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## EXPLANATORY NOTE

*(This note is not part of the Regulations)*

These Regulations revoke and replace regulations 17 to 22 of the Road Vehicles (Registration and Licensing) Regulations 1971 and regulations 18 to 23 of the Road Vehicles (Registration and Licensing) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1973 and instruments amending those regulations by making new provision in respect of the fixing and lighting of registration plates on vehicles and for the format of registration marks.

The principal changes from the revoked provisions are:

- (a) The introduction of a mandatory requirement for the use of registration plates conforming to British Standard specification BS AU 145d or an equivalent standard laid down by an EEA State (in this note called “the mandatory plates”) on all vehicles first registered on or after 1st September 2001 and on other vehicles registered on or after 1st January 1973 if an existing plate is replaced. *(See regulation 10 and Schedule 2.)*
- (b) Provision making it lawful (where it would hitherto have been unlawful) for rear plates to be fixed in the space provided on vehicles constructed in accordance with the requirements of relevant EC type-approval directives<sup>(1)</sup> and to be lit in a manner provided for in those directives. These Regulations implement those directives to that extent. *(See regulations 5 and 9.)*
- (c) Provision for the introduction of a new registration mark format. *(See regulation 13 and Schedule 3 Parts 1 and 2.)*
- (d) The introduction of new mandatory character sizes and a mandatory standard character font (“the prescribed font”) for registration marks on vehicles first registered on or after 1st September 2001 and on other vehicles registered on or after 1st January 1973 if an existing plate is replaced. *(See regulations 14 and 15(1), Schedule 3 (Part 3) and Schedule 4.)*
- (e) As regards registration marks on other vehicles, the prohibition both of fonts which are not substantially the same as the prescribed font and of layouts which make a mark relatively difficult to read or which disguise one character as another or part of another. *(See regulation 15(2) and (3).)*
- (f) The prohibition of plates fitted or treated in such a manner as to obscure or disguise the mark or make it difficult or impossible to photograph. *(See regulation 11.)*
- (g) The making of provision for the display of the international distinguishing sign of the United Kingdom adjacent to the registration mark in accordance with Council Regulation (EC) No. 2411/98 (a copy of which can be obtained from the Stationery Office). *(See regulation 16.)*
- (h) The exemption of small invalid vehicles and pedestrian-controlled vehicles from the requirement to carry registration marks and provision permitting “classic” vehicles to use old-style plates indefinitely. *(See regulations 3 and 18 and regulations 10 to 14 passim.)*

The Regulations make the use of mandatory plates containing characters of the specified size in the prescribed font (with or without the international distinguishing sign) optional on vehicles either currently registered or first registered before 1st September 2001 with effect from 21st March 2001. *(See regulation 17.)*

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(1) The directives are Council Directives [70/222/EEC](#), [76/760/EEC](#) (as amended by Commission Directive [97/31/EC](#)), [93/92/EEC](#) (as amended by Commission Directive [99/26/EC](#)) and [93/94/EEC](#).

**Status:** *This is the original version (as it was originally made).*

A draft of these Regulations has been communicated to the European Commission in accordance with Article 8 of Directive [98/34/EC](#) (a directive of the European Parliament and Council of 22 June 1998 laying down a procedure for the provision of information in the field of technical standards and regulations; OJ No. L204, 21.7.98, p. 37).

The Regulations have been made in conjunction with the Road Vehicles Lighting (Amendment) Regulations 2001 (S.I.[2001/560](#)). A combined Regulatory Impact Assessment for the two instruments has been prepared and copies can be obtained from the Road Safety Division of the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, Zone 2/09 Great Minster House, 76 Marsham Street, London SW1P 4DR (telephone number 020 7944 2452) or viewed on the DETR website [www.detr.gov.uk](http://www.detr.gov.uk). A copy has been placed in the library of both Houses of Parliament.