

Private Hire Board



by **EDDIE TOWNSON**
Chairman Private Hire Board

As usual it's been a busy period, the introduction of vehicle licensing has caused its fair share of problems. The Private Hire Board has been working with The LPHCA and The PCO to iron many of these out.

As a result of our efforts a new information sheet will in the near future be sent out by The PCO with the application to licence a vehicle. A draft is set out below which will have the majority of do's and don'ts in it.

The largest number of failures at the centres is caused by drivers failing to take the correct paperwork. The other area is radio fitment where a learning process is going on both by the trade and The PCO as to how a radio should be fitted and where is the best place to fit it.

Guidelines from Ofcom (MPT1362 this can be found on the Ofcom website) have been the basis for most of these decisions, but the PCO has been setting the standards for things like fitting a radio in the passenger compartment.

I raised the question as to why they should be changing the rules or adding new ones and a PCO spokesperson explained, "The PCO is looking at more fittings of radios than any other body and must always put passenger safety first."

Whilst I have to agree and say that is probably true I believe that they should consult with the trade first and publish the why's and give reasonable notice of change before they implement.

Please take note at The PCO! Changes to regulations for MoT's are published in advance and an implementation date is advertised. Please stop 'the pass today' and 'fail tomorrow system' that seems to exist at the moment.



"The PCO hate wires".

One more small comment on this subject, "The PCO hate wires". It would seem that if you have a wire that can be seen or worse, touched by an examiner (even if hidden away under the drivers seat) you risk a failure.

Here is a draft copy of the **dos and don'ts** that will be circulated soon by The PCO.

Private Hire Vehicle Licensing: Help yourself to pass first time

1. BOOKING A LICENSING INSPECTION

Call **0845 378 2345** to contact the licensing call centre.

Use this number to either:

- make an appointment for a licensing inspection
- confirm or change a pre-arranged licensing appointment or location
- change a licensing appointment time or location
- cancel a licensing appointment

2. DOCUMENTATION

You should bring with you:

- a good quality photocopy or the original DVLA V5 (Registration Document) for the vehicle being inspected. Or, where the vehicle is new and yet to be registered with the DVLA, a copy of the vehicle manufacturer's delivery document for that vehicle
- the original insurance certificate, valid cover note or bond or fleet insurance certificate for the vehicle being tested
- the current Road Fund Excise Licence (Tax Disc) and ensure that it is affixed to the vehicle being tested
- for vehicles more than 12 months (1 year) old at the time of the licensing inspection you must have a valid MoT certificate issued no more than 14 days prior to the date of the inspection

3. TWO-WAY RADIOS

Ensure that:

- any two-way radio equipment does not encroach the front passenger area and that any wiring, fixtures or fittings do not present a hazard to the driver or

any passengers (Equipment securely fitted under the passenger seat or the glove-box will be permitted)

- wiring is correctly fused and has been installed in accordance with the industry guidelines (usually direct to the battery or the auxiliary side of the fuse box)

4. TINTED WINDOWS

- For vehicles first used before 1st April 1985 the front windscreen and windows to either side of the driver must allow at least 70% of light to be transmitted through them
- For vehicles first used after the 1st April 1985 the windscreen must allow 75% of light to be transmitted whilst the windows on either side of the driver must allow a minimum of 70% of light to be transmitted through them

5. BODY DAMAGE

Our inspector will assess vehicle damage, at the inspection. A licence will be refused if there is evidence of significant body damage, which will include rusting, insecure or crudely repaired body panels/bumpers. In the event of refusal the inspector will explain their reasons.

6. ADDITIONAL FITTINGS

Any additional fixtures and fittings will be assessed to ensure compliance with road traffic legislation and guidelines. This assessment will primarily want to ensure that the fitting does not pose a hazard for the driver, passenger or other road users.

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Medicals

The Private Hire Board worked closely with The PCO on the potential outsourcing of Medicals and we were always concerned that if such a system were to be adopted would it give value for money and be an improvement on what already exists. (The driver using his or her own GP).

Medicals have been one of the major hold-ups within the licensing process due to the bureaucracy and differing interpretation of standards, as well as being a cause for concern within the industry because of varying prices and differing waiting periods.

Unfortunately, as the following letter from the PCO explains, it is not possible at the present time to outsource medicals to medical centres.

Transport for London Public Carriage Office



Dear Steve,

TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE DRIVERS: MEDICAL EXAMINATION SERVICE

Further to previous correspondence on the above topic and the presentations given to taxi and private hire trade association representatives in September and October 2003 respectively, I am writing to inform you of the outcome of the Public Carriage Office (PCO) competitive tendering exercise.

It was, as you know, our firm intention to enter into a contract with Atos Origin (formerly SchlumbergerSema) to deliver a medical examination service for taxi and private hire drivers, subject to the service provider being able to satisfy our requirements in terms of cost, accessibility and quality of service. The views of the trade associations was an important consideration in helping to inform our final decision in this matter. At the time we met with the trade associations, and as part of our pre-contract discussions, further work was being undertaken by the PCO and Atos Origin teams to establish how the service would operate in practice. Within this programme of work, a more detailed analysis of the projected volumes of driver medicals for the duration of the contract was undertaken and revealed that the estimated volumes set out in the original specification could no longer be sustained. As a consequence, Atos Origin asked to review their original proposal (as they were entitled to do) and reported that the decrease in the projected volume would lead to an increase in the cost of each medical examination and reduce the number of proposed examination centres.

The PCO has decided, therefore, that the delivery of a driver medical examination service by a third party service provider is, regrettably, no longer a viable proposition and Atos Origin has now been informed of our decision not to proceed with the award of a contract. The reasons and justification for the PCO mounting a competitive tendering exercise still remain and we are committed to looking at ways in which we can improve the delivery and quality of driver medical examinations. In particular, the PCO needs to address aspects of the process which no longer meet the required ethical or business standards. To this end, we will again review the options available to us for improving the service to drivers and the Licensing Authority.

Yours sincerely

Roy Ellis

Head of Public Carriage Office

Appeals and Representation

We have learned of several successful appeals for drivers at magistrate's court. Clearly the Operator's support and help in the cases that have been successfully appealed against is significant.

The LPHCA has secured the help of a lawyer Guy Bishop of Howard Kennedy in London to assist with appeals for members.

Please contact us if you have a driver who is appealing and we will put you in touch with Guy.



JOIN US

The LPHCA now has several tiers of membership and that is about to be expanded in the Autumn.

Cheaper Insurance and free provision of Licensed Vehicle for non-fault accidents are just a few of the benefits of joining us.

For further information call or text Steve Wright on 07956 329288 or email us at TheLPHCA@btinternet.com or fax us on 01442 380607 for further information.