

Drivers and digital tachographs

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Created by Business Link on 19 April 2011 12:50
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Drivers and digital tachographs

Introduction

If you drive a commercial bus, coach, lorry or van, you need an approved tachograph to monitor activities covered by EU drivers' hours rules.

There are two kinds of tachograph or 'vehicle unit' (VU) - analogue and digital. The digital tachograph stores electronic data on you and your vehicle in its own memory and also on your smart card. It replaces the analogue tachograph - the instrument that keeps its data on circular, wax-coated discs - for vehicles registered on or after 1 May 2006. This data needs to be periodically downloaded from the tachograph, and from your smart card.

This guide will give you information on record keeping, applying for your driver smart card and replacing a lost, stolen or faulty card.

What is a digital tachograph?

Digital tachographs work by digitally storing data on the driver and vehicle in its memory, and also on a credit card-sized plastic card. This is known as the 'driver smart card'.

Transport operators must periodically download this data from the digital tachograph - known as the vehicle unit (VU) - and from driver cards. They must then analyse the information to ensure that the drivers' hours rules have been followed.

The VU is located in the driver's area of the vehicle cab. It can hold up to 12 months' data on drivers of the vehicle, including their periods of driving and duty. The VU stores information relating to system faults, attempts to tamper with the system, over-speeding, and calibration details. It also records when data has been accessed by Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA) staff or police.

The VU works by sending a signal to the speedometer/odometer unit, which can be clearly viewed from the driver's seat. The VU receives a signal from the vehicle - usually from the gearbox - through a cable.

How data is kept secure

For security, the VU and the motion sensor from the gearbox are encoded as a pair, and the signals from the sensor are encrypted. Any attempt to interfere with them will be registered and recorded in the VU. If you try to replace the sender unit, the VU will record this as an attempt to breach the security of the system.

As a driver, you are only allowed to hold one driver's smart card. You must never use another person's card or allow another driver to use their card.

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The law says that you must use a driver smart card whenever you drive a vehicle fitted with a digital tachographs under EU rules. If you try to use a vehicle without a card in the VU, the system will not stop the vehicle from being driven, but it will record the fact that the vehicle has been used without a card.

Multi-manning

The VU unit contains two slots for instances when there are two drivers. The first driver must have their smart card in slot 1, and the second driver's smart card must be in slot 2. When they take over driving, the cards must be swapped into the appropriate slots.

You must use the 'mode' button on the digital tachographs correctly to record any non-driving work such as breaks and rest periods, other work and periods of availability.

The digital tachograph also produces printouts via its internal printer. These are used whenever hard copy records are needed by the operator, VOSA or the police.

Keeping records with a digital tachograph and smart card

If you're driving a digital tachograph-equipped vehicle under European Union (EU) drivers' hours rules, then you must use a driver smart card.

For information about which vehicles require digital tachographs and which vehicles are exempt, see our guide on [tachographs: the basics](#). If you are an operator, find more information in our related guide on [operators and digital tachographs](#).

Although you can drive your vehicle without the driver smart card, the vehicle unit (VU) will record its absence.

You can only have one driver smart card. You must never use anyone else's card or allow another driver to use yours.

The smart card records at least 28 days of average duty. The data recorded on your card includes:

- details of the issuing authority
- country and dates of validity and issue
- your name, date of birth and driving licence number
- dates, times, vehicle registration number and odometer readings
- duty periods

After this 28-day period, the card may start to overwrite older data in sequence.

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What to do when you're on duty

When you're driving a vehicle equipped with a digital tachograph, you should always:

- ensure the tachograph is calibrated
- ensure the tachograph is working properly
- take reasonable steps to make certain that your card is free from dirt or damage
- use only your own driver smart card
- insert your card in the correct slot - for more information, see the page in this guide on [what is a digital tachograph?](#)
- record the country where your daily work period begins and ends
- carry sufficient supplies of type-approved print roll for printouts and manual record-keeping on board
- manually record all duties performed with the card removed
- use the mode button correctly to record all other periods of work such as breaks and rest, availability and other work
- ensure that the card is not removed from the tachograph unless otherwise authorised
- be able to produce any charts or manual records on request at the roadside
- be able to produce your card at the roadside if requested

Applying for driver smart cards

If you need or are going to need to drive a vehicle subject to the EU drivers' hours regulations, you will need to apply for a driver smart card. This is your responsibility as a driver, although your company or agency may pay for your card and send off your application form.

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) issues digital tachograph smart cards for the UK. You can [request an application form \(Form ST1A\) for a driver digital tachograph smart card from the DVLA](#). You can also download [application for a digital tachograph driver card - new photo not needed \(PDF, 122K\) - Opens in a new window](#) from the DVLA website.

Driver smart cards are also available from local DVLA offices and Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA) testing stations. You should complete the form and send it with the fee and any relevant documentation to:

DVLA

Swansea

SA99 1ST

Your driver card must have a photograph and digitised signature on it. If you hold a photocard driving licence, the DVLA will use your photograph and signature already provided for your

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driving licence. All you need to do is complete an application form.

If you don't have a photocard licence, you will need to send in a photograph with the completed application form and supporting ID documents to get your smart card issued.

Company applications

A company you work for can apply for a driver smart card on your behalf, although you must provide them with the correct information.

Companies can apply for more than one card at a time. They must send a request for more than one application pack by faxing the DVLA on company-headed notepaper on Fax 01792 783 525.

The DVLA will accept payment for up to 25 driver card applications on one company cheque.

For more information on the difference between company smart cards and driver smart cards, read our guide on [operators and digital tachographs](#).

Replacing lost, stolen or faulty driver smart cards

Your digital tachograph smart card is valid for five years. However, if it is lost, stolen or stops working, you must have a new card issued for the rest of the five-year period.

If your card is lost or stolen, you must report it to Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA). You will need to phone the DVLA Tachograph Smart Card Helpline on Tel 0300 790 6109 to request the replacement card and pay a £19 fee by credit or debit card.

Alternatively, you can complete an application form and send it with the relevant fee to:

DVLA

Swansea

SA99 1AZ

You will need to apply for the replacement within seven calendar days.

Faulty cards

If your card is faulty you will need to return it with a completed application form to DVLA who will issue a new card. You will need to apply within seven calendar days for a replacement.

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Where possible try the card in a different vehicle unit (VU) to doublecheck that the card is faulty.

If you do not return the faulty card, the DVLA will have to treat the card as lost or stolen and charge the relevant fee.

You can drive without the lost, stolen or damaged card for a maximum of 15 calendar days. You can drive for longer in order for the vehicle to return to its premises provided you produce two printouts - one for the beginning of the journey and one for the end.

Picking up your new card

You can ask the DVLA to issue your new card to either your nearest local DVLA office or VOSA testing station, where you will need to collect it in person and sign a declaration.

You will need to produce two forms of identity, such as:

- your full valid passport
- your birth certificate
- your certificate of registry of birth
- your adoption certificate
- your ID card issued by a member of the EC/EEA
- your certificate of naturalisation or registration
- your driving licence
- a utilities bill or bank statement

The clerk will need proof of your identity before opening the envelope and asking you to sign the declaration that you have received your card.

Renewal

For information on how to renew your driver smart card see the page in this guide [renewing your driver smart card](#).

Fees for new or replacement smart cards

These are the current fees you'll pay for new, replacement, lost, stolen or faulty driver smart cards:

Driver smart card fees

Type	Fee
Card application	£38

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Renewal	£19
Replacement - lost/stolen	£19
Exchange	£0
Malfunction	£0

Renewing your driver smart card

Digital tachograph cards expire after five years, which means that the microchip will stop recording driver activity. To find out when your card will expire please check section 4B on the front of your card.

Renewing your digital tachograph card with a reminder

Before your card expires you will be sent a reminder. Simply follow the instructions on the reminder to renew your card and send it to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) no later than 15 working days before the expiry of your card.

What to do if you don't receive your reminder

If you do not receive a reminder and you want to renew your card you will need to complete a digital tachograph application form. You can [download application for a digital tachograph driver card - new photo not needed \(D777B\) \(PDF, 122K\) - Opens in a new window](#) from the DVLA website and follow the renewal instructions on the form. You will need to send your application to DVLA no later than 15 working days before the expiry of your card.

If you are unable to download the D777B application form, you can [request an application form \(Form ST1A\) for a driver digital tachograph smart card](#) using DVLA's online form ordering service.

Early chip expiry

DVLA is aware of an issue with driver and company cards issued before 26 August 2006. Driver cards will stop recording activity and company cards will stop locking or unlocking and downloading data 24 hours before the expiry date. Estimates are that 65,000 driver cards and 14,000 company cards will be affected. Any cards replaced since 26 August 2006 will not be affected.

The affected cards will show as invalid for this day and will be treated as malfunctioning. There is no need to notify DVLA or return the card on this occasion. Cardholders can continue to drive on this day but **must** keep records using the print out facility on the Vehicle Unit (VU).

When DVLA issue the renewal reminders the affected cardholders will be informed of this problem and advised of the VU printouts procedures. DVLA will also inform cardholders on

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where they can find additional information, including how to contact one of Vehicle and Operator Service Agency's (VOSA) traffic examiners.

How to keep drivers' hours records using printouts produced by the VU

A daily activities printout must be produced from the VU on the last two days before the expiry date of your card.

You need to do this:

- when you take over the vehicle
- when you leave the vehicle

On these two days do not produce a printout from your driver card, as this may be blank.

The printouts must be clearly endorsed with:

- driver name
- driver licence and/or driver card number
- any manual entries needed to show periods of other work, availability and rest or break
- the driver's signature.

You must:

- retain these printouts along with your card, as records of your work for 28 days
- keep them in your possession when driving so you can produce them at the roadside
- ensure that you or your employer downloads the data from your expired driver card as soon as possible
- return the printouts to your employer within 42 days of printing them

You or your employer needs to store the printouts safely for 12 months or up to two years if they are used as records for calculating your working time, under the Road Transport (Working Time) Regulations 2005.

If your card is in a VU when it expires you must remove it and insert your new card. This must be done immediately, or as soon as it is safe for you to do so.

Your new card will start to record data from the start of validity date, which can be found in field 4a on the front of the card.

If you need more information on the need to keep drivers' hours records using printouts produced by the VU, please [download the VOSA guide to drivers' hours and tachographs](#)

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[rules for goods vehicles \(PDF, 1.72MB\) - Opens in a new window.](#)

You can also contact your local Traffic Examiner, their details may be obtained by calling the national enquiry number; 0300 123 9000.

Making manual entries and recording other work on the digital tachograph

The digital tachograph allows you to make manual entries about your activities away from the vehicle. You can do this through the tachograph's manual input facility, selecting the 'Other work' mode. Read more about the mode button on the page in this guide on [what is a digital tachograph?](#)

Other manual records are needed when:

- the vehicle unit (VU) or smart card malfunctions
- you breach the rules because of an 'unforeseen event'
- a record needs to be corrected

'Unforeseen events' are delays caused by severe weather, road traffic accidents, mechanical breakdowns or interruptions of ferry services, or any event that is likely to endanger the life or health of people or animals.

In any of these situations, you should make a printout for the relevant time period, record your activities or reasons on the back, and sign it.

You must remove your card when you're away from a vehicle during a period of work. When you return to drive a vehicle and reinsert your card, the vehicle unit lets you record your activities from the time you left the previous vehicle you used.

Helplines

VOSA Helpline

0300 123 9000

Related guides on businesslink.gov.uk

[Download VOSA's guide to drivers' hours rules for goods vehicles in the UK and Europe \(PDF, 2.24MB\) - Opens in a new window](#) | [Download VOSA's guide to drivers' hours rules for passenger-carrying vehicles in the UK and Europe \(PDF, 2.55MB\) - Opens in a new window](#) | [Download the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency's \(VOSA's\) form 75](#)

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[for declaring a tachograph exemption for a goods vehicle \(PDF, 29K\) - Opens in a new window](#) | [Download form 658 for declaring a tachograph exemption for a PSV \(PDF, 30K\) - Opens in a new window](#) | [Tachographs: the basics](#) | [Drivers and analogue tachographs](#) | [Operators and digital tachographs](#) | [Operators and analogue tachographs](#) | [Vehicles exempt from drivers' hours rules](#) | [EU drivers' hours rules](#) | [GB drivers' hours rules](#) | [AETR drivers' hours rules](#) | [Moving goods by road](#) | [Moving dangerous goods](#) | [Request an application form \(Form ST1A\) for a driver digital tachograph smart card from the DVLA](#) |

Related web sites you might find useful

[Use our Transport Direct interactive tool to plan your journey - Opens in a new window](#)

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