Minibus Operator Handbook

A guide to managing risk

QBE



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Section 01

Introduction

01

Introduction

Welcome to the Minibus Driver and Operator Handbook (MDOH). The purpose of this handbook is to provide comprehensive information for drivers and operators when using or preparing to use minibuses. It outlines key legal requirements, best practices, and safety standards to ensure safe and efficient operation whilst meeting regulatory obligations. It also includes detailed guidance on day-to-day operations, emergency procedures, and updates on regulations.

Need to make a claim? Report it early!

If you're involved in an incident and need to make an insurance claim, it's important that you report it as soon as possible, ideally the same day. Reporting a claim early can save time and help you to receive any claim payments faster.

How to make a claim

We pride ourselves on placing the effective management and handling of claims at the heart of our business. Our claims teams have the skills and expertise to ensure that all claims are processed effectively and in a timely manner.

Full claim notification procedures are contained within this policy wording. For ease of reference our dedicated claims team contact details are set out below:

Tel: +44 (0)800 389 1708

Our claims line is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Email: newclaim.motor@uk.qbe.com

You must report all accidents involving an insured vehicle to us as quickly as possible, regardless of blame.

A valid Motor Insurance Certificate must be held at all times. This is a legal requirement and should be readily available for inspection.

Section 02

Why QBE?

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Why QBE?

We are a trusted partner to thousands of minibus operators across the UK. With over 30 years of experience, we combine deep sector expertise with proactive risk management to help you operate safely, efficiently, and confidently.

QBE is a specialist business insurer and reinsurer.

We're big enough to make a difference, small enough to be fleet of foot. As one of the world's leading insurers a large part of the modern world depends on our cover. We have customers as varied as bus and coach fleet operators and major international infrastructure consortiums. For them, we're the buffer between the best-laid plans and uncertain reality.

People who deal with us find us professional, pragmatic and reliable – this is one of the reasons we're still here after 130 years.

Our underwriters are empowered to take decisions that are important to you. And we don't just cover your risk. We help you manage it, meaning that you're less likely to have to make a claim in the first place.

QBE began when an Australian shipping company decided it could insure its own vessels better than anyone else. As it turned out, it could. We still admire that grit and energy. We hope it shows.

We don't just cover your risk. We help you manage it.

QBE for minibus insurance

Few insurers know the minibus market like QBE. Over the past 30 years, we have insured hundreds of thousands of minibuses and can meet the needs of almost any minibus operator.

We offer optional AA accident recovery, a nationwide repair network, legal and technical support, in-house engineering expertise, strict service level agreements, and support with fraud prevention.

In the UK we conduct business through insurance brokers, so if you're looking for minibus insurance ask your broker about QBE. www.QBEeurope.com/sme

QRisk

(https://qrisk.qbe.com/)

When accidents or incidents happen, they rarely have a positive outcome and generally result in some degree of upset or injury to your people and disruption to your business. Most organisations recognise the risks they see in their work environment and put appropriate controls in place – but knowing how effective and robust these are, can be difficult.

Through our QRisk online risk management platform, QBE customers can access a wide range of guidance and self-assessment tools to help identify any gaps or improvements to your approach, systems or procedures and help reduce the chances or impact of an unexpected event.

From managing your ESG (environmental, social, and corporate governance) risk, preventing common accidents in your workplace, or even improving your company's risk culture, QRisk can make it easier than ever to understand and manage the risks for your business.

It may seem daunting, but QRisk makes it easy for you to keep your business, employees, and customers in safe hands. Whether using the self-assessment toolkits, accessing guidance and support, updating your risk improvement status or accessing your risk quality score, QRisk's online capability means you can do this at your own pace, taking what you need, at your discretion.

- You're in full control
- Is free to use
- Is online and at your own pace
- Helps you assess and understand the risks facing your business
- Gives you instant actionable guidance and support to improve your risk management
- Enables you to benchmark elements of your business against industry peers
- Helps you monitor your progress through automated tracking and reporting.

To get started, have your QBE insurance policy number to hand and head to https://qrisk.qbe.com/

Section 03

UK regulatory information

03

UK regulatory information

Driving licences for minibuses

A minibus is normally a vehicle that can carry between 8 and 16 passengers plus the driver. If you can carry more than 16 passengers, then you should seek proper guidance as you may require a different category of driving licence.

Driving Licences for minibuses changed in January 2013. If you are unfamiliar with these changes please visit: www.gov.uk/changes-tothe-driving-licence-and-categories. These changes do not affect you if you held your licence before 19 January 2013. The new licence quotes the minibus category as D1 and you will need to have an authority to tow a trailer which is categorised as D1E. It is important to note that all new photocard licences now have a life of only 5 years not 10.

To drive a particular type of vehicle, you need an 'entitlement' for that category on your driving licence.

You can check online to see what vehicles you can drive.

Your entitlements may have additional restrictions. Check the restriction codes for your driving licence.

To check whether you can drive a minibus please refer to the following websites:

https://www.gov.uk/driving-a-minibus

https://www.gov.uk/view-driving-licence

The later allows you to see the vehicles you can drive.

Driving on a Category B License:

Drivers may operate a minibus on a standard car license (Category B) if:

- The vehicle is used for social purposes by a non-commercial body
- No payment is made for driving, other than out-of-pocket expenses
- The vehicle does not exceed 3.5 tonnes (or 4.25 tonnes if adapted for passengers with disabilities)
- Drivers must meet DVLA medical fitness standards
- Restrictions apply for young or newly qualified drivers, including additional supervision and training.

Driving on a Category D1 License:

Required for minibuses with 9-16 passenger seats operated commercially or for hire/reward.

Drivers must undertake training to obtain the Driver CPC (Certificate of Professional Competence).

Medical checks are mandatory as part of the application and renewal process.

Further details: Driver CPC Notes:

If you passed your driving test prior to 1997, any qualification to drive minibuses with or without a trailer is restricted to non–hire and reward use. If you seek to drive a minibus for Hire or Reward, it is necessary for you to pass the appropriate theory and practical test for that class of vehicle. Similarly, should you be renewing a licence because of your age (70 years old or more) then you will be required to meet the level of health and fitness required to drive such a vehicle.

If you passed your driving test for cars (Category B entitlement) after 1 January 1997 and you are driving for Hire and Reward under a Section 19 permit and you are being paid, you can only do so if you have passed a further test to obtain Category D1.

If you wish to take a minibus (8 seats or larger) outside the UK in the EU/EEA area, irrespective of the purpose of the trip, you will need to have the full Category D1 entitlement (obtained through examination) unless all four of the criteria below are met:

- It is not for Hire and Reward
- You passed your driving test before 1st January 1997 and have the Category D1 entitlement (not for Hire and Reward) on your licence
- You are not being paid
- The visit is a temporary one.

Do you drive for ‘Hire or Reward’?

This is important for you to understand as you will have to meet additional requirements. Hire or Reward is where any payment, be it money or other benefit, either directly from the passengers or from a third party on behalf of them, gives them a right to be carried. If there is a payment, then it will be for Hire or Reward. It becomes more complicated as the courts have also stated that Hire or Reward exists in cases where ‘petrol money’ changes hands or where a courtesy bus is laid on by a hotel or other such business. If you are in any doubt, you should seek advice.

Seat belts

European Directives require that any minibus first used on or after 1 October 2001 must be fitted with seat belts to every seat except side facing ones. Therefore, all forward facing seats require a 3-point belt. Rear facing seats may be fitted with 2-point belts.

If the vehicle was first used before 1 October 2001, there is no requirement for seat belts to be fitted. If, however, the seat belts have been fitted they must comply with European Directives.

It should be noted that children are not to sit in rear facing seats of pre-1 October 2001 vehicles. They are permitted to sit in rear facing seats in a post 1 October 2001 vehicle which has either a 2- or 3-point belt.

The only exemption to the need for a safety belt is where the person has a seat belt exemption certificate. In all other cases passengers must wear a safety belt.



Section 04

Operator’s licencing and permits

04

Operator’s licencing and permits

Operator Licensing

Public Service Vehicle (PSV) License:

- Operators must apply for a PSV license if carrying passengers for hire/reward
- Application process includes proving financial standing, good repute, and professional competence
- Operators must comply with regulations for vehicle maintenance, driver hours, and record-keeping
- Further details: DVSA PSV Licensing.

Local Council Taxi Plating (Smaller Vehicles):

- Vehicles with fewer than nine passenger seats may require taxi plating and licensing from local councils.

Operators must:

- Submit vehicles for inspection and testing
- Ensure compliance with local safety and emission standards
- Display council-issued plates on licensed vehicles.

Further details: Check with your local council website for specific requirements.

Section 19 and Section 22 Permits:

Community transport organisations can operate minibuses without a PSV license under these permits.

Section 19 Permits

Purpose:

Allows non-commercial organisations to operate minibuses for educational, religious, social, and recreational activities.

Eligibility:

Schools, charities, and community groups can apply.

Minibuses must not be used for profit-making purposes.

Operational Conditions:

Passenger contributions can cover costs but must not generate a profit.

Drivers must receive regular training, and vehicles must undergo safety checks.

Restrictions:

Services cannot be open to the general public.

Section 22 Permits

Purpose:

Enables community groups to operate local bus services available to the general public.

Eligibility:

Designed for non-profit organisations offering essential transport, often in rural or underserved areas.

Operational Conditions:

Services must operate on a fixed schedule and comply with accessibility regulations.

Drivers can be volunteers or paid staff, but the organisation must meet additional professional competence standards.

Restrictions:

Services must prioritise accessibility and meet Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations (PSVAR).

Key Differences:

Section 19 permits limit operations to specific groups, while Section 22 permits allow public transport services.

Section 22 permit holders must comply with stricter accessibility and scheduling requirements.



Section 05

Minibuses and drivers' hours

05

Minibuses and drivers' hours

The regulations that govern how long a person can drive a minibus for can be complex. You must ensure that you fully understand and comply with these rules. They are there to protect you as the operator/driver, plus passengers and members of the public.

In brief:

- Vehicles with 9 to 16 passenger seats are subject to EU rules when used commercially, except when used on regular services which are 50 km or less
- Where EU drivers' hours rules apply, all vehicles must be fitted with a tachograph, which, for vehicles registered on or after 1 May 2006, will be a digital tachograph
- A vehicle which is being used on a Section 19 permit is still a public service vehicle and is subject to domestic drivers' hours rules when a person is driving in the course of his/ her employment. Therefore, if payment to the driver has taken place (unless it is out of pocket expenses) domestic drivers' hours rules apply.

Domestic drivers' hours rules do not apply for the private use of a minibus or when permit vehicles are driven by volunteer (i.e. unpaid) drivers.

If a vehicle is being used as a public service vehicle (PSV) on a Regular Service (local/ nonlocal), the relevant domestic drivers' hours rules apply (or in the case of a route exceeding 50 km, EU Hours Rules). For more information visit: www.gov.uk/guidance/ drivers-hours-passenger-vehicles

Useful Link: https://www.gov.uk/drivers-hours/passenger-carrying-vehicles

Most commercial minibus operations are governed by either UK domestic or EU rules on drivers' hours. Always check with your company to see which set of rules you might be operating under. Breaches can result in legal action against you and possibly the company.

EU drivers' hours rules

These rules were revised with effect from 11 April 2007, when Regulation EC 3820/85 was replaced by Regulation 561/2006.

Breaks and rest

A break is a period of no less than 15 minutes during which time a driver may not perform any other work and is exclusively used for recuperation. The break may be on or off duty. It is permissible to take a break on a moving vehicle that someone else is driving (although a digital tachograph cannot be set to 'rest' for the second driver).

Rest is always off duty and is any uninterrupted period of at least one hour during which the driver may freely dispose of their time. Rest can only be taken on a vehicle if it is stationary and is fitted with a bunk.

Duty time

Duty time includes time spent on duty by an employee in employment which involves driving, or being available to drive, a passenger vehicle. However, duty is not limited to driving time or to time spent working on or in connection with the vehicle. It can include other time spent acting under the employer's specific instructions. (e.g. travelling to and from a vehicle pick up point in a travel vehicle).

The working day

The working day is a period not exceeding 24 hours. It starts from when a driver commences work after a daily or weekly rest. Where multiple manning takes place, the working day may be extended to a maximum period of 30 hours.

The working week

The working week is the seven days commencing at 0001 hrs on Monday until 0000 hrs the following Sunday.

Daily rest

A driver must take a continuous period of 11 hours rest in each period of 24 hours. The period of 11 hours may be reduced to 9 hours on not more than three occasions between any two weekly rest periods. There is no compensation required.

Where a driver takes daily rest periods away from base, they may be taken in a vehicle, provided that there are suitable sleeping facilities for the driver and the vehicle is stationary.

Split daily rest

As an alternative to daily rest of 11 or 9 hours, daily rest can be split into two or three separate periods totalling 12 hours. The first must be at least 3 hours and the second period must be at least 9 hours.

Multiple manning

Multiple staffing of a vehicle allows an extension of the working day from 24 to 30 hours. This period of 30 hours must contain a daily rest period of 9 hours, being the final part of the 30-hour period.

Except for the first hour, drivers must be together on the same vehicle for the full duration of the period during which multiple manning rules are being used. Multiple staffing rules cannot be used to rotate drivers working vehicles in convoy, e.g. 3 drivers sharing the driving of 2 vehicles. In these circumstances, each driver must obey single manning rules.

Weekly rest

In each fixed week a driver must take a weekly unbroken rest period of at least 45 hours. It is possible to reduce the weekly rest from 45 to 24 hours.

In any two consecutive weeks, a driver must take at least one uninterrupted 45-hour weekly rest (Regular) and at least one other weekly rest (Reduced), which may be reduced to as little as 24 hours, regardless of where it is taken. Compensation for reduced weekly rest must be given en bloc and attached to another rest period of at least 9 hours, before the end of the third week, following the week in which the reduction is taken. A maximum of 144 hours (6 x 24 hours) can elapse between the end of one weekly rest period and the beginning of the next.

Weekly rest may overlap the midnight Sunday boundary separating working weeks. It can apply to either week in which it falls. However, there must be no doubt about as to which week the rest applies. A single week rest period cannot be applied to more than one week.

Where a driver takes weekly rest periods away from base, they may be taken in a vehicle, provided that there are suitable sleeping facilities for each driver and the vehicle is stationary.

Daily driving

Daily driving is a maximum 9 hours. On no more than two occasions in a fixed week it may be extended to a maximum 10 hours without any need for a compensating reduction.

Weekly driving

There is a weekly driving limit of 56 hours.

Fortnightly driving

There is a driving limit of 90 hours in any two consecutive weeks.

Maximum period of driving and minimum breaks

The maximum period of driving under EU rules is 4½ hours (continuous) which must be followed by a break of at least 45 minutes unless the driver is starting a daily or weekly rest period.

As an alternative to a continuous break of 45 minutes, up to two separate breaks can be taken, the first of which must be at least 15 minutes long and the second of the breaks must be at least 30 minutes, making a total of 45 minutes. Once a 45-minute break has been taken either as a single break or as two separate breaks, the calculation on driving time begins again and no account is taken of previous driving periods and breaks.

Under working time regulations, it is possible to continue to work (on ‘other work’) up to 6 hours, provided the four and half-hours’ driving time is not exceeded.

Maximum number of daily driving periods or driving days.

A weekly rest period must be taken after a maximum of 6 daily driving periods.

It should be noted that it is possible to work 12 consecutive days, provided there is a 24-hour rest period between the 6th and 7th periods. This can be achieved by finishing before twelve noon and commencing the following day after 12 noon. However, the consequential compensatory rest would be up to 66 hours in such cases. In effect, it is not possible for drivers to routinely work 6-day weeks.

Interrupted rest – ferry/train

When a vehicle is transported by ferry boat or train, and the accompanying driver takes a regular rest period (not less than 11 hours) this rest period may be interrupted on up to two occasions. The total period of interruption must be no more than 1 hour. During that regular daily rest period, the driver must have access to a bunk or couchette.

Emergencies

Emergency rules can only be invoked in absolutely, genuine emergencies.

A driver may, in an emergency, disregard driving time and daily rest provided all the following points are observed.

- Road safety is not put at risk
- The extension of hours is limited to the extent that it is necessary to ensure the safety of passengers or the vehicle
- The first stopping place suitable for ensuring the safety of passengers must be observed.

Continuation to the end of the journey is permitted only if there are no suitable stopping places available before the end of the journey and then only if road safety is not put at risk.

- The occurrence and reasons are noted by the driver on the back of the tachograph chart.

This provision is not an open cheque for drivers to break the rules. There must be a genuine emergency and road safety must never be jeopardised by the driver.

UK domestic rules

If you are operating in the UK, either on a Regular Service that is below 50 km, or you are driving a vehicle with 15 or fewer passenger seats on any type of operation, you will be subject to UK domestic rules on drivers' hours. They differ from the EU rules.

Daily driving

The maximum aggregate driving time is 10 hours per working day.

Breaks

A driver must take a break of at least 30 minutes after driving continuously for 5½ hours.

A driver may work a through duty of 8½ hours driving provided that accumulated layover time is at least 45 minutes. This must be followed by either a daily rest period or a break of at least 30 minutes.

Maximum spread over

The maximum length of a driver's working day (from signing on to signing off) is 16 hours.

Daily rest

A driver must have a period of at least 10 hours between each working day which can be reduced to 8½ on no more than 3 occasions per week.

Weekly rest

A driver must have a period of at least 24 hours off duty every 2 weeks, i.e. each fortnight. The rest period does not have to be a calendar day. It can be taken at the beginning or end of a working fortnight and can fall partly in one fortnight and partly in the next, provided it is started in the fortnight to which it applies.

Mixed EU and UK work

Drivers working partly under EU rules and partly under the UK domestic rules must observe three basic principles:

- Time spent driving or on duty under one set of rules may not count as a break period or rest period under the other set.
- Driving and other duties under the EU rules count towards the limits on driving and other duties under UK rules.
- Driving and other duties under UK rules count as attendance at work under the EU rules.

Further information is contained in PSV375, available at:

www.gov.uk/guidance/drivers-hourspassenger-vehicles



Section 06

Tachographs

06

Tachographs

Where you are undertaking EU work, you are required to always drive (unless agreed in writing) in compliance with tachograph regulations. You must know the rules and comply with them.

For more information visit:

www.gov.uk/guidance/drivers-hourspassenger-vehicles

Employers must:

- Ensure that drivers are supplied with sufficient analogue charts or paper for digital tachographs
- Collect completed charts not later than 30 days after use and then keep for 12 months
- Download digital tachograph cards.

Drivers must:

Write on the disc:

- Surname followed by first name (no initials)
- Date and place chart begins with odometer reading
- Date and place chart ends with odometer reading
- Registration number of vehicle(s) used, with odometer readings
- Keep completed charts for at least 28 days plus the current weekday then return them to their employer as soon as possible and certainly within 42 days after use
- If inspection of your tachograph takes place by a police officer or vehicle inspector, make sure that the tachograph analogue disc or digital print–out is signed by the officer
- See that the instrument is kept reading and running
- Ensure that correct mode position is selected – ‘other work’ (crossed hammers), ‘available’ (periods of availability), rest. ‘Drive’ is selected automatically
- Ensure that an analogue tachograph is always set to official UK time, including throughout an international journey. A digital tachograph will always show UTC time on printouts, although local time can also be shown on the screen for reference purposes only
- Be able to produce tachograph charts and relevant digital printouts for the previous 28 days
- If the analogue tachograph becomes defective, complete the current chart by hand or fill in a temporary chart and attach to the original. With a digital tachograph, if it becomes defective, take a printout if possible and complete the back as with an analogue chart
- Keep printouts of digital tachographs where the card has been lost, stolen or become defective, where it has been produced to correct a driver error, used to record any notes against ‘activities’ or used to explain the reason for departure from the rules in an emergency
- Arrange for a defective tachograph to be repaired ‘enroute’ if the vehicle does not return to base within 7 days.

Driving effectively and efficiently

- Do not over–rev the engine
- Avoid excessive idling – switch the engine off if standing for more than a couple of minutes
- Avoid harsh braking and acceleration
- Do not exceed a safe speed for the road and conditions, remember speed limits are not a target
- Always concentrate on driving, think ahead and anticipate the road and what other road users may be about to do
- You can reduce costs by driving carefully to avoid incidents and reduce wear and tear
- Watch out for overhead obstructions, soft verges, height, length and width restrictions
- When driving, maintain safe separation distances appropriate to the conditions and avoid unnecessary overtaking, as it may give the impression to customers that you are racing
- Always be safe and courteous to other road users, this reflects well on you and the company.

Safe parking

- Park your vehicle legally
- When away from base, always find a safe and secure place to park the minibus overnight and lock all doors and lockers
- Ensure you make every effort to park where it is safe for passengers to embark/disembark and where your vehicle is less likely to be damaged by other manoeuvring vehicles
- Ensure the vehicle master switch is turned off
- Remember a poorly or illegally parked vehicle reflects badly on your company.

Mobile telephones

It is illegal to use your phone while driving unless you have hands-free access, such as Bluetooth. If you use your phone hands-free you must always stay in full control of your vehicle. The Police can stop you if they think you're not in control and you can be prosecuted.

Highway Code

As a professional operator/driver you must know the Highway Code and always abide by it.

Speed limits for minibuses

Minibus drivers must observe the national speed limits which are:

- Motorway 70 mph
- Dual carriageway 60 mph
- Single carriageway 50 mph
- Built –up areas 20, 30 or 40 mph.

Minibus towing trailers:

- Motorway 60 mph
- Dual carriageway 50 mph
- Single carriageway 50 mph.

Bad driving can reflect poorly on your company, including driving too close to other vehicles, retaliating to road rage or travelling in the outside lane of a 3 or 4 lane motorway. The last of these may be legal but can reflect poorly on the company.

It is also important for you to remember that the vehicle will change its handling when it has different numbers of passengers on board.

Removing seats

You are allowed to remove seats from a minibus however please do not remove seats unless your vehicle is specifically designed to do so.

The temporary removal of seats does not change its classification however if you permanently remove seats, its tax class must be reclassified with the DVLA (Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency), and the minibus will need to be tested. Contact your local DVLA office for more information.

It is an offence to carry passengers in a way that potentially puts them in danger. If you remove seats to increase the luggage space, you must ensure the luggage is stowed safely and cannot move around the vehicle's interior. Statutory requirements include passengers having access to at least two vehicle exits.



Section 07

Before you make your journey

07

Before you make your journey

Minibus (Pre–use) checklist

The driver should conduct a pre–use check that will be recorded on the correct form. If no form has been used, then the view of the company can be that it did not take place. It is your responsibility to ensure that the vehicle is safe and road legal. This check should be completed whenever a new driver starts duty with a minibus, irrespective of whether the check has already been completed that day.

- Oil Level (agreed)
- Coolant (agreed)
- Windscreen washer fluid (every driver should check)
- Brake Fluid (agreed)
- Fire extinguishers should be checked to ensure they are in date (where appropriate).

Safe operating checklist

The following checklist should be complied with as necessary whenever the vehicle is being operated.

Where there is a vehicle escort then some of the checklist below can be tasked to the escort.

- Conduct a pre–drive safety check (every journey)
- Ensure that you are familiar with the vehicle and its size, in particular width and height and the location of the fuel cap
- Plan your journey and where to take regular breaks, avoiding the onset of fatigue. This assists passengers who may also require regular breaks. Be able to recognise when you are getting tired; identify the signs for yourself
- Ensure that when passengers are getting on or off the vehicle it is parked with the handbrake applied. Should you have to leave the vehicle to assist passengers, the engine should be switched off and the keys removed. For additional safety, and if your vehicle allows, leave the vehicle in gear. This will provide more stability for assisting disabled persons onto and off the minibus
- The minibus should, wherever possible, be parked to maximise safety with the nearside to the kerb, allowing access from the pavement without the need for passengers to enter the road. Should you need to assist disabled passengers by means of the tailgate lift, ensure that wherever possible the vehicle faces oncoming traffic. In this way passengers are not between the minibus and oncoming traffic
- If travelling abroad then place the vehicle to maximise passenger safety and always support their entry and exit
- Manage the placement of passengers within the minibus to ensure that persons are best placed to support other passengers in alighting and boarding
- Know how many passengers the minibus can accommodate safely and do not exceed it. This will expose them to risk and you to the risk of prosecution
- Ensure that passengers are properly seated and that safety belts are in use. Pay particular attention to younger or shorter (under 5’ tall) customers who, where necessary, should use a special seat or booster cushion (if possible, check in advance if a seat is required. If you are unable to supply one then make provisions for customers to bring their own)

- Always ensure that wheelchairs are properly secured or stowed safely. If in use, they should be secured and the passenger also restrained properly
- Ensure that when undertaking school travel with younger passengers that the appropriate school signs are properly placed so as not to obstruct your view and that they are removed when the need ceases
- Maintain an up-to-date list of all passengers including staff so that in the event of an incident or other problem notification of schools, next of kin can be managed quickly. This list should also include any medical or other needs. Ensure that it is kept in a place readily available with other documentation
- Wear high visibility clothing to warn other road users.

Useful Advice

- Carry spare light bulbs for your vehicle. This is a legal requirement in many European Community Countries
- Check the oil level of the vehicle when the engine is cold, and the vehicle is parked on a level surface
- If fitted, check your spare wheel to ensure it is roadworthy
- Use an appropriate screen wash solution to prevent washer water freezing in the winter and to help keep the windscreen clean in the summer
- Windscreen wipers deteriorate over time and ideally, should be replaced on an annual basis
- Always carry a pair of sunglasses in the vehicle and if you have vision that needs correcting for driving, ensure the sunglasses have prescription lenses
- If you wear corrective glasses or contact lenses for driving, Carry spares in your glove box.

Section 08

Operational procedures

08

Operational procedures

You should always operate safely and legally. In everything you do you should be asking yourself:

- Am I legal?
- Am I safe?

The Health and Safety at Work Act places responsibility on BOTH the employer and the employee. Your responsibilities include but are not restricted to:

- Exercising 'reasonable care' to look after your own health and safety
- Ensuring that what you do, or fail to do, doesn't harm others
- Using work items, including personal protective equipment (PPE), correctly
- Not interfering with or misusing 'equipment'
- Reporting faults and defects.

Fitness for duty

It is your responsibility to ensure that whenever you arrive for work you are properly rested and that you have complied with proper rest periods. This applies to all driving duties but in particular where you will be engaged in driving during what could be termed 'unsocial' hours. Arriving for work when you are tired or unfit puts you, passengers and the public at risk and will not be tolerated.

Driving licences

You must have your driving licence (and counterpart) with you always when using a company vehicle. These may be inspected periodically and verified with the DVLA. You may be required to sign a document that allows the company to access and check this information at their discretion.

You must at the earliest opportunity notify your supervisor or manager should you be reported/ summonsed or issued with a fixed penalty notice for any driving or vehicle– related issue.

You must ensure that you meet all the medical requirements of your licence and that any changes in your health that affect such requirements are notified immediately to your supervisor, manager and the DVLA. Should you be unfamiliar with these requirements see the following website for more information. www.gov.uk/driving-medical-conditions

Smoking/Vaping/E-cigarettes

You, or any passenger, must not smoke at any time in any company vehicle. You should not smoke within sight of any children if engaged in any school minibus contract.

Also, you, and any passenger, should refrain from Vaping and using E-cigarettes in and around the vehicle as this poses a fire risk, primarily due to the batteries used in e-cigarettes and disposable vapes. These batteries can overheat, explode, or catch fire if improperly charged, damaged, or exposed to extreme temperatures. Incorrect disposal also contributes to fires, as batteries can ignite when crushed.

Passengers and alcohol (add in drugs/substances)

It is a serious offence for alcohol to be carried on minibuses that are used to carry passengers to or from certain designated sporting events. The company, the hirer of the vehicle, and the driver are all liable to prosecution if they knowingly cause or permit intoxicating liquor to be carried anywhere on the vehicle.

- It is an offence for a person to be in possession of alcohol while on the vehicle and for a person to be drunk on the vehicle
- The police have powers to stop and search minibuses and drivers must co–operate fully
- Heavy penalties with maximum fines can be imposed, and a possible prison sentence in certain circumstances can also be imposed on summary conviction.

Always check with the company when taking a minibus to a sporting event to see if the ban applies.

Be careful when dealing with passengers who may be under the influence of alcohol. Do not place yourself or other passengers at risk. Where the matter is serious you should contact the police. Where relevant and wherever possible as part of your normal introduction, ensure that you point out if the carriage of alcohol on the minibus is not acceptable. Always communicate fairly but firmly and ensure that passengers are aware of any restrictions at the earliest opportunity.

Drinking & drugs

You must not drink alcohol and drive. Any breach of this rule whilst you are on a business journey could result in your instant dismissal from your employment. You should always remember that it is still possible to be 'over the limit' from alcohol consumed the previous night. If you are in any doubt, do not drive. It is also an offence to drive a vehicle if your ability to do so is impaired by the use of recreational drugs, or even prescribed or non-prescribed drugs. Always check that prescription medicines will not affect your ability to drive. If you are caught by the Police whilst driving under the influence of drugs, you are liable to prosecution and you may face disciplinary procedures.

You are the company representative

You are the face of your company. The company will be judged by how passengers are treated by you. It is important that you ensure that the first impression of the customer is positive and that you always look and are professional.

When you first meet customers ensure that you properly introduce yourself. Customers generally respond well to being kept informed. Ensure that your customers are advised as to how any relevant equipment such as heating and ventilation works. Ensure that entertainment such as Music or Film materials are age appropriate and to the taste of your customers.

Engaging with your customers early allows you to understand their needs. Throughout the journey ensure that passengers are kept informed regarding journey times and any issues including journeys that are not progressing to time.

Ensure that passengers are fully aware of safety issues such as exits and fire extinguishers.

If you as the driver are making announcements, you must ensure that it is completely safe to do so.

At the end of the journey ensure that they have all their belongings and thank them, adding that you hope to see them again. Also, ensure that you are aware of other services and products that the company can offer. These can be recommended to customers where appropriate. Repeat business is a big part of any successful company. You can help that.

Complaints

If a customer complains to you, you should remain calm, polite and professional. Take ownership of the problem, whatever it may be, and where possible resolve it.

Where the problem cannot be resolved you should:

- Take their name and address
- Record with them what the problem is
- Ask them to write to the company outlining the nature and content of their complaint.

No employee should make any statement, whether verbal or written, that undermines the company or its position.

Social Media and Live Streaming

If someone is recording you without your consent on social media, the first step is to address the situation directly and politely. If they continue, you can explore legal options, including contacting the police or seeking legal counsel.

Here is a more detailed breakdown:

1. Initial Response:

- **Politely ask them to stop:** If they are filming you in public, respectfully request that they stop recording. Be clear and concise about your reasons for objecting
- **Inform them of your rights:** Explain that you have a right to privacy and that recording you without your consent is a breach of that right
- **Consider the context:** If you are in a public place where there's no reasonable expectation of privacy, they may have the right to film you, but they shouldn't be sharing it without your consent.

2. Escalation:

- **Request removal from social media:** If the video is shared online, contact the social media platform and request that it be removed. Provide evidence of their actions and your objection
- **Report to the police:** Depending on the situation and your location, you may want to report the incident to the police. This is particularly important if the recording is threatening, harassing, or involves a breach of privacy
- **Legal counsel:** If you're feeling unsafe or have concerns about the legality of their actions, consult with a lawyer. They can advise you on your rights and potential legal remedies.

3. Prevention:

- **Privacy settings:** Be aware of the privacy settings on your social media accounts and consider limiting the visibility of your content
- **Be mindful of your surroundings:** Be aware of who is around you and whether they might be recording you. If you're in a situation where you feel uncomfortable, consider how you can safely stop them from recording you
- **Document everything:** If someone is recording you without your consent, document the incident with screenshots, video recordings, and notes about the time, location, and who was involved.

Lost property

All customers' property is carried entirely at the passenger's own risk. Never accept liability or responsibility for any item left on the vehicle, even if it is locked.

Anyone who finds lost property on your vehicle should hand it to you as the driver, or to a company representative. You have a responsibility by law to search the vehicle for lost property either before or at the end of a journey, where practicable.

A driver has a legal duty to keep lost property safe until it can be returned to the office, clearly identifying the journey and vehicle. You have the right to open packages, bags or other containers to identify the owner.

Perishable goods may be destroyed or disposed of after 48 hours if not claimed, or earlier if they become objectionable.

Ensure that when checking left property, you do so carefully. Passengers may have left items which could be sharp, such as needles. These can result in you requiring medical attention.

Vehicle checks

The law requires you to check your vehicle daily for any defects. This will include a safety check. Failure to complete this check could expose you to prosecution.

Other equipment should also be checked such as any in–vehicle audio and video equipment. Any in–vehicle announcement system should also be checked as this could also be required in an emergency. You must report promptly any defects or symptoms of defects.

- Any defects found either during the daily check, while the vehicle is in use, or when it returns to base, must be reported in writing using the vehicle defect reporting system
- Reports should include registration or fleet number, date, details of the defects or symptoms and the driver's name
- Vehicles must not be used if they have any defect that affects the vehicle's safe operation or may be contrary to law, for example a defective tyre or exhaust.

Cleanliness of the vehicle is very important

- Keep your vehicle clean and tidy throughout the day
- Try to encourage tidiness and cleanliness
- Check out your vehicle before you pick up passengers
- Keep the vehicle tidy. Loose objects can be dangerous in a collision, heavy braking or during an emergency evacuation
- Remember your vehicle reflects you and your company so should always be professionally presented.

First aid and fire extinguisher equipment

- Make sure that you know where safety equipment is located and how to operate it
- Ensure that it is working properly and where necessary has been properly maintained.

If any faults or items are missing, you must bring this to the attention of your supervisor or manager. The vehicle must not be used until the matter is rectified.

Speed limiters

Your vehicle may be fitted with a speed limiter. You must ensure that you know the characteristics of the vehicle you are charged with operating. You must not rely on the fact that the vehicle cannot exceed the legal limit. It is your responsibility to drive safely and within the requirements of the road traffic laws.

Safety is your main priority

You are responsible for the operation of the vehicle. You are expected to be polite and courteous, however safety is your main priority. As such, passengers are expected to behave in a proper manner, and it is not permissible for them to distract the driver deliberately or inadvertently. They must remain seated and always wear a safety belt. It is not permitted for passengers to smoke or drink alcohol in the minibus at any time.

When dropping passengers off, ensure their safety by making sure that they properly move away from the vehicle before driving off and that they have all their belongings and that nothing is caught in the vehicle.

If the passengers are children, ensure that they are not left stranded and that a person is present to meet them and be responsible for them.

Ensure that as you approach a stop passengers do not, in preparation, remove belts early and start to move. Ensure that doors are not opened until the vehicle has fully come to a stop and the handbrake is applied.



Section 09

Young people and special requirements

09

Young people and special requirements

School minibus contracts

When the minibus passengers are mainly children under 16, you must display signs to the front and rear of the minibus warning other road users. These must be removed when the children are no longer present. Signs should not be used unless it is to comply with any other legal requirements.

It is advisable that those who transport children should complete an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (Enhanced DBS) check to carry out the role.

School bus signs

The Road Vehicles Lighting (Amendment) Regulations 1994 indicate the size and colour of the signs that are to be used to warn other persons and road users that children are boarding and alighting from vehicles and when a vehicle is being used as a school bus. Use of any other signs may not meet legal requirements and in the event of any incident could result in legal action.

These signs must be used when taking children, under 16 years of age, to and from school. Should you be involved in taking children from school on an educational trip or other official purpose, then there is no requirement for the signs to be visible; in fact, they should not be used. To supplement the signs and provide a greater degree of warning to other road users, the regulations allow for the use of hazard warning lights to be displayed when children are getting on or off the bus and when they are about to. Leaving hazard warning lights on when the vehicle is in motion is an offence.

Where your journey is delayed, ensure wherever possible that you give notice to the school or persons who may be waiting. Try to give a proper new estimate for arrival. Mobile phones should only be used if hands-free and you are in full control of the vehicle.

Always remain professional

If passengers are causing a problem, you should always remain professional, irrespective of any provocation you may experience. Be extra mindful when dealing with children.

Under no circumstances will it be acceptable for you to manhandle, remove or evict a child from the minibus. This could expose them to grave danger. Where serious problems occur, examine what resources are available. If there are escorts on the vehicle, ensure that they are more appropriately positioned throughout the vehicle. Always ensure that the matter is fully reported to the traffic manager upon your return.

Wherever possible, passengers must not be left unattended in the vehicle.

Passengers with wheelchairs

Staff must ensure that they are competent to assist wheelchair passengers in both entering and exiting the vehicle. Wheelchair reliant passengers should be assisted to ensure that they are comfortable and safely secured in the vehicle. In the event of an emergency, passengers with disabilities should be given whatever support they need to ensure their safety. Adequate space should be maintained for the proper siting and security of wheelchairs. Wheelchairs vary in size up to 1.2m (1200mm) x 0.7m (700mm).

Under no circumstances should wheelchairs be placed in a position that blocks or restricts access to emergency exits or be placed in aisles. If you are in any doubt regarding the safe carriage and placement of the wheelchair you must consult your supervisor or manager. If any wheelchair passenger refuses to wear the appropriate safety belt they should be asked to present their seat belt exemption certificate for inspection by you. In every case you must inform your manager or supervisor. No such passenger should be transported without being properly seated and secured.

The overriding issue is the safety of you and your passengers, and this must dictate your actions. It is not acceptable at any time to place yourself or them, or allow them to place themselves, in any danger. You are responsible for their safety.

The safe use of tail lifts

The checklist below should be used in every case of a wheelchair passenger being assisted into and out of a minibus when using a tail lift:

- Ensure the vehicle is positioned safely with the handbrake secured for deployment of the tail lift (if possible, it is recommended the vehicle be left in gear as an added precaution). All persons required to operate tail lifts must be trained in manual handling and in the safe operation of tail lifts
- The engine must be switched off when the hoist is being operated
- Wheelchairs placed on the hoist must have their brakes applied and must be facing into the vehicle
- Care should be taken to ensure that clients do not have their feet at the edge of the platform where it meets with the floor of the vehicle
- When the platform is returned to the 'Parked' position make absolutely sure that it is secure
- Electric wheelchairs must have engaged neutral and should be wheeled manually on to the lift platform
- The lift platform must have the safety stop raised
- This equipment can be dangerous if not operated correctly and must only be used by staff who have been properly trained. It is a requirement that one operative stands on the lift platform behind the client whilst the other remains on the ground using the lift controls
- Remember that the vehicle may has been left in gear when you re–start the engine.



Section 10

Taking a minibus abroad

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Taking a minibus abroad

When driving a minibus in Europe, consider obtaining an International Driving Permit (IDP), verifying passport validity, having appropriate insurance, and checking for tachograph requirements. Also, familiarise yourself with country-specific regulations, particularly those related to driving hours and vehicle weight limits.

Detailed Considerations:

Driving Licence and IDP:

While a full UK driving licence may be sufficient for some countries, an IDP is often required for non-EU countries. Check specific requirements for each country you plan to visit.

Passport Validity:

Ensure passports are valid for at least 6 months after your return date, as some countries require this.

Insurance:

Ensure you carry your QBE certificate with you.

Tachograph:

Minibuses carrying passengers may need to be fitted with a tachograph. Check if you need an analogue or digital tachograph and if you need a Driver Card or paper discs.

Driving Hours:

Be aware of national and European driving hours regulations. GOV.UK provides guidance on drivers' hours rules for minibuses.

Weight Limits:

Minibus weight limits vary by country. Some countries may have specific regulations for minibuses exceeding 3.5 tonnes.

Vehicle Requirements:

In some countries, vehicles may need to be fitted with speed limiters.

Documentation:

Ensure you have all necessary documentation, including the vehicle registration document, a letter of authority to drive, and any other documents required by the specific country.

Seatbelts:

Minibuses should have seatbelts fitted to all seats and passengers should wear them.

Child Seats:

If carrying children, ensure they are in appropriate child seats.

Local Laws:

Familiarise yourself with local laws, including road signs, speed limits, and traffic regulations.

Emergency Contact:

Carry an emergency contact list with your local EU embassy/consulate number.

If travelling abroad (outside the UK) in any minibus you will need to comply with.

European regulations regarding drivers' hours and tachographs. If you are in any doubt as to your responsibilities under these regulations, you must seek proper guidance.

Useful information:

www.gov.uk/tachographs/overview

Or you can contact either the Department for Transport or the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA). Both will provide written guidance or offer personal advice.

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/driver-and-vehicle-standards-agency



Section 11

Winter Driving

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Winter Driving

(For more information, please visit our dedicated website for risk solutions at https://qbeeurope.com/risk-solutions/motor-risk-solutions/)

Driving a minibus in winter conditions requires extra caution and preparation to ensure safety for passengers and other road users. Reduced visibility, icy surfaces, and unpredictable weather patterns are common challenges. Below is a comprehensive guide to navigating winter conditions effectively.

Pre-Journey Preparation

- **Weather Forecast:** Check the latest weather forecast before setting out. Delay travel if conditions are severe, such as heavy snow or black ice warnings
- **Route Planning:** Use main roads where possible, as these are more likely to be salted and cleared of snow. Avoid routes prone to flooding, steep hills, or sharp bends.
- **Emergency Kit:** Carry an emergency kit that includes:
  - Warm blankets and extra clothing
  - Food and water supplies
  - A fully charged mobile phone and portable charger
  - A torch with spare batteries
  - A first-aid kit
  - Warning triangles and high-visibility jackets
  - Sand or grit for traction.

Vehicle Checks

- **Tyres:** Ensure tyres have a tread depth of at least 3mm for optimal grip. Consider winter tyres for improved performance in icy or snowy conditions
- **Fluids:** Top up washer fluid with a winter-grade solution to prevent freezing. Check antifreeze levels in the coolant system
- **Battery:** Cold weather reduces battery efficiency. Ensure the battery is fully charged and in good condition
- **Lights and Wipers:** Test all lights and wipers for functionality. Clear any snow or ice from the windscreen, lights, mirrors, and roof before departure.

Driving Techniques

- **Reduced Speed:** Drive more slowly to account for reduced traction and longer stopping distances. Avoid sudden acceleration or braking
- **Gentle Steering:** Steer smoothly and avoid sharp movements that can cause skidding. Use both hands on the wheel for better control
- **Braking and Accelerating:** Use the brakes gently and progressively. If your vehicle has anti-lock brakes (ABS), press the brake firmly and allow the system to work. Accelerate slowly to prevent wheel spin
- **Extra Distance:** Leave at least double the normal following distance between your vehicle and the one in front. On icy roads, this distance should be increased further
- **Use of Gears:** In slippery conditions, use higher gears to reduce wheel spin and lower gears for engine braking on descents.

Visibility and Awareness

- **Fog and Low Visibility:** Use fog lights where appropriate but switch them off when visibility improves to avoid dazzling other drivers
- **Snow and Ice on the Roof:** Clear the roof of snow and ice to prevent it from sliding onto the windscreen or other road users
- **Blind Spots:** Continuously monitor blind spots using mirrors, especially when merging or changing lanes in poor visibility.

Managing Specific Winter Hazards

- **Black Ice:** Be alert for black ice, which often appears as a slightly glossy patch on the road. Avoid sudden movements and reduce speed when driving over potentially icy areas
- **Snow Drifts:** Drive slowly through snow drifts to avoid losing control. If the vehicle becomes stuck, use sand or grit under the tyres to gain traction
- **Flooding:** Avoid driving through deep water. If unavoidable, drive slowly in first gear to avoid water entering the engine
- **Crosswinds:** High winds can destabilise tall vehicles like minibuses. Reduce speed and grip the wheel firmly, especially on exposed roads or bridges.

Passenger Safety

- **Communication:** Inform passengers of the potential for delays due to weather and emphasise the importance of staying seated with seatbelts fastened
- **Comfort:** Maintain a comfortable temperature in the cabin and ensure proper ventilation to prevent windows from misting up
- **Emergency Protocols:** Brief passengers on emergency exits and procedures in case the vehicle becomes stranded.

Actions in Emergencies

- **Breakdowns:** If the vehicle breaks down, move it off the road where possible and switch on hazard lights Keep passengers warm and safe inside the vehicle until help arrives
- **Stranding:** If stuck in snow, stay with the vehicle unless there is a safe, nearby shelter. Run the engine periodically to keep warm but ensure the exhaust pipe is clear of snow to prevent carbon monoxide buildup
- **Incidents:** Follow local reporting procedures and prioritise passenger safety. Use warning triangles and high-visibility jackets to alert other road users.



Section 12

Incidents (fast reporting)

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Incidents (fast reporting)

Need to claim? Report it early

Finally, a reminder that if you're involved in an incident and need to make an insurance claim, it's important that you report it as soon as possible, ideally the same day. Reporting a claim early can save time and help you to receive any claim payments faster.

Much of what is written below must be quite formal. That is because the requirements are legal duties, and any failure means that you could be committing an offence.

If you are involved in any incident you must stop. If you don't you will commit an offence which can result in a prison sentence.

- Ensure that all the passengers are safe and unhurt. If there are injuries, ensure that the emergency services are aware and attending
- Follow the evacuation procedures outlined earlier to ensure the on–going safety of all passengers including yourself
- Inform your company as soon as possible.

You should supply certain details to any person who has reasonable grounds for requiring them. The details are as below. At no time should you accept blame for the incident. Details to be provided will depend on the circumstances of the incident. You MUST supply these details. If you do not, you will be in contravention of the law.

Damage only incident

- Your name and home address
- The name and address of the vehicle owner
- Registration number of the vehicle.

Personal injury incident

Where there is ANY injury, you should supply:

- Your name and home address
- The name and address of the vehicle owner
- Registration number of the vehicle
- Details of the vehicle insurance.

If you are in any doubt whether any injury exists, you should always assume that it does and provide the details above.

Where the above details cannot be supplied at the time to a person who has reasonable grounds to ask for them, this places a further requirement on to you as the driver.

- You MUST in person report the matter to the police as soon as practicable and in any case within 24 hours. This means that you must at the very earliest time report it to a police officer or to a police station. ANY delay in doing so may render you liable to prosecution
- A police officer may require you to produce driving documents including your licence, a certificate of motor insurance and a valid test certificate for the vehicle (if applicable) immediately or at a police station, which you can decide, within 7 days. You must comply with this and if you fail to do so you may be liable to prosecution. You can liaise with your transport manager regarding these issues if they apply as you may require some guidance.

It is only in the most extreme circumstances that you should believe that you may not have to comply with the above process and that should be as a result of legal advice.

Fire

If you suspect that there is a risk, even if a small one, that a fire could start you must immediately evacuate the vehicle in accordance with your safety procedures. You must give clear instructions and do everything to ensure the safety of both you and the passengers.

You should not attempt to tackle any fire unless it is completely safe to do so, and it is a very small localised one where there is no risk of fuel igniting. Prioritise your safety, as well as that of passengers and other road users. Vehicles are very unpredictable when alight and present a very serious danger to everyone in the vicinity.

Follow the evacuation procedure and ensure all occupants are in a safe place. You should consider such issues as being up–wind. Vehicle smoke can be toxic because of the materials that can burn. The smoke from a burning vehicle is also very dense and can obscure persons from other road users so a position that was originally safe may create a new risk. Always be aware where you and the passengers are. Continually re–assess the situation. Remain calm and wherever possible in contact with the emergency services. Ensure that you call the emergency services at the earliest opportunity.

How to make a claim

We pride ourselves on placing the effective management and handling of claims at the heart of our business. Our claims teams have the skills and expertise to ensure that all claims are processed effectively and in a timely manner.

Full claim notification procedures are contained within this policy wording. For ease of reference our dedicated claims team contact details are set out below:

Tel: +44 (0)800 389 1708

Our claims line is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Email: newclaim.motor@uk.qbe.com

You must report all accidents involving an insured vehicle to us as quickly as possible, regardless of blame.

Section 13

In the event of an incident

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In the event of an incident

Breakdowns

If you break down, follow the breakdown procedure and inform the appropriate people.

- Your primary concern is the comfort and safety of your clients and the quick and efficient continuation of their journey
- Follow your breakdown procedure. Ensure your passengers are in a safe position if it is necessary to evacuate the vehicle i.e. if broken down on a motorway hard shoulder. And communicate with your contact point(s), giving your exact location, passenger numbers and a contact number together with a concise report as to the possible cause of failure. Keep your passengers informed about what is being done to resolve the problem.

It is important to remember that your safety is as important as others so you must not put yourself at risk. Where there is a breakdown or incident, give clear guidance and support passengers who may be shocked and disorientated.

Emergency exits and evacuation

As the driver, you are responsible for ensuring that any evacuation of the minibus due to breakdown or collision is executed quickly and safely. You should ensure that you are able to assist and direct the evacuation. Where possible, high visibility clothing should be worn to protect you and draw attention to other passengers' movements. Remember your safety is important too.

Passengers should be reminded not to use doors that put them closer to moving traffic.

Items placed on the floors should be moved to under seats to ensure that exit routes remain clear and trip free. Passengers should generally exit in accordance with seating positions closest to the exit, leaving the minibus quickly but not in a hurried fashion. If they can remove belongings without delay, then that should be a decision you should take considering the urgency of the evacuation. In bad weather passengers should take clothing to ensure that they remain warm. Remember shock can be made worse by cold and damp.

Emergency exits should be used unless they expose passengers to additional risks. Remember to warn passengers that exit doors will generally have a drop to the road or kerb. Ensure that you check and warn passengers as to the nature of the ground they are exiting onto particularly if uneven or not stable.

Passengers with disability or mobility restrictions should be assisted by those most able to support them without causing holdups. Where necessary, give clear concise guidance indicating which person should be moving and when. Ensure that persons exiting the vehicle move to a safe location away from flowing traffic. Passengers should not be allowed to wander.

Younger passengers may not be aware of obvious risks. Warn them. Do not take for granted their knowledge of hazards.

When stopping on fast roads such as dual carriageways and motorways ensure that you use the hazard warning lights and that passengers are evacuated in accordance with safety guidelines. They should be taken to a safe location preferably with the protection of a barrier away from the carriageways. Be careful as the ground could be uneven and remember that passengers with special needs will require extra care and support.

Calling the emergency services

Give the emergency services the relevant information:

- Vehicle location – on motorways look out for identification posts – try https://what3words.com/
- Number and status of passengers involved
- Details of any injuries
- Special needs, e.g. disabled or blind persons, or children
- What actions you have already taken
- Listen to the advice given by emergency or breakdown services
- Ensure that you provide them with company contact details so that the company can be updated
- Finally, ensure that you provide a contact number in case you lose contact, and they can call you back.



Section 14

At the end of the journey

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At the end of the journey

Safety is still paramount, and all passengers should be supervised when leaving the vehicle. Where the passengers are children, you must ensure that a person is present to ensure their safety. Ensure that persons who require additional support are assisted.

Never allow passengers to leave until the vehicle is at a complete standstill, in neutral and safely parked by an adjacent pavement or other traffic–free area, with the hand brake engaged. Always park so that passengers step onto the footway and not onto the road.

Do not leave children alone if no–one has arrived to collect them. Ensure you know what to do if a child is not collected.

Report any problems or incidents that occurred during the trip to your line manager.

Supervise the passengers when boarding or leaving the vehicle, taking particular care if they are leaving by the rear exit. If driving abroad in a country that drives on the right, be aware that some doors may open onto the roadside.

Take time to thank passengers. Remember that repeat business is essential to the success of any business and that you represent your company.

Check the proper functioning of specialist equipment such as tail lifts and ensure that you are competent to operate them. Comply with instructions for use and always ensure the safety of the customer.

Ensure before driving off that it is safe to do so and that all doors are secured and that there are no obstructions or hazards. Ensure that all passengers are accounted for and that all personal items are stowed securely and safely keeping exits and walkways free from obstruction.



Section 15

Advice for electric minibus users

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Advice for Electric minibus users

Introduction

Welcome to the Electric Minibus Driver and Operator Handbook. This guide provides essential information for the safe and efficient operation of electric minibuses. It mirrors the considerations for internal combustion engine (ICE) minibuses while addressing the unique aspects of electric vehicles (EVs). Topics include licensing, vehicle standards, safety, environmental benefits, and operational practices.

(For more information, please visit our dedicated website for risk solutions at https://qbeeurope.com/risk-solutions/motor-risk-solutions/)

Licensing Requirements

Driver Licensing

Category B License:

- Drivers may operate electric minibuses up to 4.25 tonnes (instead of 3.5 tonnes for ICE vehicles) under a Category B license if:
  - The vehicle is used for non-commercial purposes by a non-profit organisation
- Medical fitness standards must be met.

Category D1 License:

- Required for electric minibuses with 9-16 passenger seats operated commercially or for hire/reward
- Drivers must hold a Driver CPC (Certificate of Professional Competence) and meet DVLA medical standards.

Additional Notes:

- Ensure familiarity with the operation and charging of electric minibuses during training.

Operator Licensing

Public Service Vehicle (PSV) License:

- A PSV license is mandatory for hire/reward operations
- Operators must demonstrate financial standing, good repute, and professional competence
- Include considerations for EV-specific maintenance in compliance.

Section 19 and Section 22 Permits:

- These permits remain applicable for electric minibuses, subject to the same operational rules as ICE vehicles
- Ensure drivers and operators are trained on EV-specific issues, such as charging and range management.

Vehicle Standards and Maintenance

Daily Checks

- In addition to standard checks for lights, tyres, and safety equipment, verify:
  - Battery charge level and charging connectors
  - EV-specific indicators on the dashboard (e.g., regenerative braking systems).

Regular Maintenance

- Schedule servicing with EV-certified technicians
- Monitor the battery health and update software regularly
- Maintain detailed records of charging cycles and range performance
- Conduct MOT tests and ensure compliance with EV standards.

Health and Safety

Risk Assessments

- Include EV-specific risks, such as:
  - Access to charging stations en route
  - Potential range limitations and mitigation plans
  - Emergency procedures for battery-related incidents.

Emergency Procedures

- Ensure fire extinguishers are compatible with lithium-ion batteries.

Charging and Range Management

Charging Infrastructure

- Familiarise drivers with public and private charging networks
- Plan routes to include charging stops as necessary
- Ensure vehicles are equipped with charging adapters compatible with the destination's infrastructure.

Efficient Range Use

- Educate drivers on maximising range through eco-driving practices:
  - Smooth acceleration and regenerative braking
  - Minimising use of air conditioning and heating.

Environmental Benefits

Reduced Emissions

- Highlight the lower carbon footprint compared to ICE vehicles
- Promote the use of renewable energy for charging to enhance sustainability.

Noise Pollution

- Emphasise the quieter operation of electric minibuses and its benefits in urban and rural settings.

Taking an Electric Minibus Abroad

Additional Considerations

- Check for compatibility of charging standards in the destination country
- Carry international breakdown cover and a Type 2 to Type 1 adapter if necessary
- Research charging station availability and map routes accordingly.

Documentation

- Ensure the Green Card for insurance includes EV-specific coverage
- Confirm any local regulations for EVs in low-emission or restricted zones.

Resources and Contact Information

- **Government EV Guidance:** Electric Vehicle Support
- **DVSA:** Electric Minibus Compliance
- **Charging Networks:**
  - Zap-Map
  - Pod Point
  - ChargePlace Scotland.

Conclusion

Electric minibuses offer a sustainable and efficient alternative to ICE vehicles. By adhering to the guidance provided in this handbook, operators and drivers can ensure compliance, maximise safety, and contribute to environmental conservation.



Section 16

Driving Electric Minibuses during winter

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Driving Electric Minibuses during winter

Cold-weather effects on Electric Minibus range and batteries:

Electric drivetrains suffer reduced range and efficiency in frost. Lithium-ion batteries slow down below about 10 °C, losing roughly 10–30% of usable capacity in very cold conditions. (For example, What Car? real-world tests show a 15–20% drop in range in sub-10°C weather.) On top of battery chemistry limits, using heaters, heated seats, lights and wipers draws extra power. Electric Minibus battery management systems often reserve ~15–20% of charge for thermal management in freezing weather. In practice, you should expect noticeably shorter distances between charges and plan accordingly. Pre-warming the cabin and battery while plugged in can significantly offset this winter range loss.

Battery chemistry slows: In extreme cold an Electric Minibus may limit charging or acceleration to protect the battery.

- **Range loss:** Expect ~10–20% less range when it's very cold. Real-world tests show winter range well below WLTP figures
- **Heater impact:** Cabin heaters in Electric Minibuses consume substantial energy (far more than in ICE cars), so using full heat quickly eats at your range. Heated seats and steering wheels use far less power and help keep occupants warm without draining as much charge. In order to be more efficient, avoid overheating an empty cabin. Preconditioning, charging and range management:

Taking advantage of Electric Minibus-specific features can preserve winter range. Always **precondition** your minibus while still plugged in. Use the vehicle's app or timer to warm the battery and cabin before departure; this way the energy comes from mains power, not the battery, and you start the trip at peak efficiency. Park in a garage or sheltered spot whenever possible to keep the battery warm. For example, even parking in sunlight or close to a wall can make a small difference to a cold battery.

- **Charge strategically:** Keep the battery topped up in winter. Frequent charging (such as overnight at home or during breaks) keeps the battery temperature higher and avoids very low charge states. Most manufacturers recommend staying between roughly 20% and 80% state of charge to protect battery health. In freezing weather the BMS may automatically withhold some charge for heating purposes, so starting the day with a high preconditioned charge ensures maximum range
- **Use slower or scheduled charging:** In cold weather the battery accepts charge more slowly. Allow extra time for charging stops – an ultra-rapid charge can take longer than usual to deliver the same range when temperatures are low. If possible, charge the vehicle during milder periods (e.g. daytime) or in a warm garage
- **Maximise efficiency**: Use any "eco" or "winter" driving mode available. These modes limit peak power and moderate throttle response, reducing energy use. Driving slightly slower on motorways (for example 65 mph instead of 70 mph) will also improve range and is safer on icy roads.

Driving techniques on snow and ice: Electric minibuses can perform well in slippery conditions if handled carefully. Most Electric Minibuses have instant torque, so be gentle on the accelerator. Select a reduced-power driving mode if available: this softens throttle response and prevents wheel-spin. Take extra care with regenerative braking. On ice or packed snow, strong regen can cause the wheels to lock briefly and lead to a skid. In very slippery conditions it's safer to rely more on the foot brake. Most Electric Minibuses let you adjust regen strength; use a lower regen setting or "coast" mode in icy conditions.

Maintain momentum: Avoid abrupt accelerations or decelerations. As with any vehicle in winter, drive smoothly. Electric Minibus drivers should especially note that lifting off the throttle can generate strong regen-braking; if you feel the rear wheels grab unexpectedly, ease off to reduce regen.

Traction control and drive modes: All-wheel-drive Electric Minibuses (or twin-motor minibuses) inherently offer better traction but still use standard winter driving methods (gentle throttle, no sudden steering inputs). Use traction control or a dedicated snow mode if the vehicle has one.

- **Tyre choice and pressure:** Electric minibuses often carry more weight, improving grip, but this also means tyres are more critical. Check tyre pressures regularly (cold air reduces pressure) and consider winter tyres. Studies show winter tyres can noticeably improve grip and range in snow. Proper tread depth and good quality tyres are essential – poor tyres will reduce any Electric Minibuses handling in ice.

Safety considerations for Electric Minibus drivetrains in winter: Electric Minibuses are designed to be as safe as conventional vehicles in cold or icy conditions. Their high-voltage systems are waterproof and well insulated, so normal winter weather (rain, snow or puddles) poses no special shock hazard. Nonetheless, observe these Electric Minibus-specific tips:

- **Battery freeze protection:** Modern Electric Minibuses have thermal management; the car will automatically warm the battery if too cold and may even shut down charging to protect it. In extremely low temperatures an Electric Minibus can disable certain functions or limit performance to conserve heat
- **No exhaust fumes:** One advantage of Electric Minibuses is that they have no tailpipe emissions. This means you can use cabin heating or defrosters as much as needed for comfort and visibility without risk of carbon-monoxide poisoning (unlike idling an ICE engine). However, remember it will still drain battery power
- **High-voltage safety:** The high-voltage battery and cables are isolated from the chassis. In the event of an incident, Electric Minibuses are designed to automatically disconnect the battery. For drivers, standard safety drills (cutting off 12V/16V to disable airbags) remain unchanged. Emergency crews can isolate the system via the 12V/16V disconnect if needed (check your vehicle's emergency shutdown procedure)
- **Traction aids:** Some Electric Minibuses have "torque vectoring" or brake-based stability systems that function differently from ICE drivetrains. For example, an Electric Minibus may use one motor to brake a specific wheel. Never attempt to disable these systems unless absolutely necessary; they are tuned for stability in low-grip conditions.

Emergency preparedness (Electric Minibus-specific): When planning for winter emergencies, include Electric Minibus considerations in your kit and procedure:

- **Keep battery charge in reserve:** If you think you might be stranded, don't let the battery run too low. A near-empty battery in deep cold may not restart the minibus or may delay charging until warmed. Aim to remain above ~20% if possible, so the car can still run climate controls or seat heaters for an extended period
- **Warmth without waste:** Have blankets, insulated boots and hats on hand. If stranded, run the heater intermittently rather than continuously if the battery is low. Using heated seats is far more efficient than cabin heat, so use those first. In many Electric Minibuses the 12V/16V system and accessories draw very little energy when parked, but the main heater (if on) will rapidly deplete the high-voltage battery. Turn off non-essential systems
- **Charging backup:** Carry an Electric Minibus charging cable even on short trips – on rural roads you may come across a 3-pin socket or slow charger by chance. Even a trickle charge can add range overnight. Also have a plan for locating charging points (download an Electric Minibus charging app before winter)

- **Communication and routing:** Plan routes with charging stops at reasonable intervals (allow extra time for slower winter charging). Keep a phone charger and contact details for roadside Electric Minibus assistance
- **Standard winter kit:** In addition to the above, stock a conventional winter safety kit: shovel, de-icer, torch, high-energy snacks, and a first-aid kit. Many breakdown services now carry Electric Minibus chargers or adapters.

Maintenance and daily checks (Electric Minibus/hybrid):

In winter, treat Electric Minibus-specific systems along with usual minibus checks:

- **Tyres:** Check pressure and tread daily. Low pressure from cold can reduce range and grip. Consider fitting dedicated winter tyres if you drive regularly on snow/ice – these can improve both traction and range by lowering rolling resistance
- **Brakes:** Because regenerative braking is less effective in cold/slush, your mechanical brakes may be used more. Inspect pads and discs frequently during winter for wear or corrosion
- **12V/16V battery:** Electric Minibuses still have a 12V/16V system that powers computers and accessories. Cold weather is hard on 12V/16V batteries; ensure its charged and healthy, or the car may refuse to power on
- **Cooling and heaters:** Some Electric Minibuses (and hybrids) have a liquid cooling loop for the battery. Check coolant levels if serviceable. Ensure heater/defroster works well (for battery thermal management and windshield clarity)
- **Charging equipment:** Keep charging plugs and sockets clean and dry. Remove frost from the connector before plugging in. Inspect cables for damage
- **Software updates:** Manufacturers often release firmware updates that improve winter efficiency (better thermal management, etc.). Keep your vehicle's software up to date (often done over Wi-Fi or at service)
- **Engine checks (PHEVs):** For plug-in hybrids, also maintain the petrol/diesel side like a normal vehicle: check oil, coolant and antifreeze levels, since the engine may kick in to generate heat or range-extending power.

Key Takeaways for Drivers:

- Anticipate reduced range in cold and use planning tools to find charging stops
- Always warm up the vehicle on charge before driving
- Drive smoothly: ease on accelerator and brakes to cope with low traction and regen differences
- Fit winter tyres and check them daily
- Keep batteries (both high-voltage and 12V/16V) in good shape: don't let the charge fall too low overnight
- Carry a winter safety kit plus Electric Minibus essentials (charging cable, adapter).

With these Electric Minibus-specific precautions, minibus drivers – whether new to electric vehicles or experienced – can operate safely and reliably through the UK's winter conditions.

Section 17

Mental health in the workplace

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Mental Health in the Workplace

Minds in business

https://qbeeurope.com/risk-solutions/qrisk/minds-in-business/

Mental health support for minibus drivers in the UK is crucial due to the demanding nature of their jobs, which can lead to stress, long hours, and feelings of isolation. It's essential for employers to create a supportive environment, provide resources, and encourage open communication about mental health. Additionally, drivers should be aware of their legal obligations regarding mental health conditions and their impact on driving.

Here is a more detailed look at the issue:

Challenges faced by minibus drivers:

Stress and long hours: The job can be stressful, involving long hours on the road, dealing with traffic, and managing passenger demands.

Feeling isolated: Drivers may spend a significant amount of time alone on the road, contributing to feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Threat of physical assault: Bus drivers, including minibus drivers, can face the threat of physical assault, which can have a significant impact on mental health.

Lack of support: Some drivers report feeling a lack of support from their employers or work colleagues.

What employers can do to support driver mental health:

Create a supportive environment: Encourage open communication about mental health and make it clear that it's okay to ask for help.

Provide resources: Offer access to employee assistance programs, mental health charities, and other relevant resources.

Conduct risk assessments: Employers have a legal duty to assess work-related stress and act on any identified risks.

Implement regular check-ins: Have regular, open conversations with drivers to discuss their well-being and identify any concerns.

Consider telematics data: Where possible, use telematics data to identify potential signs of stress, such as changes in driving behaviour.

Review driving schedules: Ensure drivers have adequate rest periods and are not driving for excessive lengths of time without breaks.

What drivers can do to support their own mental health:

Seek help when needed: Don't hesitate to reach out to a doctor, therapist, or support group if you are struggling with your mental health.

Engage in physical activity: Regular exercise can have a positive impact on both physical and mental health.

Connect with others: Try to socialise with friends, family, or colleagues.

Take breaks: Ensure you have sufficient breaks during your workday to recharge and relax.

Prioritise sleep: Get enough sleep to support your overall well-being.

Legal obligations and driving:

Inform the DVLA: If you have a mental health condition that may affect your ability to drive safely, you must inform the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA).

DVLA assessment: The DVLA will assess your ability to drive and may require you to have a medical examination or driving assessment.

Potential for restrictions: Depending on your condition, the DVLA may restrict your driving license or revoke it if your mental health condition poses a safety risk.

By taking proactive steps to address the mental health of minibus drivers, employers and individuals can help ensure the well-being of drivers and the safety of the public.

Rightsteps

Developed by a team of clinical experts, their online self-service hub is expertly designed to empower your employees to look after their mental health with 24/7 access to suite of user-friendly tools, resources and advice.

https://www.rightsteps.co.uk/v25/partners/qbe

Discover their fantastic range of free resources.

Designed by qualified therapists, Rightsteps solutions are evidence-based and available in multiple formats.



Section 18

Useful information

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Useful information

The Community Transport Association produce a range of minibus advice.

Community Transport Association
91 Princess Street
Manchester
M1 4HT
Tel: 0161 351 1475
https://ctauk.org/

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents

Produce a range of safety publications, such as 'The Safety of School Transport' and a 'Code of Practice'. ROSPA also run training courses for drivers.

ROSPA House
28 Calthorpe Road
Edgbaston
Birmingham
B1 5RP
Tel: 0121 248 2000
www.rospa.com

Traffic Commissioners for Great Britain

All Traffic Commissioners now operate from a central location.

The Office of The Traffic Commissioner
Quarry House
Quarry Hill
Leeds
LS2 7UE
Tel: 0300 123 9000

The Driver Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA)

Has information concerning the theory and practical tests for the Category D1 entitlement.

https://www.gov.uk/contact-dvsa

Section 19

Declaration by employee

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Declaration by employee

(Insert your business name) .....

expects each employee to follow the requirements of this policy, relevant legislation and the Highway Code. These requirements apply irrespective of who supplied the vehicle that you drive on business.

I have read the **(Insert your business name)** .....

Minibus Driver and Operator Handbook and understand the contents and agree to abide by its terms and conditions.

Failure to abide by the above terms could result in disciplinary action or dismissal under the terms of the **(Insert your business name)** ..... employment manual.

Employee's name: **(Insert employee's name)** .....

Signed: ..... **Date:** **dd/mm/yyyy** .....

We kindly ask that you retain this document for your own records. There is no requirement to return this document to QBE.

QBE European Operations
30 Fenchurch Street
London EC3M 3BD
+44 (0) 20 7105 4000

QBEeurope.com

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