

December 2005

Welcome to the latest edition of *Update*. It has been some time since our last edition and amazingly we are now almost on the brink of Christmas. This has been a difficult year for DVTA, trying as we have to recover from the long driver and vehicle waiting times which resulted from last year's industrial action. This edition provides you with an update on this and a number of other issues. There seems to be a growing problem with overuse of driving test routes for carrying out driving lessons and we have provided information about particular 'trouble spots'. We have also included updates on our staffing situation, telephone and internet booking and the reminder service for MOTs as well as the current position regarding the HPT test for instructors. I hope that you find the contents of this edition of *Update* both interesting and informative.

#### **DRIVER TEST WAITING TIMES**

The number of customers waiting for driving test continues to be exceptionally high at around 11,000. We would normally expect between 3,000 and 4,000 applications to be in the system at any one time. Since April 2005 there has been a 25.57% increase in the demand for tests compared to the same period last year. Between 1 April and 29 October 2005, some 34,632 driving tests have been conducted. This represents an increase of 16.25% (4,842) on the same period in 2003/04. Unfortunately the additional resource which has been deployed on driving tests has been almost entirely used up coping with this additional demand rather than addressing the backlog as expected.

I am pleased to advise that six new Driving Examiners began training during November. Those examiners who pass the course are likely to begin examining in the New Year. A further number of Driving Examiners are also due to be appointed.

A Driving Examiner from DSA has been and will continue to conduct driving tests on our behalf at Enniskillen and Omagh. In addition, a number of existing staff have been re-trained and are now carrying out driving tests. We are hopeful that these measures will lead to a substantial reduction in the backlog and in waiting times in the next few months.

#### **NEW FORM FORMS FOR ADI PART 2 TEST REPORTS ADI PART 3 PST TEST REPORTS**

The Agency has revised the test report forms used for **Part 2** of the ADI qualifying examination. The changes bring the report closer to that used in the rest of the UK. Guidance notes will be issued along with the report for the first time. Serious and

Dangerous faults will be recorded using oblique lines instead of an X or D mark. There is no change in the level of assessment examiners will use. We have included off road (bay) reverse parking on the report, as this may be introduced to the test at a later stage.

We have also revised the test report forms used for the **Part 3** test. Again, the changes bring the report closer to that used in the rest of the UK. The main change is that the assessment boxes in column B are now under the heading of Core Competencies and have been separated to clearly distinguish satisfactory and unsatisfactory markings. There is no change in the level of assessment examiners will use. PST number 7, which has been subject to review for a period of time, will also be re-introduced at this point.

We intend to start using the new forms on 3 January 2006. If you require copies of the new forms for training purposes please contact Angie McClenaghan on 028 9054 7933.

## **USE OF TEST ROUTES FOR PRACTICE**

In addition to an increasing number of complaints from residents, examiners in several centres have advised us about the overuse of some driving test routes for practice. Examiners are increasingly finding locations for test maneuvers blocked by driving school cars practicing and on some occasions examiners have had to move on, only to find their alternative location also blocked. You will appreciate how disruptive this could be to examiners working to a tight deadline and the detrimental effect it could have on driving test candidates.

Examiners have also stated that some ADI's have followed them around a test route, possibly in order to learn the route. This could have the effect of shielding the test candidate from the normal interaction with other road users, thereby adversely affecting the quality of test being delivered. We request those involved to desist from this practice.

As stated, increasingly, residents are making complaints to us about school cars "swamping" particular areas. If the situation continues, some test routes may become untenable, and there are a finite number of routes available. You should be aware that some residents have suggested that they may take legal action on the grounds of nuisance being caused. We aim to work in partnership with you regarding the use of test routes and our advice is still the same - please stay off the test routes until the latter stages of training. Listed below are a number of particular areas of concern.

### **Ballymena**

Residents in *Moat Road* have complained about ADI's using this area to teach manoeuvres such as the turn in the road and reverse parking. They claim that the area is inundated with driving school cars at various times of the day during the week and at weekends.

Residents say they are unable to obtain a parking space and allegedly a number of vehicles belonging to residents have been damaged.

One of the residents is ill at the present time and the situation is causing them additional stress and worry. The Agency designs its test routes to minimise inconvenience to residents as far as possible and the situation we have described is one of the reasons why we expect ADI's to stay off the approved test routes until the latter stages of training. It is fair to say that we all have a responsibility to try and resolve such problems and we would ask you to respond positively to the concerns raised by the residents.

Also in Ballymena, residents in *Rowallane Drive* are finding the use of their road for driving practice unacceptable and a signed petition has been completed by the residents of this street who have described the use of their road as a nuisance and a danger to residents.

Residents at *Hollybank Park* have also complained of saturation usage by driving instructors.

### **Cookstown**

We have received a complaint from residents in *Fortview Terrace* about ADI's using this area to teach maneuvers such as reverse parking. According to the residents, the volume of school cars at various times is causing difficulty for elderly and disabled residents to obtain a parking space close to their dwelling and allegedly a number of vehicles belonging to residents have been damaged.

Again, in this situation we would ask you to respond positively to the concerns raised by the residents.

### **PUBLICATION OF TEST ROUTES**

The Agency has plans to publish its test routes on the internet. Route details are currently being verified prior to publication. This step has been taken as a consequent of the recently introduced Freedom of Information (FOI) legislation.

This should assist ADIs to familiarise themselves with the routes but we would hope that it would not exasperate the difficulties outlined in the previous section.

### **USE OF MINI CONVERTIBLE FOR DRIVING TESTS**

You may be aware from recent publicity of concerns about the suitability of vehicles with restricted all-round vision for use on practical driving tests. The Agency's policy is not to conduct driving tests in vehicles where the examiner's view is severely restricted and the existence of blind spots, which seriously affect an examiner's all-round vision, would render a vehicle unsuitable for test.

Some driving tests have been conducted in the Mini convertible and concerns about examiners' safety have been raised.

Whilst these vehicles are safe from a driver's point of view, the examiners do not have an acceptable degree of all-round vision. It is therefore not possible to adequately assess a candidate's response to other road users, which may not be visible

to them. Motorcyclists, cyclists or pedestrians in particular could be completely hidden from the view of an examiner in the front seat. In addition, the restricted view to the rear in this vehicle renders the emergency stop exercise difficult if not potentially dangerous to carry out and an examiner may not be able to take avoiding action, if necessary, in such a vehicle.

As a result, the Mini convertible is no longer considered suitable for use on driving tests in Northern Ireland. This decision is taken on the basis of a duty of care to examiners.

### **ANTICIPATED ROADWORKS AT WESTLINK**

Major roadworks are anticipated to begin early in the New Year on the Westlink in Belfast. This work has the potential to cause some disruption to driving tests out of Balmoral Road. A number of measures are being considered to mitigate against the effects of any potential disruption and information will be issued to candidates and instructors closer to the time.

### **AVAILABILITY OF ADI DETAILS WHEN BOOKING**

Our booking service offers the ability to record an ADI against an appointment date and highlight where there may be a possible clash with other appointments for the same ADI. In a lot of cases customers either do not know or do not offer their ADI details. We are also aware that on some occasions our staff may not ask for the information. If you want to ensure that your ADI details are recorded please ensure that your candidates know and provide your ADI number when requested. Call centre staff have also been reminded to ask for this information when they take bookings.

The telephone booking service continues to operate on the extended hours (see below). Initially demand was low, but recently it has increased and there is now a steady demand during the evening and on Saturday mornings.

<b>Telephone Booking</b>	<b>0845 247 2472</b>
<b>Hours of Service</b>	<b>8.00 am - 7.00pm (Mon - Fri)</b> <b>9.00 am - 1.00pm (Sat)</b>

Postal and counter booking options will continue to be offered as at present.

### **DISCLOSURE OF DETAILS TO THIRD PARTIES**

As you know the Agency provides learner drivers with contact details for ADIs (excluding addresses) in their area. We are regularly asked by ADI Associations, or commercial or marketing interests for lists of ADIs, but the last time we asked you, very few of you gave us permission to issue your details for this purpose. We have again attached a form, which we would like you to complete advising if you would like your details to be issued for specific purposes. Ideally, we would like to list as many ADIs as possible on our website as we believe that new learners will increasingly use the website to find instructors. Others may use the information to forward information, which may be of interest to you.

## **REMINDER SERVICE FOR MOTs**

On 9 March we launched a reminder service for MOTs. Customers now receive a letter notifying them that their current certificate is about to expire. The letter issues 5 weeks before the due date, but only if an application has not already been made. More recently reminders have also been introduced in respect of vehicles requiring their MOT test for the first time.

## **ILLEGAL INSTRUCTION**

The Agency has reviewed its contacts with PSNI in relation to reporting cases of suspected illegal instruction. We now have an up to date list of officers in all areas throughout Northern Ireland to whom we can report any cases of suspected illegal instruction. We are hopeful that this will facilitate early action in investigating suspects, following the Agency's own investigations into such cases. All allegations of illegal instruction are followed up by the Agency and it is our practice to inform any suspects that we have received reports about their activities.

## **DRINK AND DRUGS**

We have had enquiries from instructors about the apparent increase in learner drivers presenting for driving lessons apparently under the influence of drugs or alcohol. In particular, instructors are concerned about their own legal position in the event of an accident occurring or if stopped by PSNI, where the learner is found to have excessive amounts of alcohol or drugs in their system. PSNI has advised that while there is no specific offence the instructor, depending upon the circumstances could be guilty of aiding and abetting. They further advise that if an instructor has any suspicion of someone being under the influence they would recommend refusing the lesson.

You may find it useful the advice we give to Driving Examiners who have good reason to suspect that a candidate may not be fit to do the test. Should it become apparent either before or during the test, that the candidate's condition is such that it is likely to affect the control of the vehicle, examiners are advised to inform the candidate that they appear to be ill and that, in fairness to them, the examiner feels unable to take or continue the test. The examiner is advised to use considerable tact in announcing this decision and to avoid making any reference to alcohol or drugs. Instructors may also wish to check the position with their insurance companies.

## **GREATER BELFAST DRIVING INSTRUCTORS ASSOCIATION**

The above association met with the Agency about a number of issues effecting instructors in the Belfast area including pass rates, driving test routes, the de-brief and check tests. Points of clarification were sought and will be provided to the Association. The Agency welcomes positive engagement with all ADI associations.

## **HPT FOR QUALIFIED INSTRUCTORS**

The Agency will shortly be writing to all ADIs who did not undertake the Hazard Perception Test when they were qualifying. We aim to make the test available in the near future and details will be issued as to how individual instructors can apply.

## **DRIVING STANDARDS AGENCY (DSA) RESEARCH**

Instructors may be interested in a number of research reports which have recently been completed by DSA. The reports now published are

- Professional Driving Instructor Competency Framework, Parts 1 and 2, by Red Scientific Limited
- Developing a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Programme for the Driving Instruction Industry, by 5S Consulting Limited.
- DSA Continuing Professional Development for (CPD) for ADIs Feasibility Study, by Dr Elaine Freedman, Researchers for Education.

These reports can be found at [www.dsa.gov.uk](http://www.dsa.gov.uk). Follow the links to Instructors/CPD/Instructor standards.

## **PROPOSAL FOR A DRAFT ROAD TRAFFIC (NORTHERN IRELAND) ORDER 2006**

The Department of the Environment issued a consultation paper on 6 October 2005 on a Proposal for a draft Road Traffic Order (Northern Ireland) 2006. The draft Order is wide ranging and includes provisions which were committed and agreed to within the ADI Review. Anyone wishing to obtain a copy can do so by contacting:

John Brogan	Tel: 028 90540076
Road Transport Legislation Branch	Fax: 028 90540020
Department of the Environment	E-Mail: <a href="mailto:john.brogan@doeni.gov.uk">john.brogan@doeni.gov.uk</a>
Clarence Court	Textphone on 028 9054 0642
10-18 Adelaide Street	
BELFAST BT2 8GB	

The Order and Explanatory Memorandum are also available on the Department's website: <http://www.doeni.gov.uk/roadsafety> or <http://www.consultationni.gov.uk/>. The paper has been issued to ADI associations and other interested groups. The closing date for comments to the above address is 12 January 2006.

## **HIGH RISK OFFENDERS**

DVLNI has asked us to bring the above scheme to your attention. We know that ADIs are a very law abiding group especially when it comes to personal driving behaviour but the information may be of use to some of your learners.

The High Risk Offenders scheme was introduced in Northern Ireland on 3 May 2005. As a result of this new scheme, the offences/disqualifications outlined below are ones that the law recognises as being an indication that such drivers may misuse alcohol in a way that could make them unfit to hold a driving licence. Drivers disqualified under any of the following criteria will therefore be categorized as HROs:

- Failing to provide a specimen for analysis (on or after 3 May 05)
- Having an alcohol level exceeding 2.5 times the legal limit in their body (on or after 3<sup>rd</sup> May 05):
  - Breath HRO Limit is **87.5** (ie 2.5 x 35) microgrammes per 100mls of breath
  - Blood HRO Limit is **200** (ie 2.5 x 80) milligrammes per 100mls of blood
  - Urine HRO Limit is **267.5** (ie 2.5 x 107) milligrammes per 100mls of urine
- 2 specified alcohol-related disqualifications within 10 years, at least one of which must be on or after 3 May 05 (the latest disqualification will trigger the HRO categorization).

### ***HRO Fees***

- The current fees for an application for a provisional licence, following disqualification, for a driver who is categorized as a HRO are, in total, £160.50 (ie, £75 for the driving licence plus £85.50 to cover the medical fee). The fees (which are subject to change) should accompany the application for the licence. An applicant for a licence who fails to pay these fees or to attend the medical examination will have the application refused and any entitlement to drive will no longer apply.
- A HRO who has been disqualified by a court for a fixed period of less than 56 days will normally receive his/her driving licence back (provided it hasn't expired) but will still be subject to the HRO medical examination and the current fee of £85.50 to cover the cost of it. Failure to pay the fee or to attend the medical examination will result in his/her licence being revoked and any entitlement to drive will no longer apply.

### **CHRISTMAS CLOSURES AT TEST CENTRES**

Agency test centres will be closed this year for Christmas and the New Year on the following dates:

**26, 27 & 28 December 2005 and 2 January 2006**

Finally, all of us in the Agency wish you a very Merry Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year. Any comments on the contents of this *Update* are very welcome.



**R J CROSBY**  
Registrar

**DATA PROTECTION ACT 1998**

I would like DVTA to disclose my contact details (\*Name/ Address/ Telephone No./ Email/ Web-site) for the following purposes

*\*(Please delete as appropriate)*

Please tick as appropriate:

	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>Learner Drivers</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>ADI Associations</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
-------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

<b>Commercial Organisations</b> (Eg Car hire, insurance)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
---	--------------------------	--------------------------

**Signed** .....

**ADI number:** .....

**Date:** .....