



TAXI ENFORCEMENT TEAM

The Driver & Vehicle Testing Agency assumed responsibility for carrying out taxi enforcement in Northern Ireland as a result of a restructuring of the core Department in October 2000. In April 2003, additional resourcing was secured through an increase in the PSV licensing fee, which resulted in the Agency establishing a dedicated Taxi Enforcement Team. The primary objective set for the team was to effectively reduce the number of illegal taxis operating on the province's roads through working in partnership with the industry.

It was clear from feedback received, that the industry wanted enforcement action to be focussed more directly on the illegal sector with less emphasis placed on high profile enforcement. As a result, a new intelligence led targeted enforcement approach was developed that required enforcement officers, working mainly in plain clothes, to focus on investigating illegal operators as opposed to carrying out random high profile vehicle checks.

This strategic approach has proved extremely effective, in that, since the introduction of the team in April 2003, the number of licensed taxi operators in Northern Ireland has increased from 6,500 to 9,000.

During this same period, some 643 illegal taxi operators have been detected and reported to the Public Prosecution Service for the following offences:

- 563 Public Service Vehicle Licence Offences
- 399 Taxi Driver Licence Offences
- 524 Insurance Offences

In addition, taxi radio equipment was seized from 257 illegal vehicles on evidential grounds.

TAXI DEPOT LIABILITY

The owners and managers of taxi depots are reminded that using a taxi without valid insurance in force, aiding and abetting the use of an unlicensed taxi and aiding and abetting the use of a taxi where the driver is not the holder of a valid driver's licence, are offences for which they can be held liable.

A number of indepth taxi depot investigations are currently ongoing throughout the province.

TAXI PLATING COMPLIANCE

Taxi plating was introduced as a new legal requirement in Northern Ireland in November 2004. The objectives of the scheme are to assist the public clearly identify the legitimacy of a taxi and make it more difficult for illegal taxis to ply their trade. This has clear benefits for the public and industry alike and to ensure the success of the scheme, enforcement officers have been undertaking spot checks on taxis operating throughout the province. It has been established that up to 40% of legitimate taxis do not have taxi plates fitted in accordance with regulations. This has the potential to undermine the success of the plating scheme. It also frustrates the efforts of enforcement officers when attempting to target illegal operators. As a consequence, some 270 warning letters have been issued to licensees of offending vehicles.

The licensee of any taxi detected operating in breach of plating requirements on a second occasion, will be required to present their vehicle to a Vehicle Examiner for inspection and may face the prospect of prosecution.

Most commonly encountered breaches relate to the total absence of one or more plates and window labels, or plates that have been placed loosely on a rear parcel shelf or on the vehicle's dash. The regulations stipulate that the external plates shall be mounted squarely and affixed as close as possible to the extreme front and rear of the vehicle. Also, when affixed, the information on the plates shall be clearly visible when viewed from the front or rear of the vehicle. The internal windscreen plates shall be affixed to the inside of the windscreen in a prominent position with the photo luminescent side facing outwards. The rear passenger side window labels shall be affixed to the inside surface of the rear passenger door windows with the licence details facing outwards

Taxi depot managers are reminded to carry out regular spot checks to ensure that their taxis fully meet with taxi-plating requirements.

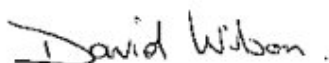
WORKING TOGETHER

The benefits of more effective enforcement will be improved road safety, fairer competition, reduced damage to the environment and a contribution to reducing vehicle related crime.

We need your help and cooperation and we will be seeking new ways to communicate more effectively with all representatives of the industry.

Please contact us if you require information in respect of licensing regulations, or on maintaining your vehicle.

You can also report any suspected illegal taxi operator in total confidence by contacting the Taxi Enforcement Team on 02890 254402. (This facility has a 24-hour recording service)



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