

# Code of practice for Class 3 vehicle users

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## What is a Class 3 vehicle?

Three types of 'invalid carriage' are defined in 'The Use of Invalid Carriages on Highways Regulations 1988':

Class 1 - manual wheelchair, i.e. self-propelled or attendant-propelled, not electrically powered;

Class 2- powered wheelchairs and scooters, for footway use only with a maximum speed limit of 4 mph;

Class 3- powered wheelchairs, and other outdoor powered vehicles, including scooters, for use on roads/highways with a maximum speed limit of 8 mph and facility to travel at 4 mph on footways.

## Where can Class 3 vehicles be used?

They can be used:

On footpaths, pavements, bridleways and pedestrian areas at a maximum speed of 4 mph;

On most roads at a maximum speed of 8 mph;

They **cannot** be used on motorways, cycle lanes or in bus lanes (when in operation). Nor is it advisable to use them on unrestricted dual carriageways (i.e. those with a speed limit of over 50 mph). If they are 4-wheeled vehicles, then they must use an amber flashing light for conspicuity when used on dual carriageways.

## What are the legal requirements?

A Class 3 vehicle is not legally defined as a motor vehicle and, therefore, the user is not required to have a driving licence or to take a test. The vehicles themselves are not subject to Vehicle Excise Duty ('road tax') or mandatory insurance requirements.

However, the law does say that:

a Class 3 vehicle can only be used by a disabled person aged 14 or over, or by an able-bodied person who is demonstrating a vehicle before sale, training a disabled user or taking the vehicle to or from a place for maintenance or repair.

The vehicle must have certain construction features, including:

- a maximum unladen weight of 150 kg (330 lbs);
- a maximum width of 0.85 metres (2'9");
- a device to limit its speed to 6.4 kmph (4 mph);
- a maximum speed of 12.8 kmph (8 mph);
- an efficient braking system;
- front and rear lights and reflectors, and direction indicator which are able to operate as a hazard warning signal;
- an audible warning instrument (horn);
- a rear view mirror;
- an amber flashing light if a 4-wheeled vehicle is used on a dual carriageway.
- If these conditions are not met, you are liable to prosecution by the police.

## **Should I have insurance?**

Although it is not a legal requirement, **an insurance policy is strongly advised**. Suitable schemes are not too expensive and are available to cover your personal safety, other people's safety and the value of the vehicle.

## **What should I do to prepare myself for the road?**

If you are using a powered vehicle for the first time, or if it is a while since you have driven on the road, you are strongly advised to get some training. For details of courses, contact your local Disabled Living Centre, Mobility Centre or your local authority's Road Safety Unit, or contact the Department of the Environment Transport and the Regions, Mobility & Inclusion Unit. Useful addresses are listed at the end of this booklet.

Always go to an approved supplier. If you are in doubt about a supplier contact the BHTA for advice.

In addition to this booklet, you should also look at a current edition of the Highway Code and become familiar with the various traffic signs and signals you may come across when you are driving.

Although there is no legal eyesight requirement, you should be able to read a car's registration number from a distance of 12.3 metres (40 ft). It is essential that you monitor your ability to do this regularly throughout your time as a Class 3 vehicle user.

It is advisable to wear fluorescent clothing during the day and something reflective at night. This will help others to see you in daylight or poor visibility. The leaflet 'Be Safe. Be Seen', which is available free from the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Region, gives advice on clothing. But above all don't wear dark clothes at night.

If the vehicle has a lap belt fitted to it, always use it - even for short journeys.

As a general rule, plan your journeys carefully. This way, you could reach your destination without having to negotiate major roundabouts, rush-hour traffic, or busy roads. However, if the situation on the road does become too daunting, you can always switch to pavement mode (4 mph) and move to the footway until you feel confident enough to rejoin the traffic.

## **What 'Rules of the road' should I follow?**

Class 3 vehicles should not be used if you are under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or medication that may affect your driving ability. If you are in any doubt, consult your doctor.

## **On footways**

Show consideration for pedestrians, particularly elderly people or those who are blind, partially sighted, deaf or hard of hearing.

Although Class 3 vehicles can legally travel at 4 mph on footways or in pedestrian areas, it is not always safe to travel at this speed if pedestrians are not able to move out of the way quickly enough, e.g. in a crowded shopping precinct.

You can take advantage of pelican and zebra crossings when in 4 mph mode in order to cross from one footway to another.

When moving off the footway on to the road (to use the vehicle in 8 mph mode), take special care. Before moving off, always look round and make sure it is safe to join the traffic and watch out, in particular, for cyclists.

## **On the road**

When on the road, drive with due care and attention, always travelling in the direction of the traffic, obeying traffic signs and signals and give way to pedestrians who are crossing at junctions or pedestrian crossings. Keep a special look out for children crossing roads because they may lack the skills and experience to negotiate traffic safely.

Remember that, in comparison with the majority of other vehicles on the road, a Class 3 vehicle is not powerful or conspicuous. As a Class 3 vehicle driver, you are often in a similarly vulnerable position to cyclists - especially at roundabouts and junctions.

Direction indicators must always be used to indicate manoeuvres on the road.

Always use the front and rear lights in the dark or when visibility is poor due to adverse weather conditions.

The vehicle's horn should not be used when the vehicle is stationary (unless there is danger due to another moving vehicle) or between 11.30 at night and 07.00 in the morning. When the vehicle is moving, the horn should be used to warn other road users that you are there - it should not be used as a rebuke.

Watch out for obstructions in the road ahead, such as drains, pot-holes and parked cars. When passing parked cars, watch out for doors being opened in your path or the vehicle moving off without indicating.

## **How to deal with road junctions and roundabouts?**

Take extra care at junctions. When going straight ahead at road junctions, check to make sure there are no vehicles about to cross your path.

When turning left, watch out for other vehicles overtaking, prior to turning left across your path.

There are several options for dealing with right turns, especially turning from a major road. If moving into the middle of the road is difficult or dangerous, you can stop on the left hand side of the road and wait for a safe gap in the traffic. You can also negotiate the turn as a pedestrian, i.e. switching to pavement mode and travelling between footways. If the junction is too hazardous, it may be worth considering an alternative route.

Similarly, when negotiating major roundabouts, eg roundabouts with two or more lanes, it may be safer to stay in the left hand lane, even when you are turning right or taking the last exit and treat each exit you cross as a junction. Alternatively, it may be safer to use the footway or find a route which avoids the roundabout Altogether

## **Parking**

All the normal parking restrictions should be observed.

Your vehicle should not be left on the footways unattended if it causes an obstruction to other pedestrians - especially those in wheelchairs or those with prams or pushchairs. Remember too, to look out for blind or partially sighted people when parking.

Parking concessions provided under the Orange Badge Scheme will apply to all Class 3 vehicles displaying a current badge. If you think you are entitled to a badge, you can apply to your Local Authority Social Services Department or to the Chief Executive of your local Regional or Island Council if you live in Scotland.

## **How can I keep my vehicle roadworthy?**

It is essential that you keep your vehicle in good working order in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations. Vehicle suppliers should be able to answer any questions you might have about the maintenance of specific modes of Class 3 vehicle.

In general, if the vehicle has a battery, make sure that it is kept in good condition.

Lighting equipment should be kept clean and in good working order.

Windows, windscreens and mirrors should also be clean and clear of obstructions for good all-round vision.

It is important that your vehicle undergoes a thorough safety check at least once a year.

## **Useful Addresses**

For further information about the safer driving of Class 3 vehicles, please contact:

The Mobility and Inclusion Unit  
The Department of the Environment Transport and the Regions  
1/18  
Great Minster House  
76 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DR

Tel: 020 7944 6100  
Fax: 020 7944 6102  
e-mail: [miu@dft.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:miu@dft.gsi.gov.uk)

BHTA (British Healthcare Trades Association)  
1 Webbs Court  
Buckhurst Avenue  
Sevenoaks  
Kent TN13 ILZ  
Tel: 01732 458868

Disabled Living Centres Council  
1st Floor  
Winchester House  
11 Cranmer Road  
London SW9 6EJ  
Tel: 020 7820 0567

This Code of Practice was developed by the William Merritt Disabled Living Centre on behalf of the Department of Transport's Mobility Unit.

It has been sponsored by the Mobility Vehicles Section of BHTA, a trade association with the following member firms who have manufacturing interests covering Class III vehicles:

Booster Electric Vehicles Ltd  
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Sungift plc  
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