

INTRODUCTION

The following sections in this handbook, indexed under Contents, are to assist any PCC driver or any driver driving a PCC minibus, or vehicle hired by PCC to carry out minibus duties.

All enquiries about future courses should be directed to the Plymouth Road Safety office, shown below.

The information contained therein will act as a reference and reminder to all qualified drivers and will answer many of the questions or queries that may be raised. Any further information can be obtained at the numbers shown.

Please Note:

PCC = Plymouth City Council

Accessible Vehicle = A vehicle designed or adapted for carrying passengers in wheelchairs and passengers with disabilities. The vehicle will be fitted with a wheelchair lift or ramp as part of the fitting of the minibus.

The following telephone numbers and addresses should be retained in addition to any given by your organisation.

All enquiries regarding training and testing of minibus drivers:

Plymouth Road Safety Team
Floor 10
Transport Services
Civic Centre
Plymouth
PL1 2EW 01752 307730

Community Transport4hire information and registration:

Public Transport Office
Floor 12
Civic Centre
Plymouth
PL1 2EW 01752 307735

Plymouth Citybus breakdown (Plymouth boundary only)
01752 661919 (quote ref Plymouth City Council vehicle hire)

RAC Breakdown
0800 591111 (quote ref 763P)

HiQ Tyres
0800 474474 (Quote ref Plymouth Branch)

1.0 **GENERAL**

1.1 **COMPETENCE**

Drivers must at all times be familiar with the workings of the vehicle, including the instruments and switches. They must be aware of any instructions on the use of vehicle equipment displayed on, or in the vehicle. This especially applies to the accessible vehicles equipment for securing wheelchairs and occupants.

They must carry out the routine checks on the vehicles prior to every journey, especially on the condition.

Speed limits must be observed at all times.

Plymouth City Council will take an extremely serious view of any driver reported for instances of PCC vehicles being driven in a reckless, dangerous or careless manner.

When reversing a minibus, always use the reversing horn if fitted. This is of course subject to legal restrictions, that is, NOT between 23:30 and 07:00 hours.

Take particular care when reversing in built up area's where there are pedestrians around. Young children in their enthusiasm to board may forget that the minibus may still be moving and run into the path of the reversing minibus. If there is any doubt, then obtain the services of someone to assist you in reversing.

1.2 **DRIVING LICENCES**

It is the responsibility of all drivers to inform their Group/Association and PCC immediately if there are any changes in their licence, i.e.: -

- Changes in vehicle categories covered.
- Any medical condition that may affect the renewal date of granting of the licence, or any extra medical reports requested by the Licensing Authority.
- Legal proceedings for a motoring offence. *
- Penalty points. *
- Disqualification. *

*** This applies whether or not the offence was committed in a private or PCC vehicle.**

Your driving licence must be available for inspection at any time.

In addition, all drivers of PCC minibuses must have approved driver status, normally gained by passing the PCC minibus test and with the issue of a Minibus Certificate of Competence.

1.3 FITNESS

Drivers must report any changes in their medical conditions that may affect their ability to drive.

No alcoholic drink whatsoever should be taken before or during the hire period. This includes the taking of alcoholic drink **without** necessarily exceeding the legal limit for driving with alcohol in the breath/blood.

Any alcohol in the blood impairs a driver's ability to drive, further, the smell of alcohol in the breath, particularly when carrying passengers, could lead to allegations should an accident or incident take place.

Drivers must be aware that alcohol from drinking the day before can still be in the blood for up to 24 hours and that any alcohol can affect judgement.

Drivers must not drive while under the influence of any drugs that may affect driving ability. Drugs **also** include those prescribed by a doctor. If in any doubt as to whether prescribed drugs can affect your ability to drive, then consult your doctor.

1.4 CHECKS.

In the cab area of every PCC vehicle there will be at least one logbook, i.e.: -

A Log Book, (Driver's Record Book), a Maintenance Record Book, (for use by maintenance workshop only) and a Vehicle Defect Book, for recording defects to be repaired later. These books must be kept in the vehicle at all times.

On wheelchair accessible vehicles, check that there is sufficient equipment for securing both wheelchairs and occupants.

A current tax disk (Excise Licence) for the vehicle **MUST** be displayed at all times. Not only is it an offence not to have a current tax disk, but it is also an offence not to display one if one is in existence. Make sure it has not fallen onto the floor.

1.5 FUEL

Ensure that the correct type of fuel is always used. It is your responsibility to ascertain whether the fuel you require is petrol, diesel or propane gas. Using the wrong fuel can be an expensive mistake, especially where the whole of the fuel system has to be removed for cleaning.

Avoid if at all possible, fuelling with passengers aboard unless absolutely necessary.

1.6 FINISHING & PARKING

At the end of the hire, vehicles must be returned to the allocated location from where it was picked up and parked in such a way as to not cause obstruction or annoyance to others.

P = PETROL

Check that you have sufficient fuel for the journey. Remember to ensure that the correct fuel is used. If in doubt about whether the minibus uses diesel or petrol then enquire before making a costly mistake of putting the wrong fuel into the tank. Refer to the comments under Fuel:

O = OIL

Check all oil levels. In addition to the engine oil level which is done with the dipstick, check brake fluid levels, check power steering fluid level, (if power steering is fitted), check clutch fluid level, (if hydraulics are fitted instead of a cable operation). Usually most checks of oil levels can be done visually through the plastic container or reservoir.

W = WATER

Check coolant water level. Remember to do this when the engine is cold. Check washer bottle levels, some vehicles have an additional bottle at the rear for rear wash/wipe.

E = ELECTRICS

Check all electrics. This includes all lights, interior, side and head. Check indicators. Check brake lights. Get the help of someone to check the operation of the rear brake lights when you are in the vehicle operating the foot pedal or reverse back to a Wall and check the reflection on the wall. Check reflectors. Check operation of wipers and horn, which includes door-warning buzzer if fitted.

R = RUBBER

Check tyres. This includes pressures, condition and security of wheel nuts. It is important that the pressures are checked prior to every journey no matter how long the journey will be. Remember to check the spare if one is carried. Check condition of the rubbers of the windscreen wipers. Although not strictly rubber, check the condition and working of the seat belts, including buckles and inertia reels.

IN ADDITION

- Check the condition of the vehicle bodywork.
- Check mirror condition and ensure mirrors, windscreen and rear window are clean.
- Check that ALL doors are unlocked each time before carrying passengers. Failure to do so is an offence.
- Check that the fire extinguisher and first aid kit is in place and complete. It is an offence **NOT** to have them on the vehicle.
- Check the operation of the wheelchair lift, if fitted.
- Check that any equipment required for restraining wheelchairs is present and in working order.

At any time when the vehicle is left, the driver must ensure:

- The handbrake is on correctly.
- The vehicle is left in gear (1st or reverse).
- The keys are removed (lock in the security box if fitted).
- The alarm and immobiliser is activated.
- All valuables are removed. (PCC cannot be responsible for any losses of a driver's own items).
- All doors and windows are securely locked.

1.7 PASSENGERS

AT ALL TIMES, the driver is responsible for the carriage of his or her passengers. He or she can be assisted by an escort, if available, but the driver should not move unless he or she is satisfied with the safety of the passengers. Whilst the driver can take advice from others, ultimately, should any incident or accident occur to any passengers, then the driver could be held responsible. Therefore, attention to the advice given in this booklet could be of great importance.

Always be aware that some people are very sensitive to being touched or handled. Be especially cautious about any physical contact with any child to ensure that your conduct cannot be misinterpreted in any way. You should also be cautious about topics of conversation and ensure that they are not offensive or open to misinterpretation.

Choose stopping points with care, being aware of poor surfaces, puddles, dropped kerbs etc.

1.8 SEATING

The total seating capacity must not be exceeded on any vehicle. It is forbidden to carry more passengers than available seats in a minibus. On no account are mini-buses to be loaded to such an extent that passengers have to stand or sit anywhere other than in a proper seat.

All passengers are to wear a seatbelt when travelling in a PCC vehicle. It is the driver's responsibility to ensure that any passenger under 14 years of age wears a seat belt. Passengers of 14 years of age or over should wear a seat belt, if they do not, they should be politely asked to do so as they could be at risk to other passengers.

1.9 PICKING UP & SETTING DOWN

The degree of care and need varies with the requirements of the passenger. Pick up and drop off points must be the nearest and safest practical vehicular access. This may, depending upon the requirements of the passenger and the premises, require the driver to accompany the passenger into their home.

The vehicle must not be loaded or off loaded on the offside of the road.

Access on minibuses should be via the main passenger doors on the nearside. Rear doors are only to be used for passengers using the lift or ramps on accessible vehicles.

Boarding or alighting must not be allowed unless the vehicle is at a complete standstill and should take place adjacent to the pavement or other traffic free area.

2.0 BEFORE PULLING AWAY

Special seats and child seats must be correctly secured and adjusted.

Allow for any passengers who have left the vehicle to move away before driving away.

The vehicle must not pull away until all passengers are seated and wearing a seatbelt or harness if fitted.

The vehicle must not pull away until all doors are shut and the doors must not be opened before coming to standstill.

All luggage and spare equipment must be secured and must not block gangways or access to any door on the minibus. Unobstructed access from every passenger seat to both main passenger door and the rear door (s) must be maintained at all times, including when carrying wheelchairs.

2.1 ACCESSIBLE VEHICLES

Allow sufficient level road space to the rear of the minibus for lift operations. Make sure that passengers are properly positioned on the platform and the toe-guards, roll-off bars etc; are correctly positioned before ascending or descending. Also ensure that brakes are applied on manual wheelchairs.

Drivers must use the equipment provided for the restraint of passengers and are ultimately responsible for securing wheelchairs and passengers in the vehicle, including the correct use of seat belts, restraints and harnesses.

If the vehicle does not have sufficient equipment, clamps, belts, etc; the driver must report this to the Community Transport4hire office immediately.

Under no circumstances should a wheelchair be carried unrestrained or incorrectly secured.

PASSENGERS CARRIED IN WHEELCHAIRS MUST:

- Be carried **forward** or **backward** facing. **NOT** sideways.
- The wheelchair **handbrake** must be applied.
- Clamped symmetrically with two identical fixing systems.
- In addition to the above, the passenger must be secured with seat belts attached to the vehicle or tracking: Belts integral to the wheelchair are not sufficient.
- Secured in such a way that adequate space between wheelchairs and seats is left so that walking access to all doors and passengers is maintained.

The carriage of passengers in any way other than observing the previous five points is specifically forbidden.

When using the wheelchair lift, the wheelchair must:

- Be facing forward or backward and not sideways. Forward is recommended.
- The wheelchair handbrake must be applied whilst ascending or descending.
- The platform safety flap(s) front and rear must be up.
- The driver is to be on the lift with the passenger while ascending or descending, except when the wheelchair leaves no space. If there is no space for the driver on the ramp, someone else should be in the vehicle waiting to receive.

2.2 HEALTH & SAFETY

When lifting goods, especially vehicle seats, the following procedures must be followed:

- Do not stack above shoulder height unless the higher levels are stacked or unstacked from inside the vehicle.
- Stack the heaviest items or containers at the bottom.
- Ensure that all loads or containers are stacked securely.
- If the vehicle has folding seats, the driver must be aware of any instructions for using them when these are displayed in the vehicle.

2.3 BREAKDOWNS, ACCIDENTS & OTHER EMERGENCIES

The first concern following a breakdown or an accident is to ensure the safety of the passengers. Drivers must give clear instructions with this in mind. Ensure that the vehicle is stopped in a safe place as possible. If not, or there is a risk of fire, evacuate the passengers to a safe place away from any danger from traffic or other possible hazards.

2.4 BREAKDOWNS

In the event of a breakdown, use the list of a telephone numbers that should be kept in the vehicle to call for assistance.

(See the list of emergency contacts at the front of this book).

2.5 MOTORWAY BREAKDOWNS

If your vehicle breaks down on the motorway, stop on the hard shoulder. **DO NOT STOP ON THE CARRIAGEWAYS** unless you are forced to do so by the breakdown. (In the unlikely event of a collapsed suspension, etc). Pull over on the hard shoulder as far as you can to the left, away from carriageways. Evacuate all passengers and get them to stand on the other side of the Armco barriers, if possible. Common sense will have to apply if the weather is inclement and there is a risk to the health of some of the passengers. Many accidents on motorways occur on the hard shoulder caused in the main by other vehicles hitting parked or broken down vehicles.

Do not use a mobile phone to call for assistance unless in a dire emergency, instead walk to the nearest telephone, (which are 1 mile apart) and contact the emergency services. This way the emergency services can instantly recognise your position from the phone you are using.

2.6 ACCIDENTS

If you are involved in an accident, whilst driving you should:

- STOP. (As soon as possible, in a safe place, set the handbrake and switch the engine off).
- Make the scene as safe as possible. Put on hazard warning lights, use warning triangle if one is carried in the minibus. Don not move the vehicle or passengers unless it would be dangerous not to do so.
- Check your passengers for injury. Injuries such as shock or concussion may not be apparent immediately, so if anyone is injured, call an ambulance.
- Also call Police and Fire Brigade if someone is trapped or there is a danger of fire, leaking fuel, etc.
- Collect as much information about the accident as possible for the subsequent report and inquiry. It will also help you to fill out the PCC accident report.

2.7 LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

If you are involved In accident which causes damage or injury to any person or animal, (horse, cattle, sheep, ass, mule, pig, goat or dog), not in your vehicle, or to any other vehicle or road side property, you are required by law to give the following information to any person having reasonable grounds for requiring it.

In all cases; you must **STOP**, then give:

- Your name and address
- The vehicle owner's name and address.
- The vehicle registration number.
- The name and address of any witness.

DO NOT PROVIDE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION OR ADMIT LIABILITY.

2.8 ACCIDENTS THAT CAUSE INJURY

If requested by any person having reasonable grounds for requiring it, you must produce the certificate of insurance for the vehicle. In many cases this is not carried on the vehicle. In these cases the insurance can be produced at a Police station within 7 days. For vehicles hired from a commercial rental company, these details should be displayed in the vehicle as on your copy of the hire agreement.

REMEMBER; In cases involving injury or when the above details are not able to be exchanged, (for example, hitting a dog which then runs off), the details of the accident **MUST** be reported to a Police station as soon as possible and in any event, within 24 hours.

2.9 FIRE

Minibuses registered from 1.4.1988 must carry an approved fire extinguisher. It is PCC policy that all minibuses carry not only the extinguisher but also a first aid kit. Locate the extinguisher and check it's condition before you have a fire!

The first priority in the event of a fire is the safety of yourself and your passengers. The fire should be tackled ONLY if it is safe to do so and to give additional time to evacuate the passengers. Remember that some fire extinguishers give off toxic gas in confined areas.

3.0 FIRE EMERGENCY PROCEDURE

In the event of a fire on the minibus, the following emergency drill should be carried out.

- STOP the vehicle immediately.
- Switch off the engine. Do not open the engine compartment to see where the fire is located.
- Switch off the fuel cut off switch, if fitted.
- Evacuate the passengers off the vehicle in a orderly manor, control panic. Make sure they are away from any danger from fire or traffic.
- Do not allow anyone to go back to the vehicle for any personal belongings.
- Call the emergency services.
- If you have time, remove the ignition key and switch off the battery isolator switch, if fitted.
- Tackle the fire but only if it is safe to do so.
- Await the arrival of the Fire Service to inform them if you are carrying gas canisters, oxygen bottles, wheelchair batteries, etc.

3.1 EVACUATING WHEELCHAIR PASSENGERS

If the vehicle, following an accident or breakdown is not in a safe place, or if there is a risk of fire, evacuation may need to be done speedily, and if carrying passengers in wheelchairs, evacuate all able bodied passengers first, or let others, who are able to do so, do this while you are taking the disabled out from the rear of the vehicle.

In order to evacuate as speedily as possible, the lift may be positioned halfway between road and floor and use a step, if time allows, with another person helping to lift wheelchairs down if at all possible.

If there is insufficient time, then carry the passenger from the wheelchair to safety outside the vehicle.