

Driver Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC)

A RECENT EUROPEAN DIRECTIVE 2003/59/EC introduced the requirement for compulsory initial qualification and periodic training for professional drivers of buses, coaches, minibuses and lorries (all sizes). In addition to holding a driving licence all professional drivers will be required to hold a Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC), which will be renewable on a 5 yearly basis.

Your individual circumstances will determine how you acquire the Driver CPC.

■ **New drivers** acquiring a PCV vocational entitlement (D1, D1+E, D, D+E licence) after 10 September 2008 and/or an LGV vocational entitlement (C1, C1+E, C or C+E licence) after 10 September 2009 will have to obtain the initial Driver CPC in addition to their licence to drive professionally. In order to obtain the CPC a theory test with case study questions and a 30 minute practical test will have to be taken.

■ **Existing drivers** who already hold a vocational licence on 10 September 2008 (PCV) or 10 September 2009 (LGV) are exempt from the initial Driver CPC. This is known as "acquired rights".

Both new and existing drivers must complete a total of 35 hours Periodic Training within the 5 years following their 'acquired rights' or initial Driver CPC to keep their Driver CPC valid. This is only required if the driver is using their licence professionally. PCV drivers exempt from the Driver CPC via acquired rights will have to complete their periodic training by September 2013 and LGV Drivers exempt from the Driver CPC via acquired rights will have to complete their periodic Driver CPC by September 2014.



The exemptions associated with the Directive are listed below:

- Vehicles with a maximum speed not exceeding 45 Kph
- Vehicles used by the armed forces, civil defence, and emergency services
- Vehicles undergoing road tests for technical development, repair or maintenance
- Vehicles used in states of emergency
- Vehicles used in the course of driving lessons or examinations
- Vehicles used for non-commercial carriage of passenger or goods – for personal use
- Vehicles used for carrying material of equipment to be used by the driver in the course of his or her work,

providing that driving the vehicles is not the drivers' principal activity.

Ultimately, it is up the driver and their employer to decide if they are covered by these exemptions, and if necessary, justify it to the competent authority.

It is believed that **volunteer** drivers of buses under Section 10B Permits in Northern Ireland are likely to be outside the scope of Directive 2003/59 /EC or that they are covered by one of its exemptions.

In the Republic of Ireland the Road Safety Authority Act 2006 confers responsibility for relevant elements of implementation of this Directive to the new Road Safety Authority. The Authority will engage with industry stakeholders regarding full implementation of Directive 2003/59/EC. ■

Sources of Information:
RoI: www.nsc.ie; NI - www.driverscpc.org