



**ORKNEY**  
ISLANDS COUNCIL

# **Driving at Work Handbook**

**March 2024- 2026**

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# 1. Introduction.

Driving is one of the most hazardous activities we engage in, and driving for work is often riskier than personal driving. Consequently, the HSE Guidelines on 'Driving at Work' emphasize that health and safety laws apply to all on-the-road work activities, and risks must be effectively managed within a health and safety framework.

All organizations have a legal duty of care under health and safety legislation to ensure the safety of their employees, which includes voluntary staff, passengers, and any other individuals (such as other road users) who may be impacted by their activities. Employers hold legal responsibilities toward their employees, regardless of whether the vehicles used are owned by the company, the employee, or another party.

Orkney Islands Council acknowledges the importance of safeguarding employees and others from the risks associated with work-related driving. The Driving at Work Policy ensures that the Council fulfills its legal obligations under the Health and Safety at Work Act.

When driving for work, both the employer and the employee share the responsibility for identifying and managing risks effectively. This necessitates thorough planning.

It is crucial for all drivers to contribute to this effort. This handbook is designed to assist you as a driver in collaborating with your manager to prevent accidents and injuries to yourself, your passengers, and other road users.

This handbook outlines the arrangements and procedures for fleet drivers and vehicles, while also providing information for private car drivers. The Driving at Work Policy, available on the portal, informs you of the Orkney Islands Council's policies regarding driving practices, and this handbook complements that policy.

Further useful information on driving can be found on the following website:  
[https://www.gov.uk/guidance/the-highway-code.](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/the-highway-code)

## 2. Legal Matters

The Council requires confirmation that you meet the following essential criteria:

**1. Legal Entitlement to Drive** - You must be legally authorized to operate the specific type of vehicle you are using. This includes holding a valid driver's licence that corresponds to the vehicle category, ensuring compliance with all relevant licensing laws and regulations.

**2. Vehicle Safety and Compliance** - It is crucial that the vehicle you are using is safe and adheres to all legal requirements for road use. This means the vehicle should be regularly maintained, free from defects, and equipped with necessary safety features. Compliance with additional regulations, such as having valid insurance and registration, is also mandatory.

**3. Training and Competence** - You should possess the appropriate training and demonstrate competence in driving the vehicle safely. This includes having completed any required driver training and being familiar with the vehicle's controls and handling characteristics. Continuous professional development in safe driving practices is encouraged to enhance your skills.

**4. Appropriate Use of the Vehicle** - The vehicle must be used for purposes that are suitable and aligned with the Council's policies. This means that the vehicle should only be operated for work-related activities or other approved uses, ensuring that it is not misused or driven for personal reasons that could compromise safety or legality.

By ensuring these criteria are met, the Council can maintain a safe and compliant driving environment for all employees.

## 3. The Driver

### 3.1 Driving Licence.

It may be a requirement of your employment with Orkney Islands Council to hold a full UK driving licence. You are responsible for ensuring that you drive in compliance with the Council's Driving at Work Policy.

Services will be utilising the Integra system to record and monitor the status of your licence, ensuring it is checked annually, regardless of the vehicle you use.

Service administrators will receive an email notification indicating that the DVLA Driving Licence was last checked over a year ago and requires an updated check. Please ensure that a PDF copy of the Driving Licence check certificate is obtained from the DVLA site and uploaded to Integra.

There are two options for completing this: you can either perform the check yourself and send a PDF copy of the certificate to your service administrator, or the service administrator will obtain the certificate directly through the DVLA site on your behalf.

<https://www.viewdrivingrecord.service.gov.uk/driving-record/licence-number>

Once the DVLA certificate is supplied, it will be reviewed to ensure you have:

- A full driving licence,
- Possess the correct categories of driving authorisation
- There are no special conditions on your licence that would impact on your ability to drive as part of your employment.
- You have no additional penalty points.

### 3.2 Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC)

Drivers who are required to drive Heavy Goods Vehicles, Buses or coaches are required to undertake 35 hours of periodic training every 5 years to keep your Driver Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC). This will also be checked as part of the requirements of the Council's Operators Licence.

### 3.3 Certificate of Motor Insurance

Where a vehicle is being driven is owned by the Council, they will ensure it is properly insured for the intended use of the Council's business. If you operate the vehicle out with its intended use you may be prosecuted and steps taken to recover associated costs.

If you are driving your personal vehicle on Council business, you must ensure you have a certificate of motor insurance which includes business use. Normally, a policy will include social, domestic and pleasure use. If you use your vehicle to commute to your work, you should ensure this is likewise covered within your policy.

Where you drive your personal vehicle for business use, you will provide evidence of insurance as part of the administrative arrangements. This will extend only to satisfy your cover for business use.

If you are stopped by Police whilst driving a Council vehicle, officers will have access to the Motor Insurance Database which will hold details of the Council's insurance. In the unlikely event that you are required to provide evidence of insurance you should make contact with the Council's insurance officer who will provide the relevant details.

### 3.4 Fitness to Drive

The Council needs to ensure that you:

- Are always fit to drive.
- Do not operate a vehicle under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or medications.
- Do not drive if you are unwell.
- Do not drive when you are too fatigued to do so safely.

It is essential that you inform your employer of any health issues or personal circumstances that could impact your driving ability. Additionally, you are legally obligated to notify the DVLA (Driving and Vehicle Licensing Agency) of any medical conditions that may affect your capacity to drive safely.

### 3.5 Eyesight

The minimum legal eyesight standard for driving is that you can read a new style number plate (for example: AB 123 ABC) at a distance of 20 metres (around 65 feet), or an old style number plate (for example: A 123 ABC) at a distance of 20.5 metres (67 feet). If you must use glasses or contact lenses to do this, then they must be worn when driving.

As there are other eyesight requirements not included in the above which include vision acuity (sharpness), it is strongly recommended that you have your eyesight checked regularly (at least every two years, where you sense a deterioration in your eyesight, when recommended more frequently by your optician or if requested as part of an occupational health review).

### 3.6 Alcohol

Employees must not consume alcohol in the course of the working day or shift and must avoid drinking alcohol in the hours before they will be driving (for example, in the morning, at lunchtime). It can take several hours for alcohol to be removed from your body, and you may still be over the limit or affected by alcohol the morning after you have been drinking.

Further guidance is contained within the Council's Substance Misuse Policy.

Alcohol impairs judgement, making drivers over-confident and more likely to take risks. It slows their reactions, increases stopping distances, impairs judgement of speed and distance and affects vision. Even a small amount, well below the legal limit, seriously affects the ability to drive safely.

The legal drink-drive limit in Scotland is different from that of other countries in the United Kingdom. The current limit is 50 milligrammes of alcohol per 100 millilitres of blood. Drivers with a blood alcohol concentration between 20 and 50 milligrammes are three times more likely to be involved in a fatal crash. If their blood alcohol concentration is between 50 and 80 milligrammes per 100 millilitres of blood, the likelihood increases to six times, and if it is between 80 and 100 milligrammes, the risk rises to 11 times more likely to result in a fatal crash.

### 3.7 Illegal Drugs

Do not drive if you have taken any illegal drugs. They can affect your decision-making and driving skills, as well as your physical and mental condition and behaviour.

### 3.8 Medicines

Check with your GP or pharmacist whether any over-the-counter or prescribed medicines you are taking are likely to affect your driving (for example, by causing drowsiness). If so, ask for an alternative that does not, or avoid driving.

Always check the label of medicines and the Patient Information leaflet to see if there are any warnings. If the label says that certain side-effects may occur, assume that they will do so.

If you are taking prescribed medicines that may affect your ability to drive or operate plant or other equipment you should alert your line manager.

Driving a vehicle whilst under the influence of drugs, whether legally prescribed or otherwise, may constitute an offence.

### 3.9 Illness

Illness can also affect our ability to drive. We can often be tempted to 'soldier' on when in fact it would be safer for everyone concerned not to drive until we are feeling better.

A medical examination must be carried out on all drivers applying for a vocational driving licence prior to being granted a provisional licence / licence. After the age of 45 a medical has to be carried out every five years until the age of 65 when it becomes an annual requirement.

Managers must refer staff who drive at work to Occupational Health if they suspect or receive a report which indicates that they have a health problem which could affect their ability to drive safely. The employee will be reassigned to non-driving duties pending the receipt and consideration of an Occupational Health report.



### 3.10 Fatigue

Consider whether you are likely to be drowsy or sleepy while driving. Tired drivers are more likely to crash, especially on long monotonous journeys and in the early hours of the morning. Discuss any problems with your line manager.

### 3.11 Mileage Claims

If you are using a personal vehicle for Council business, you are eligible to claim the appropriate mileage. This will be established in consultation with your line manager. Please note that mileage will only be reimbursed if you have submitted the required documentation demonstrating that both you and your vehicle comply with the Council's Driving at Work Policy and this Handbook.

## 3. The Vehicle

### 4.1 MOT Certificate.

If you are driving a Council vehicle over three years old, it will require to undergo a Ministry of Transport Inspection. Now operated by the Driving and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) the more commonly known MOT certificate provides evidence of compliance with certain requirements at the time of the check. The Council will ensure the vehicle is inspected and has passed its MOT inspection.

If you are using your private vehicle on Council business, and your vehicle is over three years old likewise you will need to provide evidence that the vehicle has a current MOT Test Certificate. This check can now be carried out online at <https://www.gov.uk/check-mot-status>.

### 4.2 Vehicle Excise

Every vehicle being driven on public roads in UK is required to have a vehicle excise, which is sometimes referred to as car tax or road fund licence in place. If you are driving a Council vehicle this will be taxed for your use. If you are using a personal vehicle for Council business, you will be liable to ensure the vehicle is taxed. Similarly, by clicking the link in the preceding paragraph details of the status of your vehicle car tax can be determined.

## 4.3 Vehicle Safety

Vehicle defects are only involved in a small proportion of crashes. However, the type of vehicle also has a major influence on the likelihood and severity of injuries when there is a collision.

As the driver, you are also responsible for ensuring that the vehicle you are driving is safe and legal.

Before driving any vehicle, check:

- Tyres are undamaged (no cuts or bulges), are at the correct pressure for the number of passengers or equipment being carried and have enough tread depth. The legal minimum is 1.6 millimetres, but above 3 millimetres gives much shorter braking distances in the wet.
- There are no signs of vehicle damage.
- Oil, coolant and windscreen wash levels are correct (check when cold).
- You know the correct type of fuel for the vehicle.
- Brakes are working.
- Lights, indicators and reflectors are clean, in good condition and working.
- Lights are adjusted to compensate for any load.
- Head restraints are adjusted to compensate for the effects of whiplash.
- Windscreen and windows are clean and free from defects.
- Washers and wipers are working.
- Mirrors are clean and correctly positioned.
- All occupants are using their seat belts and head restraints are adjusted correctly.
- Loads are securely restrained.
- During periods of inclement weather ensure you clear all windows of ice and remove all loose snow from the vehicle, including the roof.

There may be additional checks required dependent on the vehicle – refer to the manufacturer's manual or your line / fleet manager.

If you find any problem during the check, report it to your manager immediately.

You should not drive a vehicle unless it is in a safe and legal condition for its intended use. Where a defect has been identified, you should not drive it until that fault has been rectified and it is safe to do so. Finally, consider whether the vehicle is suitable for the task - for example:

- If carrying passengers, is there a seat belt for each occupant?
- If carrying children, is there an appropriate child seat for each child that needs one?
- If carrying a heavy load or an animal, can you secure it safely?

## 4. Safe Driving

Drivers who travel at higher speeds have less time to identify and react to what is happening around them. It takes them longer to stop and if there is a crash it is more severe, causing greater injury to the occupants and any pedestrian or rider they hit.

Higher speeds also magnify other driver errors, such as close-following or driving when tired or distracted, thus multiplying the chances of causing a crash.

Excessive speed contributes to 28% of collisions in which someone is killed, 18% of crashes resulting in a serious injury and 12% of all injury collisions. This means that around 900 people are killed each year on Britain's roads because drivers and riders travel too fast, and over 6,000 are seriously injured.

### 5.1 Speed Limits

Always stay within speed limits (including variable limits and temporary limits at roadworks) even if you think the limit is too low. Speed limits set the maximum speed for that road, however, there are many circumstances when it is not safe to drive at that speed (for example: around schools at the beginning and end of the day; on busy, narrow roads; on rural roads which are narrow, bendy and hilly and visibility is restricted).

Make sure you know the speed limit of the roads you are using. Far too many drivers, who have been caught speeding, complain that they thought the road had a higher speed limit (40 miles per hour instead of 30 miles per hour).

In many cases, the nature of the road does not indicate the speed limit. In urban areas, for example, dual carriageways can have limits of 30 miles per hour, 40 miles per hour, 50 miles per hour, 60 miles per hour or 70 miles per hour.

When driving on street-lit roads, assume the limit is 30 miles per hour until you see a sign saying otherwise, but remember the limit could be lower – 20 miles per hour.

Speed limit signs tend to be placed at junctions because this is often the point at which the limit changes. However, junctions are also where you need to absorb a wide range of different information and it is easy to miss a speed limit sign when concentrating on one or more other things (e.g. which way am I going? Is that driver going to pull out?). So you need to get into the habit of checking for speed limit signs at junctions, and looking for repeater signs after the junction, especially if the nature of the road has changed.

If you are not sure, assume the limit is lower until you see a sign.

## 5.2 Staying within the Limit

We all have our 'speed triggers' – things that make us more likely to speed up and perhaps exceed the limit unintentionally. This could be feeling the need to keep up with other drivers, feeling stressed by a driver too close behind or it could be something as simple as going downhill.

Learn to recognise your own 'speed triggers'. This will make it easier to avoid being 'pushed' into speeding. It will also make driving less stressful and more relaxing.

## 5.3 Reversing

Nearly a quarter of deaths involving vehicles at work occur during reversing. Many other reversing accidents do not result in injury but can cause costly damage to vehicles, equipment and premises.

Most of these accidents can be avoided by taking simple precautions.

The best way to avoid reversing accidents is to **remove the need for reversing altogether**. Where reversing is unavoidable, routes should be organised to minimise the need for reversing.

In relation to the use of vehicles other than cars, motorcycles and e-bikes at locations where reversing cannot be avoided:

- Reversing areas should be planned out and clearly marked.
- People who do not need to be in reversing areas should be kept well clear.
- Use a trained signaller (a banksman) both to keep the reversing area free of pedestrians and to guide you as the driver. A banksman will be mandatory for certain reversing tasks which will be identified in the job risk assessment and method statement.
- You should ensure your banksman is visible to you and is wearing highly visible clothing such as an appropriate reflective vest.
- If you lose sight of your banksman you should stop your vehicle immediately.

For further advice and guidance on reversing of vehicles, please follow the link below:-

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/workplacetransport/information/reversing.htm>

## **6. Journey Planning**

It is important to plan your route before every journey, the more planning in advance you can do, the less likely unforeseen and risky circumstances will arise, and the better you will be prepared to deal with them if they do. The policy outlines key information on routes and scheduling, distance and weather.

If a journey is to travel somewhere, rather than transporting people or items, then it may be that the safest journey plan is to use another form of transport.

Avoid driving in poor conditions and check the weather forecast before you set off, especially if there has been recent bad weather. If the reported advice is to only make essential journeys, then you should follow it.

Preventing driver sleepiness due to fatigue is something that your organisation can help you manage. Crashes caused by driver fatigue are most likely to occur:

- On long journeys on monotonous roads.
- Between 02:00 and 06:00.
- Between 14:00 and 16:00.
- After having less sleep than normal.
- After drinking alcohol.
- After taking medicines which cause drowsiness.
- On journeys home after night shifts.

As a general rule, drivers should take a 15-minute break after driving for two hours. You need to examine work schedules in advance to ensure that you will not be pressured by time.

Driving at night, especially after a long shift, should be avoided. Overnight stays can be arranged in order to help drivers stay within daily and weekly limits, and avoid crashes due to fatigue.

## 6.1 Give Yourself Time

Plan your journey to allow sufficient time to complete it (include rest breaks and take account of foreseeable weather and traffic conditions) at safe speeds and without needing to exceed speed limits.

The time it takes to complete a journey is determined much more by your average speed during the whole journey, rather than the maximum speed you achieve for part of it. This is especially true in urban areas, where you constantly have to slow down for junctions, traffic lights and other road users. The faster you drive, the sharper you have to brake. This also uses much more fuel and so makes driving more expensive.

Knowing that you have plenty of time to complete your journey will help you to relax and avoid the temptation to push your speed.

## **7. Distractions**

Driving requires your full concentration all of the time. Trying to do something else while driving will distract you, slow your reactions and increase the risk of crashing.

According to road traffic legislation and contained within the Highway Code you must exercise proper control of your vehicle at all times and never drive without due care and attention or reasonable consideration for other road users. It is difficult to determine what may constitute the foregoing, however some are listed in the following paragraphs.

### **7.1 Mobile Phones**

A substantial body of research shows that using a hand-held or hands-free mobile phone while driving is a significant distraction, and substantially increases the risk of the driver crashing. There are instructions that apply to all Council staff who drive vehicles for the course of their work. This is outlined in the Driving at Work Policy.

It is illegal to use a hand-held mobile phone while driving (this includes any activity that involves holding the phone such as dialling a number or writing a message). Driving whilst using hands-free phone could also be construed as not exercising proper control of the vehicle.

Using a hands-free phone while driving does not significantly reduce the risks, because the problems are caused mainly by the mental distraction and divided attention of taking part in a phone conversation at the same time as driving. Consequently, the Council has adopted a policy requirement prohibiting drivers from using hands-free kits as well as hand-held mobile devices while driving.

### **7.2 Other Equipment**

Modern vehicles are equipped with a multitude of advanced technologies, from GPS navigation systems and Bluetooth connectivity to in-car entertainment and driver assistance features. While these innovations significantly enhance convenience and

safety, it is crucial that they are used responsibly to avoid distractions while driving. Engaging with technology whether it's adjusting the GPS, taking a call, or changing music should be done in a way that ensures the driver's full attention remains on the road. Misuse of these technologies can lead to reduced reaction times, impaired judgment, and ultimately, accidents. Drivers must prioritize safety by, setting up devices before starting their journey, and pulling over safely if they need to interact with their vehicle's technology. Responsible use of in-car technology not only ensures the driver's safety but also that of passengers and other road users.

Dash-mounted front and rear cameras are now being installed as standard in some vehicles or may be retrofitted. When these cameras are fitted to a Council-owned vehicle, they should be operated according to the provided instructions and must not be adjusted while the vehicle is in motion. Likewise, if these cameras are fitted to an employee's vehicle, they should be used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and not adjusted while driving.

For Council-owned vehicles, dash cams will have their microphones muted.

### 7.3 Smoking, Eating, Drinking or Tuning the Radio.

Many seemingly simple and innocent actions can be distracting while driving and can lead to fatal crashes. Such incidents have occurred because drivers chose to unwrap a sweet, take a drink, or light a cigarette while driving.

The Smoking, Health and Social Care (Scotland) Act 2005 prohibits smoking in certain premises, making it an offence. The Prohibition of Smoking in Certain Premises (Scotland) Regulations 2006 lists the premises where smoking is banned, which includes "vehicles which one or more persons use for work." Furthermore, the Smoking Prohibition (Children in Motor Vehicles) (Scotland) Act 2016 makes it an offence to smoke in any vehicle with children (those under the age of 18).

These requirements are reflected in the Council's Smoking Policy. With respect to the driving at work policy, this also includes e-cigarettes.

As stated in Section 7.2, any of these activities, aside from the smoking legislation, may under certain circumstances be deemed careless. Therefore, you should always stop the vehicle before undertaking such activities.



## 8. Occupant Safety

### 8.1 Seat Belts

Under UK law, it is mandatory for all vehicle occupants to wear a seat belt if one is fitted. This requirement is crucial for ensuring the safety of both drivers and passengers. Failure to wear a seat belt can result in a fine of up to £500.

Drivers are responsible for ensuring that all passengers under 14 years old are properly restrained in accordance with these laws. Additionally, any medical conditions that may affect a person's ability to wear a seat belt must be reported to the DVLA (Driving and Vehicle Licensing Agency).

#### Seat Belt Requirements

- **Adults:** All adults must wear a seat belt in the front and back seats of the vehicle. Only one person is allowed per seat equipped with a seat belt.
- **Children:** Children under 12 years old or shorter than 135 centimeters must use an appropriate child car seat. Once they reach 12 years old or exceed 135 centimeters, they must wear a seat belt.

#### Child Car Seat Regulations

- Children must be secured in a child car seat suitable for their weight and height until they reach the age of 12 or a height of 135 centimetres, whichever comes first.
- There are specific types of child car seats based on weight categories, and they must comply with EU safety standards. For instance:
  - **Group 0:** For infants up to 10 kg, typically rear-facing.
  - **Group 1:** For children weighing 9 to 18 kg, can be rear or forward-facing.
  - **Group 2 and 3:** For children weighing 15 to 36 kg, using booster seats or cushions.

By adhering to these regulations, we can significantly reduce the risk of injury in the event of an accident, promoting a safer driving environment for everyone.

## 8.2 Head Restraints

Adjust your head restraint correctly, and check that every passenger has their head restraint correctly adjusted. Properly adjusted head restraints help to protect against whiplash, and prevent long-term injuries. The top of the head restraint should be level with the top of your head and it should be as close to the back of your head as possible.

## 9. Accident, Breakdown and Emergency Procedures

The procedure for accidents is contained in the Council's Driving at Work Policy. It is essential that you are familiar with, and follow, these procedures, if an emergency occurs.

In the vehicle, keep copies of:

- The emergency procedures.
- Contact details for the person(s) to whom you should report emergencies.
- Contact details of the breakdown firm used by the Council and any reference numbers that you may need to quote.

Make sure you have a fully charged mobile phone to summon help if necessary. Do not use the phone while driving.

A summary of the main points to remember is below however you should always follow the procedures set down within the Driving at Work Policy.

### 9.1 Accidents

- Use hazard warning lights and switch off your engine.
- Do not move injured passengers unless they are in immediate danger of further injury from other vehicles or from fire or explosion.

- Call the emergency services immediately; provide them with information about the situation, any special circumstances (for example, if carrying oxygen bottles) and if any passengers have additional needs.
- If child passengers are present, ensure an adult remains with them.
- If the emergency services are called, stay at the scene until they allow you to leave.
- Obtain the names and addresses of all independent witnesses (if possible).
- Ensure the vehicle is roadworthy before continuing the journey.
- If there is any injury or the names of people involved are not exchanged, report the accident to the Police as soon as possible or in any case within 24 hours.
- Ensure any dashcam footage is retained.
- Notify your line manager who will assist with any arrangements that may be required.
- Do not admit blame or liability to the other driver.

Following an accident you will need to discuss the details with your line manager at the next appropriate moment. This will help them ensure that any risk assessments that they have made are relevant and up to date. They will also assist you with any support you require post-accident including assistance with documentation or welfare arrangements.

## 9.2 Breakdowns

Where a Council owned vehicle is required to travel to mainland UK, breakdown cover will be arranged prior to travel. In such circumstances, and having received authority to travel, details of the journey and vehicle should be passed to the Insurance Officer who will make necessary arrangements with the Council's breakdown recovery provider. A card should also be picked up from the Fleet Manager prior to travel which will contain the necessary details.

In the event of a breakdown, the driver should:

- Move the vehicle off the carriageway (onto the hard shoulder on UK motorway) and switch on the hazard warning lights.
- If this is not possible, move it as far away from moving traffic as you can.
- Move passengers out of the nearside of the vehicle and as far away from it and other traffic as possible. No one should stand between the vehicle and oncoming traffic.
- On busy roads (or on UK motorways) passengers should be taken onto the embankment or grass margin and as far from the traffic as is practicable.
- Keep passengers together, keep children under constant supervision.
- Telephone the emergency services, or breakdown firm, giving them accurate details of the vehicle's location, and whether children or passengers with mobility problems are being carried.
- Telephone your nominated contact person to tell them what has happened.
- On a motorway, use the roadside emergency telephone as this will enable the Police to pinpoint your location.