



Advice for companies manufacturing trailers

Construction and Use, and Lighting Regulations

All trailers used on the road must comply with various regulations about their construction and use. These are primarily The Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986 (as amended) and The Road Vehicles Lighting Regulations 1989 (as amended). For a trailer to be used on the UK highway it must be safe and well-engineered so that it is unlikely to fall apart or otherwise cause danger to other road users.

In addition, from 29 October 2012 onwards, new trailers will need to be approved. This means that a government agency will need to sanction the design of new trailers before sales can begin.

Obtaining approval

Most trailers will need to be type approved to European Community Whole Vehicle Type Approval (ECWV-TA) standards. 'Type approval' can be obtained from a number of European type approval bodies including the UK's Vehicle Certification Agency (VCA). The approval process involves an assessment of certain aspects of the trailer design, inspection of a prototype and assessment of the production facility. This must all take place before production of the trailers starts.

Alternatively, specialised trailers built in low numbers can be assessed individually after they have been built. This is done by the Vehicle Operator Services Agency (VOSA), under an Individual Vehicle Approval (IVA) inspection. In this scenario every single trailer produced must be towed to a VOSA test station and inspected. For larger trailers (over 3500kg), certain items (such as Brakes) will have to be tested by an independent party and documentary evidence of compliance obtained, before the trailer can be submitted to VOSA.

For manufacturers of low numbers of trailers the choice of whether to use type approval or IVA is a commercial decision and will be made based on expected production volumes, expected markets (UK or overseas), costs of the schemes and other factors.

Brief details of the standards which apply

Small trailers (categories O1 and O2) – lights, reflectors and their installation, towing coupling and its installation, statutory plate (showing gross (maximum) weight), and brakes. If gross weight is 750kg or below brakes do not have to be fitted but bear in mind that where they are fitted they need to comply. The lights, tyres and towing coupling must be approved to European standards by the supplier and e-marked.

Large trailers (categories O3 and O4) (above 3500kg gross weight) - In addition to the items tested on small trailers, much more extensive brake testing requirements would apply. Depending on its size the trailer is likely to need side and rear under-run guards and spray suppression devices. If the trailer is fitted with axles that steer, a space heater or specialised electronic equipment, then these will also need to be tested.



Entry into service of trailers

Trailers in the UK are treated differently to motor vehicles in as much as they are not registered. However starting from 29th April 2012 new requirements for notification and record keeping will begin to come into force, from the same dates that type approval is required.

Large trailers subject to annual test with VOSA

Currently a large trailer used to carry goods must be notified to VOSA at any time in its first year of use on public roads, for VOSA to issue a **Ministry Plate**. It will be added to the VOSA records and must be brought in for its first annual roadworthiness test and plating examination, before it is one year old.

From **October 2012** it will become mandatory for a large trailer to be notified to VOSA **before** it is used on the public road. (As an exception, a partly built trailer chassis can be towed to the place where a body will be mounted upon it or the build completed). As part of the notification procedure, VOSA will check the evidence that the vehicle is approved before issuing clearance to use the trailer. A trailer stopped by the side of the road which has not been cleared by VOSA to operate may be subject to enforcement action.

Other trailers

For trailers which are not subject to an annual test, because they are small (under 3500kg gross weight) or not used to carry goods, it will be mandatory from **October 2012** for the person retailing the trailer to the public to keep records of every trailer sold for 10 years, and these records must include details of the type approval **Certificate of Conformity** or **Individual Vehicle Approval (IVA) certificate** which covers the trailer.

It will be possible to use a third party to retain the data on the retailers behalf. It is envisaged that commercial companies will offer a registry service to manufacturers and retailers, which may offer additional benefits throughout the life of the trailer. At present a similar kind of scheme, known as CRiS, is available for caravans.

More information

VCA and type approval

www.dft.gov.uk/vca
www.businesslink.gov.uk/vehicleapprovalschemes

VOSA and IVA

www.businesslink.gov.uk/iva

The Road Vehicles (Approval) Regulations 2009

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukSI/2009/717/contents/made>

Trade Associations SMMT, VBRA and NCC supply advice to their members

www.smmt.co.uk
www.vbra.co.uk
www.nationalcaravan.co.uk

VCA – Delivering a Safer Environment

www.dft.gov.uk/vca