

Foreign Licences / Vehicles

A Brief Guide

Several Questions have arisen recently from response officers regarding foreign registered vehicles and drivers producing a foreign driving licence.

I stop a driver who produces a Foreign Driving Licence, is it valid in the UK?

Drivers who produce an EU (European Union) licence are entitled to drive in the UK for an unlimited time period those classes of vehicles that they are entitled to drive in their home country. EU driving licences are very similar to our own plastic card licences and display on the reverse which classes of vehicles the holder is entitled to drive.

Which countries are in the EU?

Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom

The driver produces a NON EU Licence, what happens now?

Visitors from Non EU countries may drive in the UK for UP TO 12 months from when they first became resident, irrespective of return visits to their own country (regardless of the frequency) After a 12 month period, they **MUST** apply and pass a UK driving test.

Certain countries are exempted from this rule for example – Hong Kong, Australia, South Africa, Canada, Barbados, Japan, New Zealand, Switzerland, Zimbabwe (not a prescriptive list) in this case these visitors may apply for an exchange of licence without passing a UK Driving Test if they reside in the UK for more than 12 months.

Please bear in mind there is no such thing as an “International Driving Licence” – which may be purchased on the Internet for a small fee.

What about Insurance?

Foreign Registered Vehicle

If the vehicle is registered abroad, the driver may produce an insurance policy from a company outside the UK

HOWEVER

Foreign registered vehicles which are circulating temporarily in the UK are usually exempt from UK registration and licensing. The exemption (provided under EC Directives) allows foreign vehicles to circulate within the UK without the need to register or pay certain duties in this and limits visits to six months in a twelve month period.

To qualify a visitor must have their normal residence outside the UK and live there for at least 185 days in each calendar year because of personal or occupational ties. The vehicle must also comply with the registration and licensing requirements of its home country and be insured for the duration of its stay in this country.

Anyone whose normal residence is in the UK or whose vehicle has been used in the UK for more than six months in any twelve has to make an application to register and license the vehicle here.

Just to clarify that point – any vehicle that has been used in the UK for more than 6 months HAS to be registered (given UK VRM plate) and MOT'd, it also MUST be insured by an authorised insurer (one who carries out business under the Insurance Companies Act 1982 and is a member of the Motor Insurance Bureau and only in the UK).

To clarify, the vehicle should be registered in the UK, hold a current MOT, British insurance and a valid vehicle excise licence.

UK Registered Vehicle (foreign driver)

Sect 143 Road Traffic Act 1988 states; any person must not use a motor vehicle unless they have a policy that meets the requirement of the Act.

Sect 145 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 includes the requirement that the policy must be issued by an authorised insurer - one who carries out business under the Insurance Companies Act 1982 and is a member of the Motor Insurance Bureau

So a UK registered vehicle MUST have UK Insurance.

We hope this has helped

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