

Appendix 8: Hackney carriage and private hire

Vehicle suitability inspection (VSI) manual

February 2024

The Freight Transport Association (FTA) published the 'National Inspection Standards' in 2012; a 'Best practice guide to inspection of Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles'. That document "*...sets out the procedures and standards for those who carry out inspections of hackney carriage and private hire vehicles*". It "*...provides additional testing requirements to those in the MOT Inspection Manual*" and advises that "*...local licensing authorities use the best practice guide in conjunction with the VOSA MOT Inspection Manual as an advocate to public safety.*"

In recognition of the guidance from the DfT and FTA, Somerset Council has adopted a VSI format which comprises of the procedures and standards of inspection set out in the 'National Inspection Standards', which Somerset Council has modified in some places to be consistent with the latest DfT guidance and Council policy.

To allow a thorough examination of a vehicle or any part thereof, it must be presented for test in a clean condition. The vehicle presented will fail the test if, in the opinion of the vehicle examiner, the vehicle is so dirty that it would be unreasonable for the test to be carried out.

A test will not be carried out unless the examination fee has been paid in advance.

1. Lamps, reflectors and electrical equipment

1.1 Electrical wiring and equipment

Method of inspection	Reason for fail
<i>This examination is limited to that part of the electrical system that can be readily seen without dismantling any part of the vehicle.</i>	
a) Check all electrical wiring for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • condition • security • position • signs of overheating • heavy oil contamination b) Check all switches controlling all obligatory lights.	a) Wiring: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • positioned so that it is chafing or clipped to a fuel line or likely to be damaged by heat so that insulation will become ineffective. • with clear evidence of overheating. • heavily contaminated with oil. b) Insecurity or malfunction of a switch controlling an obligatory light.

1.2 Additional lamps

Method of inspection	Reason for fail
<i>With the ignition switched on check the following:</i>	
Reversing lamps a) The reversing lamps emit a diffused white light when reverse gear is selected. b) The lamps extinguish when neutral gear is selected. c) The lamps are in good working order and are secure. d) The lamps do not flicker when lightly tapped by hand.	Reversing lamps a) Fails to operate or does not emit a white diffused light. b) Fails to extinguish when neutral or forward gear is selected. c) Are not in good working order or insecure. d) Flickers when tapped lightly by hand.
Front fog/driving lamps e) A single front fog lamp emitting a white or yellow diffused light illuminates only when dipped beam is selected. f) A pair of matched fog lamps both emitting a white or yellow diffused light should illuminate together. g) A pair of matched, long-range driving lamps, both emitting a white diffused light, should illuminate together.	Front fog/driving lamps e) Lamp inoperative or operates other than in dipped beam mode. f) Operate incorrectly. g) Operate incorrectly
'For Hire' and roof signs For hackney carriages: h) Roof sign fitted. i) Ensure the sign is securely fastened to the vehicle.	'For Hire' and roof signs For hackney carriages: h) Does not have roof sign. i) Insecure sign.

<p>j) Condition and security of wiring.</p> <p>k) Functional test of sign for illumination.</p> <p>For private hire vehicles:</p> <p>l) Check for roof sign as prohibited on private hire vehicles.</p>	<p>j) Unsatisfactory wiring condition.</p> <p>k) Sign does not illuminate or Illumination not consistent across the sign, i.e. all light bulb(s) LED(s) illuminated when switched on.</p> <p>For private hire vehicles:</p> <p>l) Roof sign fitted.</p>
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1.3 Meter test – hackney carriages only

Method of inspection	Reason for fail
<i>Not currently in use.</i>	

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2. Steering and suspension

2.1 Steering control – steering wheel

Method of inspection	Reason for fail
<p><i>With both hands rock the steering wheel from side to side at right angles to steering column and apply slight downward and upward pressure to the steering wheel rim (in line with column). Note the following.</i></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Fractures in steering wheel hub. b) Fractures in steering wheel rim. c) Steering wheel spokes loose or fractured. d) Jagged edges on steering wheel rim. e) If possible, check the retaining device on steering wheel is fitted. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Steering wheel hub fractured. b) Steering wheel rim fractured. c) A steering wheel spoke loose or fractured. d) Jagged edges on steering wheel rim likely to injure the driver. e) A steering wheel hub-retaining device not fitted.

2.2 Steering control – steering column

Method of inspection	Reason for fail
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Try to lift the steering in line with the steering column and note the movement at centre of steering wheel. b) While steering wheel is rotated, check for deterioration in any flexible coupling or universal joint of steering column. c) Where practical, check any clamp bolts for presence and security of locking devices. (These may be located in the engine compartment or under chassis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Excessive movement at centre of steering wheel in line with steering column (end float). <i>Note: Certain types of steering column might show some movement not due to excessive wear, e.g. those fitted with universal joints or flexible couplings.</i> b) A flexible coupling or universal joint deteriorated, worn or insecure. c) A coupling clamp bolt or locking device loose or missing

4.3 Suspension spring units and linkages

Method of inspection	Reason for fail
<p>Coil springs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check for welding repairs. 	<p>Coil springs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repaired by welding.

3. Body, structure and general items

3.1 Vehicle body and condition (exterior)

Method of inspection	Reason for fail
Examine the body thoroughly for security, corrosion, damage, poor repair/paint match or sharp edges that are likely to cause injury.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a) An insecure or missing body panel, trim, step or accessory.b) Any sharp edge whatsoever which may cause injury.c) Heavy scuffing, abrasions or deformation to front and rear bumper.d) More than 8 stone chips visible on a bonnet/grill that has not penetrated to the metal or more than 4 stone chips that have penetrated to the metal.e) More than 8 stone chips on any panel including door edges, provided the base coat has not been penetrated.f) More than 4 stone chips on any panel where the base coat has been penetrated to the metal and is untreated.g) A single dent of more than 80mm, or more than 3 dents of not more than 20mm in any one panel.h) More than 4 scratches and or abrasions of more than 50mm in length in any one panel provided that the base coat has not been penetrated.i) Dull, faded paintwork which has lost its gloss finish or paint miss-match to a panel(s) to such an extent that it detracts from the overall appearance of the vehicle.j) Evidence of poor repairs and or paint finish to a repaired panel(s) including runs and overspray to adjoining panels/trim that detracts from the overall appearance of the vehicle.k) Obvious signs of rust/corrosion of any size particularly those that are covered by advertising signs.l) Lack of clearly displayed or omission of 'No Smoking' signs.

3.2 Vehicle body, security and condition (interior)

Method of inspection	Reason for fail
a) Examine thoroughly the interior for damaged, insecure or loose fixtures, fittings or accessories.	a) Insecure and loose fixtures, fittings or accessories.
b) Dirty, missing and worn trim, carpets, seat belts, mats, headlining, boot area and inclusion of prescribed items. Remove mats to inspect carpets underneath for cleanliness and wear.	b) Missing, dirty, soiled, stained worn or insecure trim, carpets, headlining, and mats in such a condition that they are likely to soil or damage passengers' clothing or luggage.
c) Examine interior lights, motion door locks and warning lights.	c) An inoperative interior light (all lights must illuminate if they are part of the manufacturer's standard equipment). Missing or defective motion switch/lock or warning lamp not illuminated.
d) Examine heating, demisting and air condition systems for correct operation, including passenger compartment controls where fitted (includes electric front and rear screen demisters).	d) A system(s) which does not function correctly, or any part is missing including vents, controls and switches.
e) Examine all windows ensuring they allow lowering and rising easily.	e) An opening window that is inoperative or difficult to open and or close mechanism broken/missing.
f) Examine interior door locks, grab handles/rails safety covers.	f) Missing, defective or loose door locks, child locks, protective covers grab handles and rails. Grab handles/rails, which are rigid to aid the blind and partially sighted, and are worn to excess.
g) Examine grills/partitions for security and condition.	g) A grill/partition which is insecure or has sharp edge which may cause injury to passengers or driver.
h) Examine electrical wiring for condition, security, including intercom systems.	h) Frayed, chaffing wiring, non-shielded terminals and cables so routed that they cause a trip hazard, cables that can be easily disconnected. Intercom system defective, warning light inoperative and signs illegible/missing.
i) Examine the boot for access, contents, cleanliness and water ingress.	i) Unable to open, close and or lock boot lid, failure of boot lid support mechanism, defective seals/evidence of water ingress, dirty boot and/or carpets, loose items stored in boot (i.e. spare wheel tools and equipment etc).
j) Check for presence and display of 'No Smoking' sign.	j) 'No Smoking' sign missing/not adequately displayed.

<p>Additional items to be inspected in limousines and novelty vehicles.</p> <p>k) All fixtures and fittings, i.e. mirror balls, drinks cabinets, televisions etc must be stored securely and not hinder the ingress or egress from the passenger compartment.</p> <p>l) A notice identifying the maximum seating capacity to be displayed in the passenger compartment and clearly visible to all passengers. It may be necessary to display more than one sign indicating the maximum seating capacity.</p>	<p>l) Any fixture or fitting that is loose or insecure or where walkways are blocked that prevent ease of ingress or egress from the passenger compartment.</p> <p>m) No maximum seating capacity sign or signs displayed. A sign or signs not clearly visible to all passengers.</p>
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3.3 Bumper bars

Method of inspection	Reason for fail
<p>Examine the bumper bars and check the following.</p>	
<p>a) They are secure to their mountings.</p> <p>b) The mountings are secure to the vehicle.</p> <p>c) There is no evidence of damage.</p>	<p>a) A loose bumper bar or mounting. A weakened bumper bar and/or mounting is insecure because of poor repairs.</p> <p>b) A fractured mounting bracket. Mounting bolts so worn or elongated that the bumper bar is likely to detach partially or completely from the vehicle when in use. A bumper bar secured by wire or other temporary means is regarded as insecure and must be rejected.</p> <p>c) Bumper bars which have jagged edges, cracks, splits or projections, which may cause injury to persons near the vehicle. Paint miss-match or fading which is significantly different to that of the rest of the paintwork.</p>

3.4 Doors and seats

Method of inspection	Reason for fail
<p>Doors and emergency exits</p> <p>Examine the condition of all doors and emergency exits. Check door locks, striker plates, handles and hinges for security, wear and missing and damaged trim/cover plates.</p> <p>Check the presence, condition and correct functioning of all door stay catches and devices (including sliding doors).</p> <p>Check markings describing the presence and method of opening emergency exit(s) are readily visible on or adjacent to the exit and are legible.</p> <p>Check that seats are secure, clean and not unduly worn.</p>	<p>Doors and emergency exits</p> <p>a) A door or emergency exit does not latch securely in the closed position.</p> <p>b) A door or emergency exit cannot be opened from both the inside and outside the vehicle from the relevant control in each case.</p> <p>c) Missing, loose or worn handles, lock or striker plate.</p> <p>d) Markings describing the presence and method of opening an emergency exit missing, illegible or incorrect.</p> <p>e) Missing, loose or damaged trim/cover plate.</p> <p>f) Seat cushion(s) stained, torn, holed, worn or insecure. A seat that does not provide adequate support at base or backrest. Torn, slashed or badly stained seats are not acceptable.</p> <p>g) A door stay catch or device missing, excessively worn or not fulfilling its function.</p>
<p>Accessibility: wheelchair vehicles</p> <p>Door configurations for wheelchair accessible vehicles:</p> <p>a) Single rear door – must open to a minimum of 90 degrees and be capable of locking in place.</p> <p>b) Twin rear doors – both must open to a minimum of 180 degrees and be capable of being locked in place. This is to enable an attendant (driver or guide) to assist the wheelchair passenger if required.</p>	<p>Accessibility: wheelchair vehicles</p> <p>a) Door does not open to a full 90 degrees and cannot be secured in the open position.</p> <p>b) Twin doors do not open to a full 180 degrees and cannot be secured in the open position.</p>

4. Exhaust, fuel and emissions

4.1 Exhaust system

Method of inspection	Reason for fail
Where applicable, check for presence, security and adequacy of grease shields to hot exhausts.	A heat shield missing, insecure or inadequate.

4.2 Fuel system – pipes and tanks

Method of inspection	Reason for fail
<p>a) Check that fuel tank filler caps are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Present• of the correct type• secure and seated properly to ensure correct function of sealing.	<p>a) A filler cap missing or unsuitable or in such condition that it would not prevent fuel leaking or spilling.</p>
<p>b) Examine pipes to see they are securely clipped to prevent damage by chafing and cracking, and are not in a position where they will be fouled by moving parts.</p>	<p>b) Damaged, chafed, insecure pipes or pipes so positioned that there is a danger of them fouling moving parts.</p>
<p>c) Check that no fuel pipe runs immediately adjacent to or in direct contact with electrical wiring or the exhaust system.</p>	<p>c) A fuel pipe immediately adjacent to or in direct contact with electrical wiring or exhaust system.</p>
	<p>d) Temporary/emergency fuel cap fitted.</p>

5. Driver's view of the road

5.1 Mirrors and view to rear

Method of inspection	Reason for fail
<i>The number and position of all obligatory mirrors must be checked.</i>	A mirror reflecting surface deteriorated or broken. <i>Note: A defective additional external mirror is not a reason for rejection.</i>
Check the condition of each mirror reflecting surface.	

5.2 Windscreen – view to the front

Method of inspection	Reason for fail
<i>Sit in the driver's seat and check that there is reasonable view of the road ahead, bearing in mind the original design of the vehicle.</i>	The position or size of any object restricts the driver's view of the road ahead, bearing in mind the original design of the vehicle.
For all air operated wipers examine: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the condition of any visible piping. the function of the operating mechanism. the function of necessary valves to protect the braking system. <p><i>Note: Equipment or objects not originally fitted to the vehicle as part of the original design must not obstruct the designed forward view of the driver. In particular, objects such as (but not limited to) pennants, cab decorations and external stone guards/visors should not interrupt the view through the swept area by the windscreen wipers.</i></p>	Air operated wipers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> pipes inadequately clipped or supported. incorrect function of the wipers or leaking components. incorrect operation of protection valves.

5.3 Window glass or other transparent material

Method of inspection	Reason for fail
a) Visually check the condition of all windscreens, internal screens, partitions, side, rear, roof and door windows for cracks, surface damage and discolouration.	a) A crack, surface damage or discoloration in glass or other transparent material that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> impairs the driver's front, side, or rear view of the road. presents a danger to any person in the vehicle.
b) Check presence and security of all windscreens, side, roof, or rear windows, or internal screens or partitions.	b) A windscreen or any other outside window missing, or any windscreen, window, internal screen or partition insecure.
c) Check for evidence of obvious leaks from all windscreens and side, rear, roof or door windows.	c) Any external window or windscreen is obviously leaking.
d) Check for presence, security and condition of guard rails or barriers at windows, internal screens or partitions.	d) A guard-rail or barrier at a window, internal screen or partition missing, insecure or damaged.

e) For all vehicles first used before 1 January 1959. As far as is practicable, check that glass fitted to windscreens and outside windows facing to the front is safety glass, except glass fitted to the upper deck of a double deck bus.

f) For all vehicles used on or after 1 January 1959, as far as is practicable, check that glass used for windscreens and all outside windows is safety glass, or safety glazing.

g) Vehicles first used on or after 1 June 1978, check that windscreens and other windows, wholly or partly, on either side of the drivers' seat are made from safety glass displaying an acceptable safety mark

Note: Marking is not required for safety glass on vehicles first used before 1 June 1978.

e) The windscreen and/or any outside window facing to the front of a vehicle obviously not safety glass fitted to a vehicle first used before 1 January 1959.

f) Glass used for a windscreen or an outside window is obviously not safety glass.

g) For vehicles first used on or after 1 June 1978, that windscreens and/or other windows wholly or partly on either side of the drivers seat that are not made from safety glass display an acceptable safety mark

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6. Additional requirements

6.1 Transmission

Method of inspection	Reason for fail
Examine transmission, check for the following.	
a) Missing or loose flange bolts.	a) A loose or missing flange bolt(s).
b) Cracked or insecure flanges.	b) A flange cracked, or loose on the transmission shaft.
c) Wear in shaft and/or wheel bearings.	c) Excessive wear in shaft bearing.
d) Security of bearing housings.	d) A bearing housing insecure to its fixing.
e) Cracks or fractures in bearing housings.	e) A cracked or fractured bearing housing.
f) Wear in universal joints.	f) Excessive wear in a universal joint.
g) Deterioration of flexible couplings.	g) Deterioration of a transmission shaft flexible coupling.
h) Distorted, damaged shafts.	h) A damaged, cracked or bent shaft.
i) Deterioration of bearing housing flexible mountings.	i) Deterioration of a flexible mounting of a bearing housing.
j) Clearance between transmission shafts and adjacent components.	j) Evidence of fouling between any transmission shaft and an adjacent component.

6.2 Oil and water leaks

Method of inspection	Reason for fail
a) Check vehicle for oil and water leaks from any assembly or component to the ground.	a) An oil or water leak, from any assembly, which deposits fluids underneath the vehicle whilst stationary.
b) And/or which could be deposited on surrounding bodywork or onto the exhaust system.	b) Leaks which, when the vehicle is moving, could be deposited upon the surrounding bodywork, exhaust and brake system so that it would: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contaminate areas. • could potentially cause a health, safety or fire risk.
<i>Note: If necessary, the engine can be run at idle speed to confirm the existence of an oil lea</i>	

6.3 Luggage/load space

Method of inspection	Reason for fail
Physical separation is not so much an issue as is the safety of passengers in the event of an accident. The luggage should therefore be secure and prevented from becoming dislodged in an accident in such a manner as may cause injury. Such security can be by means of a sheet or net, which could be anchored to the floor of the luggage area. Clearly if the luggage compartment is not physically separated from the passenger compartment then care will need to be taken so as not to carry any hazardous items such as fuel cans, detergents or other loose items that could leak if they become damaged.	<p>Load restraint system, if required, not present at time of test.</p> <p>Load restraint system faulty or unserviceable</p>

6.4 Trailers and tow bars

Method of inspection	Reason for fail
<p>Trailers</p> <p>Where a local licensing authority permits the use of trailers for the carriage of luggage, then the trailer needs to be presented for test along with the vehicle that will be authorised to tow it. The trailer will also need to display the appropriate registration plate and a licence plate.</p> <p><i>Note: Trailers presented for inspection should be built by an approved or recognised trailer manufacturer</i></p>	<p>Trailers</p> <p>Rejections as indicated on the trailer inspection sheet.</p>
<p>Towbars</p> <p>Where tow bars are fitted checks must be made on the condition and security to the towing vehicle</p>	<p>Towbars</p> <p>Rejections as indicated on the trailer inspection sheet.</p>

7. Ancillary equipment

7.1 Wheelchair restraint and access equipment

Method of inspection	Reason for fail
<p>Wheelchair restraint</p> <p>a) Where applicable check condition and operation of wheelchair restraint.</p> <p>b) A system for the effective anchoring of wheelchairs shall be provided within the vehicle in all spaces designated as wheelchair spaces.</p>	<p>Wheelchair restraint</p> <p>a) A wheelchair restraint is defective, worn or missing.</p> <p>b) Wheelchair anchorage systems and devices do not conform to European Directive 76/115 EEC (as amended).</p>
<p>Wheelchair access and equipment</p> <p>A vehicle shall be fitted with either of the following forms of wheelchair access equipment:</p> <p><i>Ramps</i></p> <p>c) Check that appropriate ramps fitted are securely installed in the designated storage area. Examine for damage, deformity, sharp edges etc. and provision of anti-slip covering.</p> <p><i>Wheelchair lift</i></p> <p>d) A purpose designed wheelchair lift shall conform to the LOLER 98 Regulations. A report, confirming that the lifting equipment is safe to use, shall be presented at the time of the vehicle inspection. Vehicles presented for inspection with a wheelchair lift will require a LOLER certificate that is valid for a period of six months from the date of issue.</p> <p><i>Note: Passenger lifting equipment will need to be thoroughly examined by a competent person, in use, at least once every six months.</i></p> <p>e) Any purpose designed wheelchair access ramp that is carried must be lightweight and easy to deploy. The installed ramp shall have visible reference to safe working load of 250kgs and certified to BS 6109.</p> <p>f) Wheelchair access equipment shall be fitted either into the rear or side access door of the vehicle. Where it is fitted to a side door this shall be the door situated on the nearside of the vehicle, i.e. kerbside when stopped in a normal road.</p> <p>g) The aperture of the door into which the access equipment is fitted shall have minimum clear headroom in its central third of 48 inches (1,220mm). The measurement shall be taken from the upper centre of the aperture to a point directly below on either the upper face of the fully raised lift platform or the upper face of the ramp fully deployed on level ground.</p> <p>h) A locking mechanism shall be fitted that holds the access door in the open position whilst in use.</p>	<p>Wheelchair access and equipment.</p> <p>c) Ramps missing, insecurely stored, damaged/deformed, anti-slip covering in poor condition or missing.</p> <p>d) Vehicle not presented with a valid or current LOLER certificate.</p> <p>e) The installed ramp does not have any visible reference to a maximum safe working load or certification to BS 610.</p> <p>f) Wheelchair access equipment is fitted to the offside access door of the vehicle.</p> <p>g) There is not clear headroom in the aperture within the central third of 48 inches (1,220mm).</p> <p>h) No evidence of a suitable locking mechanism to hold the door open.</p>

i) All wheelchair tracking must be fit for purpose and structurally sound.

i) Damaged or insecure tracking or detritus deposits within the tracking rails.

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