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Department for Infrastructure



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TRAIN DRIVING LICENCES AND CERTIFICATES REGULATIONS NORTHERN IRELAND 2010

A Guide to the suspension and withdrawal of licences

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Background

The Train Driving Licences and Certificates Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010 (as amended) (TDLCR) give duties to different organisations and people. We have produced a series of separate guides to explain the duties and responsibilities arising from the TDLCR and how you can take appropriate action. Together these guides form a complete set of guidance.

There are separate guides:

- Guide for train operators
- Guide to the medical and occupational psychological fitness requirements
- Guide to training and examination requirements
- Guide to the suspension and withdrawal of licences
- Guide to the certificate appeals process

We have produced this guide to assist you in meeting the requirements of TDLCR. However, we do not seek to cover every aspect of the legislation. It remains your responsibility to ensure that you are compliant with the relevant legislation.

The guidance does not introduce new duties or requirements but it sets out what we consider to be good practice.

Please note this guidance is intended for use only in Northern Ireland

We periodically update these guides, and you can download the latest version of any of these guides from our website

1. Introduction

1.1. Train driving licences are normally valid for 10 years. To ensure that drivers continue to maintain the required standards throughout the validity period of a licence, there are legal obligations to ensure that the conditions required for its issue continue to be met. Therefore under the TDLCR, train operators are responsible for ensuring that the drivers they employ meet the following conditions.

- passing medicals at set times (every 3 years up to age 55, annually after that);
- maintaining general competence; and
- undertaking revised / new training where necessary

1.2. Under the TDLCR, train operators must have monitoring systems in place to ensure that their drivers continue to meet the conditions for holding a licence. If a train operator believes as a result of that monitoring that the fitness or competence of one of their drivers does not meet the requirements, they must immediately take any necessary action, which may include:

- ensuring the driver undergoes appropriate medical or occupational psychological fitness examination;
- ensuring the driver undergoes appropriate competence training or examination;
- informing DfI of anything which may affect the validity of a licence, so that we can consider whether it is appropriate for us to suspend or withdraw that licence; and
- suspending or withdrawing the driver's train driving certificate.

1.3. There are a number of specific regulations in the TDLCR which set out the respective duties for DfI, train operators and train drivers that are relevant to the validity of licences – these are outlined below.

What are the statutory duties for DfI / Train Operators / Train Drivers that are relevant to suspension and withdrawal?

1.4. The table below sets out the key, relevant requirements in TDLCR.

<i>Regulation</i>	<i>Applies to</i>	<i>Wording</i>
17(1)	Train operator	"A railway undertaking or infrastructure manager must have a system for monitoring train drivers employed by them to check that the requirements of these Regulations which apply to them are adhered to."

17(2)	Train operator	“If the results of that monitoring call into question a train driver’s competence for the job, or the continuing validity of their train driving licence or their train driving certificate, the railway undertaking or infrastructure manager must immediately take any necessary action which may include– (a) informing the ORR of matters relevant to the continuing validity of the licence; (b) requiring the driver to undergo the relevant examinations or tests referred to in regulations 13 or 15; or (c) suspending or withdrawing the driver’s train driving certificate.”
17(3)	Driver	“A train driver who considers that his state of health calls into question his fitness to drive trains must immediately inform the railway undertaking or infrastructure manager by whom he is employed.”
34(1)(a)	Dfl	“Without prejudice to regulation 37, if the Department considers that the holder of a train driving licence issued by the Department no longer satisfies a condition required for the holding of it, or decides to suspend or withdraw the licence pursuant to paragraph (3), the Dfl must suspend or withdraw the licence.”
34(2)	Driver	“If the Department suspends or withdraws a train driving licence the holder must surrender it to the Department.”
37(1)	Dfl	“If the Department considers that a train driver is a serious threat to the safety of the railways it must immediately take any necessary action.”
22(1)	Dfl	“The Department must have and keep up to date a register of train driving licences issued by it or on its behalf, and in particular the register should include details of any updating, renewal, amendment, expiry, suspension or withdrawal of any such licence, and record any loss, theft or destruction of any such licence.”
26	Train operator	“Railway undertakings and infrastructure managers must, upon request, provide to the Department any information relating to train driving certificates issued by them or any other functions carried out by them under these Regulations”

1.5. Only Dfl can suspend or withdraw licences that we have issued - it is the responsibility of the train operator to supply all relevant information concerning a driver to allow us to make our decision. The licence remains the property of the driver until such time as a decision to suspend or withdraw it is made. Then, if we suspend or withdraw the licence, the holder must surrender it to us as required by regulation 34(2). If the licence has been issued by another safety authority only they can suspend or withdraw it, but Dfl may prohibit a driver holding such a licence from driving trains in Northern Ireland. If a driver wants to voluntarily surrender their train driving licence for any reason (as can be done with road driving licences) they should contact Dfl setting out their reasons.

- 1.6. Additionally, train operators should make their drivers aware that they have a duty under regulation 17(3) of TDLCR to immediately inform their employer if the state of their health calls into question their fitness to drive trains. Our fact sheet for drivers summarises the responsibilities of drivers under the TDLCR.
- 1.7. Train operators must inform DfI in certain circumstances as the information and evidence provided might lead us to consider whether suspension or withdrawal of a licence may be appropriate. This applies even if the driver no longer works for that train operator or has been moved to other duties. Paragraphs 1.14 to 1.17 provide more detail.
- 1.8. To assist cases where licence suspension or withdrawal needs to be considered, train operators should contact DfI at: railsafety@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk providing details including, licence information; date last drove train; employment status; incident details; competence information; medical status; and any other information considered relevant to suspending or withdrawing a licence.
- 1.9. The guidance for train operators includes further information on how train operators need to keep DfI informed of more general or routine changes so that we can keep our register up to date and re-issue licences where appropriate. The fact sheet for drivers includes the type of information about their licence that drivers are responsible for passing on to their employer.

Which requirements have to be maintained in order to keep a licence valid?

- 1.10. In order to maintain the validity of a licence, both the holder of the licence and their employer have ongoing responsibilities to ensure that the driver continues to meet the requirements set out in schedules 1 and 3 of the TDLCR that needed to be satisfied in order for the licence to be issued in the first instance. These form the “criteria” that ongoing licence validity will be measured against. Specifically, a driver needs to:
 - pass medical examinations at least every three years in accordance with schedule 1 of TDLCR (if aged up to 55);
 - pass medical examinations annually in accordance with schedule 1 of TDLCR once a driver is aged 55;
 - inform their employer if they believe that their health may affect their ability to drive;
 - maintain general skills and professional knowledge and requirements as outlined in Schedule 3 of TDLCR, undertaking training / examination as necessary;
 - this includes requirements in relation to a driver’s work, the work environment, the driver’s role and responsibilities such as:
 - knowledge of the general thrust of legislation and rules applicable to rail operation and safety;
 - understanding of the specific requirements and professional demands (of their work as a train driver);

- understanding behaviours which are compatible with safety critical responsibilities (medication, alcohol, drugs, illness, stress, fatigue etc.);
- understanding the importance of being precise in carrying out duties and in working methods; and,
- understanding occupational health and safety and maintaining knowledge of behavioural skills and principles (stress management, extreme situations etc.).

1.11. Train operators should refer to schedule 3 of the TDLCR for the full requirements.

What type of issues might affect licence validity and how should they be raised?

1.12. Train operators are required, as part of their monitoring arrangements under regulation 17(1) to check that the requirements of TDLCR are adhered to in relation to their drivers. Regulation 17(2) requires train operators to inform ORR if the results of that monitoring give rise to any questions about a driver continuing to be able to satisfy all of the conditions for holding it. As explained above, these conditions need to continue to be met in order to assure the ongoing validity of a licence.

1.13. Whilst Dfl needs to be informed about routine information such as:

- Updates of driver details;
- Updated medical dates;
- Resignations of drivers;
- Retirements of drivers;
- Death of a driver;
- An individual voluntarily leaving the driving grade; and
- Periods of more than 3 months' work incapacity;

so that the register we are required to maintain under regulation 24 of TDLCR can be kept up to date, these types of updates can be communicated via email to railsafety@infrastructure-ni.go.uk. Following receipt of the information we will update the register as necessary and consider what the update means in relation to the status of the licence. Where a driver voluntarily leaves the driving grade, unless the operator has flagged concerns around medical fitness or competence we would be unlikely to suspend or withdraw the licence until either the driver's medical expires or competence is deemed to have lapsed (see paragraph 2.1(e)).

1.14. Other information, where the medical fitness and/or competence of the driver could be called into question, might include:

- Involvement in an accident / Signal Passed at Danger / operational incident or accumulation of such events that gives sufficient concern to a train operator for it to conduct its own investigation or instigate internal processes, capability meetings etc.;

- Issues with/incidents involving drugs or alcohol;
- Driver issues that emerge from Competency Management System / Safety Management System monitoring arrangements;
- Failed medical or occupational psychological fitness examination (or missed appointments);
- Misconduct / discipline issues; or
- Instances where a train operator has refused to grant, update or renew a certificate or has suspended or withdrawn one.

1.15. The information above is potentially more serious by nature, and should be communicated, with full details, as soon as possible to ORR through its pro forma, regardless of the employment status of the driver. This type of information may lead us to consider whether suspension or withdrawal is appropriate and it is important that we receive the information promptly to lower the risk of a driver moving on to another train operator or presenting themselves at a training/examination centre as a “new” driver whilst questions around licence validity remain (Appendix B of RIS 3751-TOM Rail Industry Standards for Train Driver Selection covers the importance of transferring safety information between train operators and ORR can quickly check a driver/licence status on its register on request). Whilst it is good practice to alert ORR to potential issues as soon as possible, it is unlikely that we would consider the appropriateness of suspension or withdrawal of the train driving licence until we received confirmation that a train operator’s internal processes had concluded.

1.16. In cases where drivers work for more than one train operator, it is important that each operator consider whether there might be “cross-employer” issues in relation to that driver. For example, a series of safety of line incidents across the respective train operators that taken in isolation might not prompt action but when considered cumulatively might warrant investigation.

1.17. Information relevant to licence validity might also come to light through ORR’s inspections. In cases where ORR considers that a train driver is a serious threat to the safety of the railway we must immediately take any necessary action, such as suspending or withdrawing the licence and prohibiting the driver from driving a train in Northern Ireland.

2. Suspension and withdrawal process

What kind of information and evidence do Dfl require in order to consider the potential suspension or withdrawal of a licence?

2.1. The type of information and supporting evidence that Dfl would require to consider the potential suspension or withdrawal of a licence is detailed under the headings below:

- **Driver has ceased employment – regulation 16(1)**
 - This regulation requires train operators to give written notice to ORR when a person ceases to be employed by them as a train driver, regardless of the reasons. Additional information needs to be provided in the following cases.

- **For resignations following operational incidents or drugs and alcohol test:**
 - Date of resignation
 - Date last drove a train
 - New train operator/employer (if known)
 - Information about the significance of the incident/s or testing that might affect the future validity of the licence.

This may be followed by the completion of the ORR pro-forma, depending on the circumstances of the resignation.

- **For dismissals:**
 - Initial email with all relevant details such as the date and reason for the dismissal (not all reasons for dismissal will have relevance to the ongoing validity of the licence but we will still need to update the register)
 - Date last drove a train.

This may be followed by the completion of the ORR pro-forma, depending on the circumstances of the resignation.

- **Competence / safety issues – regulation 17(2)**
 - Notification of issue by train operator, inspector or third party
 - A clear written statement from the train operator as to why in their judgement the driver's competence has been brought into question and any conclusion reached
 - Date of any removal from driving duties
 - Date last drove a train
 - Any communications between the train operator and driver (letters, meetings, notes from hearings etc.)
 - Results of any competency assessment / re-assessment
 - Investigation report(s) of any safety incident(s)

- Details of any development plans (including monitoring of same)

We recognise that under an operator's competence management system a driver may fall out of competence temporarily and then quickly return to driving following a brief period of further training or development. In such cases it might not be necessary or appropriate to suspend the licence in the interim but operators should use their judgment to decide whether or not they should inform DfI so that we can consider the circumstances or monitor the position.

- **Medical issues – regulation 17(4)**

- Details of failed assessment/operator decision on fitness to drive
- Evidence of the relevant condition
- Details of any missed scheduled appointments
- Date last drove a train

- **Incapacity to work – regulation 17(5)**

- Details of any period of work incapacity of 3 months or more
- Date last drove a train

Although TDLCR requires this, we recognise that drivers may be incapacitated from time to time and will then return to driving. Notification allows DfI to monitor the position and we may need to take action in respect of the licence if the driver is away from driving duties for 12 months or more (see paragraphs 2.2 -2.7 below). In the case of an absence of twelve months or more due to pregnancy/maternity leave the licence will not be suspended but the employer should ensure that the driver is required to demonstrate competence through an examination check on return to work.

- **Retirement**

- Date of retirement
- Date last drove a train (if different)

In cases of retirement, licences will automatically be suspended after 12 months of inactivity as it will be assumed that certain competences will have lapsed because the required frequency of their examination (and any necessary training/re-training) as set out in TDLCR cannot have been satisfied.

- **Death**

- Where ORR is notified that a licence holding driver has died, licences will be automatically withdrawn.

For a summary of the basic information required, please see Annex A.

How does Dfl reach a decision regarding potential suspension or withdrawal of a licence?

2.2. Our decisions are:

- guided by the framework outlined in the TDLCR and the requirements summarised at paragraph 1.12 of this guidance;
- reached following the application of a standardised process (see later);
- evidence based; and
- considered on a case-by-case basis but with reference to previous, similar cases where appropriate.

2.3. Broadly, cases are likely to fall into three main areas – medical fitness, issues around competency, issues around professional knowledge and requirements (i.e. where a driver may have acted in contrary to them). In common with the rail industry - where it may affect driving performance or safety, Dfl has a zero-tolerance policy towards the use of drugs or consumption of alcohol. When presented with clear evidence of contravention of this policy including details of any contact with the Police Service of Northern Ireland, Dfl will withdraw the relevant licence (unless an appeal is pending).

2.4. Our expectation is that a train operator will provide clear evidence to allow us to consider whether licence suspension or withdrawal is appropriate. Where information is missing or unclear we will go back to the train operator and, in some cases, might ask the driver to provide relevant information. However, we will not carry out our own investigation of a driver or the circumstances, nor re-assess the competence of any driver whose licence may be under review.

2.5. Where we think it may be necessary, we may seek specialist advice in order to help us make an informed decision, for example to consider whether a driver may ever regain full fitness to drive following a medical issue.

2.6. For a more detailed illustration of the suspension/withdrawal process, please refer to Annex B. The process we follow can be summarised as follows:

- Dfl informed of an issue(s) which could lead to licence suspension or withdrawal;
- Dfl requests the information and supporting evidence from the train operator;
- Dfl's casework officer reviews the information and supporting evidence, requesting clarifications or additional information from the train operator (and/or the driver) as required;
- a case team is formed, including representatives from ORR's legal, policy and specialist or operational teams, who will consider the evidence before making a recommendation to suspend, withdraw or take no action;
- the recommendation is reviewed and, if agreed, signed-off by a senior manager within ORR; and
- a letter setting out the decision (see later) will be sent to the driver and their most recent employer.

2.7. Each case is considered individually but as a general guide:

- Suspension - may be appropriate when there is temporary loss of validity of a licence because certain conditions are not currently being satisfied but there is the possibility of validity being regained.
- Withdrawal - may be appropriate when there is a loss of validity, and there is no realistic prospect of fitness or competence being regained. It can also occur where a licence has been suspended for more than 12 months and no attempt has been made to regain fitness or competence, or when attempts have been made, and they were unsuccessful.

What happens with the potential suspension or withdrawal of licences issued by other safety authorities?

2.8. In line with regulation 35 of TDLCR, if DfI considers that the holder of a train driving licence, either issued by another safety authority, or by the ORR, no longer satisfies a condition for holding it, we will:

- inform the safety authority or ORR as appropriate;
- inform the safety authority or ORR of the reasons for our concerns;
- ask for a review of the relevant driver's suitability to hold a licence, or request that the licence be suspended or withdrawn;
- notify the European Commission, other safety authorities, and ORR of the request.

2.9. Following the above and pending the outcome of the request to suspend or withdraw a licence, or any other conclusion, we may prohibit the driver in question from driving a train in Northern Ireland.

How are DfI's decisions communicated to the relevant parties?

2.10. Once we have made a decision to suspend or withdraw a licence, the driver will be informed of our decision in a letter containing the following:

Suspension of licences

- The reason(s) for the suspension
- Details of the relevant condition(s) that is/are no longer satisfied
- Details of why the driver must return their licence, where to return it to, and what DfI will do with it on receipt
- What the driver would have to do to regain full validity of the licence (where appropriate)

- What evidence Dfl would require to lift the suspension and return or re-issue the licence to the driver (and who should provide this)
- Details of how to appeal against the decision

Withdrawal of licences

- The reason(s) for the withdrawal
- Details of the relevant condition(s) that is/are no longer satisfied
- Details of why the driver must return their licence and where to return it to
- Details of how to appeal against the decision

2.11. In either case, the letter will be copied to the appropriate inspector (so that any driver management issues can be followed up where needed) and the relevant train operator (i.e. the most recent employer of the driver). We will update our register of train driving licences and mark it for any further action. For example, suspended licences will be withdrawn after 12 months if there is no further contact from the driver or train operator. Where a suspended licence is withdrawn after 12 months, a further letter will then be sent to the driver, copied to the inspector and train operator.

What happens to the licences once a decision to suspend or withdraw has been reached?

2.12. The following shows what happens to a licence following suspension or withdrawal:

Suspension of licences

- If suspended, the licence must be returned to Dfl, and will be held for a maximum of 12 months. Should the driver be re-instated, the licence will be returned to the driver.

Withdrawal of licences

- If withdrawn, the licence must be returned to Dfl. If there is no appeal, or the appeal is unsuccessful, the licence will be destroyed. If a driver who has had their licence withdrawn wants to drive trains again they will have to apply for a new licence and satisfy all relevant requirements.

Can a driver appeal against DfI's decision to suspend or withdraw licences?

- 2.13. If DfI suspends or withdraws a licence, the driver or their representative can make an appeal under the Model Appeals Provisions Order (Northern Ireland) 1997.

3. How does data protection legislation impact what information train operating companies can send to DfI?

- 3.1. DfI has published a [privacy notice](#) that sets out how we collect and process personal data. This privacy notice also sets out how we handle the flow of information between DfI, train operators and other parties in connection with our obligations under TDLCR.
- 3.2. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) provides that personal data can be collected, processed and disclosed if there is a lawful basis for doing so. Where DfI processes personal data in relation to the TDLCR it is doing so on the lawful basis that the processing is necessary for compliance with a legal obligation on it, namely compliance with the requirements of the TDLCR.
- 3.3. In particular, DfI is legally obliged to disclose personal data in relation to the suspension/withdrawal of licences:
 - regulation 34 requires DfI to inform a train driver's employer of any decision to suspend or withdraw a licence (as well as the driver him/herself);
 - regulation 35 requires ORR, in cases where we consider that the holder of a train driving licence issued by another safety authority or the Department for Infrastructure no longer satisfies a condition required for holding it, to inform them of our view and to notify the European Commission, other safety authorities, the Department for Infrastructure and the Intergovernmental Commission;
 - regulation 25 states that DfI must, upon request, supply information on the status of licences issued by it to an appropriate train operator or to ORR, another safety authority, or the European Union Agency for Railways.
- 3.4. There are also legal obligations on train operators to provide DfI with information in relation to the suspension/withdrawal of licences:
 - regulation 17 requires train operators to supply DfI with any information that could call into question the validity of a licence and/or any period of work incapacity for a period of longer than 3 months. The regulation still applies in the event that any driver in question has subsequently left the train operator's employment for any reason.
 - regulation 26 where DfI has requested information from a train operator in relation to certificates they have issued or in relation to their functions under the TDLCR, train operators are legally obliged to provide DfI with such information.

Annex A: Information required to help DfI determine whether suspension or withdrawal may be appropriate.

Method of leaving	Email with details	New Train Operator (if known)	Effective date	Date last drove train	Competence Issues	Medical/ Psychological Issues	Work incapacity of more than 3 months
Retirement	✓		✓				
Resignation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓*	✓*	✓*
Dismissal	✓		✓	✓	✓*	✓*	✓*
Death	✓						

* Where a train operator believes it to be relevant

Email address for providing details: railsafety@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

Annex B: Train Driver Licence Suspension / Withdrawal Process

Train operator notifies Dfl of issue(s) regarding driver



(a) Dfl requests any further information from train operator (within 5 working days)



(b) Train operator provides any information and supporting evidence (within 10 working days)



(c) Dfl review information (within 5 working days of receipt)



(d) Case review team set up to make decision (within 5 working days of “c”)



(e) Casework Officer to ask for any further information from any party, if deemed necessary by the case review team



(f) Case team meet to discuss case on receipt of all information (within 5 days of “e”)



(g) Casework Officer to write up team decision, and circulate for comment (within 5 days of “f”)



(h) A senior manager will review case team decision (within 5 days of “g”)



(i) Final decision letter sent to driver, copied to train operator (within 5 days of “h”)



(j) Casework Officer to update TDL register to record decision (asap)

More information

Detailed guides are available at <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/topics/public-transport/rail-safety-authority>