

Temporary relaxation of the enforcement of the EU drivers' hours rules: All road haulage sectors in Great Britain

In response to the exceptional pressures on the freight industry due to the continued consequences of Covid-19 the Department for Transport has introduced a temporary relaxation of the enforcement of the EU drivers' hours rules in England, Scotland and Wales for the general haulage of goods in Great Britain.

This relaxation reflects the exceptional circumstances stemming from and envisaged in relation to the COVID-19 outbreak, including the new strain, and the end of the EU transition period.

Timing of the relaxation

The relaxation of the rules applies from **00.01 Wednesday 23 December 2020** until **23:59 on Friday 22 January 2021**.

The current situation is being kept under review and the Department reserves the right to withdraw or amend the relaxation if circumstances change.

Scope of the relaxation

Anyone driving in Great Britain (GB) under the EU drivers' hours rules and undertaking carriage of goods by road can use this relaxation where necessary. The relaxations are not limited to specific sectors or journeys. Drivers engaged in international road transport or transport between GB and Northern Ireland (NI) should not use this relaxation. Drivers must not use this relaxation as well as the relaxation provided for international road transport and transport between GB and NI.

The temporary relaxation of the rules reflects the exceptional circumstances stemming from the COVID-19 outbreak and the effects within Great Britain of COVID disruption and EU transition changes to international supply chains. It must be used only where necessary, otherwise the normal drivers' hours should be followed.

The department encourages operators facing high work demands or work absences to take urgent measures to secure drivers who have limited or no current work.

The Department wishes to emphasise that, as a general rule, we expect business to plan for and manage the risks of disruption to supply

chains. This relaxation does not apply to drivers in scope of the GB drivers' hours rules and so not subject to tachograph controls.

Please note that relaxations in relation to transport which is undertaken solely in the territory of Northern Ireland are a matter for the devolved authority.

Details of the relaxation

The EU drivers' hours rules can be temporarily relaxed as follows:

- replacement of the requirement to take a full weekly rest period of 45 hours in a 2-week period with an alternative pattern of weekly rest periods specified below. This enables 2 consecutive reduced weekly rest periods to be taken;
- that in a 4-week period beginning on 23 December 2020, a driver can take 2 consecutive reduced weekly rest periods of at least 24 hours (allowing them to work two 6-day weeks);
- however, any reduction in weekly rest shall be compensated for in the normal way by an equivalent period of rest taken before the end of the third week following the week in question
- in addition, any rest taken as compensation for a reduced weekly rest period shall be attached to a regular weekly rest period of at least 45 hours (which can be split over 2 regular weekly rest periods)
- increasing the fortnightly driving limit from 90 hours to 99 hours

This relaxation must not be used in combination with existing rules for international driving, which allow for 2 consecutive reduced weekly rest breaks in certain circumstances. It is not recommended this relaxation be used for drivers engaged partly in international journeys.

Interaction with other relaxations

There are currently two other active relaxations for certain journeys and sectors.

A driver should not be using more than one relaxation at the same time as another. This is to protect driver welfare.

The relaxation granted for the delivery of food and essential items to retailers which began on 10 December 2020 will end on Sunday 30 December.

The relaxation granted for the international carriage of goods by road which began on 23 December 2020 will end on 22 January 2021.

Using the relaxation

Driver safety must not be compromised. Drivers should not be expected to drive while tired – employers remain responsible for the health and safety of their employees and other road users.

The practical implementation of the temporary relaxation should be through agreement between employers and employees and driver representatives.

Operators must notify the DfT if this relaxation is used by completing an [initial notification of relaxation form](#) and emailing a copy to RSSSFOLRCOVID19@dft.gov.uk

A completed [follow-up notification of relaxation form](#) must then be emailed to RSSSFOLRCOVID19@dft.gov.uk one week after the end of the period of relaxation.

Failure to comply with the requirement to notify the DfT would be an indication to enforcement authorities that the relaxation had been used inappropriately and follow-up investigatory action may occur.

In addition, when driving under the EU drivers' hours rules, drivers must note on the back of their tachograph charts or printouts the reasons why they are exceeding the normally permitted limits. This is usual practice in emergencies and is essential for enforcement purposes.

This temporary relaxation of the rules reflects the exceptional circumstances stemming from Covid-19 and EU transition.

The DfT encourages operators facing high work demands or work absences to take urgent measures to secure drivers who have limited or no current work.

As a general rule, we expect business to plan for and manage the risks of disruption to supply chains.

22 December 2020
Department for Transport
United Kingdom