

Converting a Vehicle into a Campervan

Statement

This document provides general guidance and advice on the legislative requirements in Great Britain relating to converting a vehicle to be a motor home. Every effort has been made to ensure that it is factually correct but recipients should check with the producers of this document if they are unsure about the validity of a particular regulation after the date of publication or if they have reason to believe any part is not correct or is now out of date.

General requirements

A Motor Caravan is defined as a vehicle constructed or adapted for the carriage of passengers and their effects and which contains “*Permanent Facilities*” which are necessary to provide mobile living accommodation. “Permanent Facilities” must include:

- Seats & Table
- Sleeping Accommodation (which may be converted from the seats)
- Cooking Facilities
- Storage Facilities

Provided you ensure that the conversion work you carry out complies with the requirements of the *Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986* (SI 1986 No. 1078) as amended, it is quite acceptable to convert a van or other vehicle to a campervan. You should, however, pay particular attention to Regulations 95 and 96 which deal specifically with the use of gas fired appliances.

These regulations state that:

Regulation 95

(1) No person shall use, or cause or permit to be used, in or on a vehicle on a road any gas fired appliance unless the whole of such appliance and the gas system attached thereto is in an efficient and safe condition.

(2) No person shall use, or cause or permit to be used, in any gas-fired appliance in or on a vehicle on a road any fuel except liquefied petroleum gas as defined in regulation 94 (4).

(3) No person shall use, or cause or permit to be used, in or on a vehicle on a road any gas-fired appliance unless the vehicle is so ventilated that—

(a) an ample supply of air is available for the operation of the appliance;

- (b) the use of the appliance does not adversely affect the health or comfort of any person using the vehicle; and
 - (c) any unburnt gas is safely disposed of to the outside of the vehicle.
- (4) No person shall use, or cause or permit to be used, on a road a vehicle in or on which there is---
- (a) one gas fired appliance unless the gas supply for such appliance is shut off at the point where it leaves the container or containers at all times when the appliance is not in use;
 - (b) more than one gas fired appliance each of which has the same supply of gas unless the gas supply for such appliances is shut off at the point where it leaves the container or containers at all times when none of such appliance is in use; or
 - (c) more than one gas fired appliance each of which does not have the same supply of gas unless each gas supply for such appliances is shut off at the point where it leaves the container or containers at all times when none of such appliances which it supplies is in use.

Regulation 96

- (1) Subject to paragraph (2), this regulation applies to every motor vehicle and trailer.
- (2) Paragraphs (3) and (4) do not apply to a vehicle constructed or adapted for the conveyance of goods under controlled temperatures.
- (3) No person shall use, or cause or permit to be used, in any vehicle to which this paragraph applies, while the vehicle is in motion on a road, any gas fired appliance except---
- (a) a gas fired appliance which is fitted to engineering plant while the plant is being used for the purpose of the engineering operations for which it was designed;
 - (b) a gas fired appliance which is permanently attached to a bus, provided that any appliance for heating or cooling the interior of the bus for the comfort of the driver and any passengers does not expose a naked flame on the outside of the appliance; or
 - (c) in any other vehicle, a refrigerating appliance or an appliance which does not expose a naked flame on the outside of the appliance and which is permanently attached to the vehicle and designed for the purpose of heating any part of the interior of the vehicle for the comfort of the driver and any passengers.
- (4) No person shall use, or cause or permit to be used, in any vehicle to which this paragraph applies, while the vehicle is in motion on a road, any gas fired appliance to which---
- (a) sub-paragraph (3)(a) refers, unless the appliance complies with the requirements specified in paragraphs 12 and 13 of Schedule 5 and the gas system to which it is attached complies with the requirements specified in paragraphs 2 to 9 and 15 of Schedule 5; or

(b) sub-paragraph (3)(b) refers, unless the appliance complies with the requirements specified in paragraphs 12, 13 and 14 of Schedule 5 and the gas system to which it is attached complies with the requirements specified in paragraphs 2 to 9, 11 and 15 of Schedule 5; or

(c) sub-paragraph (3)(c) refers, unless the appliance complies---

(i) if it is fitted to a motor vehicle, with the requirements specified in paragraphs 12, 13 and 14 of Schedule 5; and

(ii) in any other case, with the requirements specified in paragraphs 12 and 13 of Schedule 5;

and the gas system to which the appliance is attached complies with the requirements specified in paragraphs 2 to 9 and 15 of Schedule 5.

(5) No person shall use, or cause or permit to be used, in a vehicle to which this regulation applies which is in motion on a road any gas fired appliance unless it is fitted with a valve which stops the supply of gas to the appliance if the appliance fails to perform its function and causes gas to be emitted.

Although it is not specifically illegal to travel in the accommodation area of a campervan, you should bear in mind that this area would not normally be designed for use when travelling and Regulation 100 of *the Road Vehicles (Construction & Use) Regulations 1986* may apply. This requires:

a motor vehicle, and all its parts and accessories;

the number of passengers carried, and the manner in which any passengers are carried in or on a vehicle; and

the weight, distribution, packing and adjustment of the load of a vehicle,

to be at all times such that no danger is caused, or is likely to be caused, to any person in or on a vehicle or on a road.

Further to this, Section 40a of *The Road Traffic Act 1988* (as amended by Section 8 of the *Road Traffic Act 1991*) Part II, Using a Vehicle in a Dangerous Condition, states that:

A person is guilty of an offence if he uses, or causes or permits another to use, a motor vehicle or trailer on a road when:

(a) the condition of the motor vehicle or trailer, or of its accessories or equipment; or

(b) the purpose for which it is used; or

(c) the number of passengers carried by it, or the manner in which they are carried; or

(d) the weight, position or distribution of its load, or the manner in which it is secured;

is such that the use of the motor vehicle or trailer involves a danger of injury to any person.

Our advice is that passengers are safest in a forward or rearward facing seat equipped with a three-point seat belt. Seat belt anchorage points should be designed so that they will be capable of withstanding the high forces of an impact and seat belts must comply with the latest British or European

standards and be marked accordingly with either the 'e', 'E' or BS 'Kitemark'. We strongly recommend that they are professionally installed by qualified persons (such as a commercial garage or seatbelt specialist).

Although side facing seats, with or without seat belts, are not illegal, we would not advise that they are used. This is because seat belts are not designed to be used with such seats. In the event of an accident, seat belts on these side facing seats may help to prevent the wearer being thrown around the vehicle or from being ejected, but in a frontal crash they can increase injury risk by subjecting vulnerable parts of the body to higher loads than seat belts used on forward facing seats.

If you intend to carry children aged 12 years or under, the seat belt wearing regulations require them to use a suitable child restraint. You should bear in mind that child restraints cannot be fitted to side facing seats. In order to fit the required child restraints, you would need to have forward or rearward facing seats with full three-point seat belts.

Whilst there is no specific limit on the number of passengers carried, vehicles designed or modified to carry more than 8 seated passengers excluding the driver will fall into the 'minibus' category and must comply with specific construction requirements which are set out in Schedule 6 of *The Road Vehicles (Construction & Use) Regulations 1986*.

It is important that you confirm the number of passengers and the manner in which they will be carried with your insurance company.

Further information

Consolidated versions of National regulations can be found in Sweet and Maxwell's *Encyclopaedia of Road Traffic Law and Practice (Construction and Use)* which should be available at most main reference libraries.

Copies of National legislation can also be purchased from TSO Orders/Post Cash Department, PO Box 29, Norwich, NR3 1GN; telephone: 0870 600 5522; fax: 0870 600 5533; email: customer.services@tso.co.uk; website: <http://www.tso.co.uk/>

The requirements for child car seat use can be viewed at:
http://www.dft.gov.uk/think/focusareas/children/childincar?whoareyou_id=&page=Overview.

If you require any further information regarding the content of this information sheet, please contact the DfT at the address below:

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NOTE: The information in this document is a summary of the Departments understanding of what the law requires. However, ultimately the interpretation of the law is a matter for the courts based on individual facts of any particular case. You are therefore advised to consult the relevant legislation and, if necessary, seek independent advice.