

The number of trailers that road vehicles are permitted to draw is set out in regulation 83 of the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986 (C&U), as amended. This sheet provides information on regulation 83 and guidance on the requirements that are likely to apply where more than one trailer is permitted. However, for the definitive requirements, the regulations themselves should be consulted. Details of how to obtain the C&U regulations can be found at section 8 of this information sheet.

Note: This sheet provides information on vehicles operating under the C&U regulations. Different requirements apply to special vehicles operating under the Road Vehicles (Authorisation of Special Types) (General) Order 2003. For information regarding the number of trailers permitted by vehicles operating under this Order, please refer to the Order itself. This is available at:

<http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2003/20031998.htm>

1. Extract from the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986 - Regulation 83.

The following extract is a consolidation of regulation 83 from 1986 and the following amendments; The Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) (Amendment) Regulations 1987 (SI 1987/676) and The Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) (Amendment) (No. 4) Regulations 1989 (SI 1989/2360).

Regulation 83 - Number of trailers

(1) No person shall use, or cause or permit to be used, on a road a wheeled vehicle of a class specified in an item in column 2 of the Table drawing a trailer, subject to any exceptions which may be specified in that item in column 3.

(regulation 83(1))

1	2	3
Item	Class of vehicles	Exceptions
1	A straddle carrier	—
2	An invalid carriage	—
3	An articulated bus	—
4	A bus not being an articulated bus or a mini-bus	(a) 1 broken down bus where no person other than the driver is carried in either vehicle or (b) 1 trailer
5	A locomotive	3 trailers
6	A motor tractor	1 trailer 2 trailers if neither is laden
7	A heavy motor car or a motor car not described in item 1, 3 or 4	2 trailers if one of them is a towing implement and part of the other is secured to and either rests on or is suspended from that implement 1 trailer in any other case
8	An agricultural motor vehicle	(a) in respect of trailers other than agricultural trailers and agricultural trailed appliances, such trailers as are permitted under items 5, 6 or 7 above, as the case may be; or (b) in respect of agricultural trailers and agricultural trailed appliances— (i) 2 unladen agricultural trailers, or (ii) 1 agricultural trailer and 1 agricultural trailed appliance, or (iii) 2 agricultural trailed appliances

(2) For the purposes of items 5, 6 and 7 of the Table—

- (a) an unladen articulated vehicle, when being drawn by another motor vehicle because it has broken down, shall be treated as a single trailer; and
- (b) a towed roller used for the purposes of agriculture, horticulture or forestry and consisting of several separate rollers shall be treated as one agricultural trailed appliance.

(3) No track-laying motor vehicle which exceeds 8 m in overall length shall draw a trailer other than a broken down vehicle which is being drawn in consequence of the breakdown.

(4) For the purpose of this regulation, the word “trailer” does not include a vehicle which is drawn by a steam powered vehicle and which is used solely for carrying water for the purpose of the drawing vehicle.

2. Definitions.

Vehicle definitions can be found in regulation 3 of the C&U Regulations. The following table provides extracts of the relevant definitions for the vehicles specified in the table in section 1 of this information sheet.

Vehicle	C&U definition
Straddle carrier	a motor vehicle constructed to straddle and lift its load for the purpose of transportation.
Invalid carriage	a mechanically propelled vehicle the weight of which unladen does not exceed 254 kg and which is specially designed and constructed, and not merely adapted, for the use of a person suffering from some physical defect or disability and is solely used by such a person.
Articulated bus	a bus so constructed that— (a) it can be divided into two parts, both of which are vehicles and one of which is a motor vehicle, but cannot be so divided without the use of facilities normally available only at a workshop; and (b) passengers carried by it at all times pass from either part to the other.
Articulated vehicle	a heavy motor car or motor car, not being an articulated bus, with a trailer so attached that part of the trailer is superimposed on the drawing vehicle and, when the trailer is uniformly loaded, not less than 20% of the weight of its load is borne by the drawing vehicle.
Bus	a motor vehicle which is constructed or adapted to carry more than eight seated passengers in addition to the driver.
Mini-bus	a motor vehicle which is constructed or adapted to carry more than 8 but not more than 16 seated passengers in addition to the driver.
Locomotive	a mechanically propelled vehicle which is not constructed itself to carry a load other than the following articles, that is to say, water, fuel, accumulators and other equipment used for the purpose of propulsion, loose tools and loose equipment, and the weight of which unladen exceeds 7370 kg.
Motor tractor	a mechanically propelled vehicle which is not constructed itself to carry a load, other than the following articles, that is to say, water, fuel, accumulators and other equipment used for the purpose of propulsion, loose tools and loose equipment, and the weight of which unladen does not exceed 7370 kg.
Heavy motor car	a mechanically propelled vehicle, not being a locomotive, a motor tractor, or a motor car, which is constructed itself to carry a load or passengers and the weight of which unladen exceeds 2540 kg.
Motor car	a mechanically propelled vehicle, not being a motor tractor, a motor cycle or an invalid carriage, which is constructed itself to carry a load or passengers and the weight of which unladen— (a) if it is constructed solely for the carriage of passengers and their effects and is adapted to carry not more than seven passengers exclusive of the driver does not exceed 3050 kg; (b) if it is constructed for use for the conveyance of goods or burden of any description, does not exceed 3050 kg; (c) does not exceed 2450 kg in a case falling within neither of the foregoing paragraphs.
Agricultural motor vehicle	a motor vehicle which is constructed or adapted for use off roads for the purpose of agriculture, horticulture or forestry and which is primarily used for one or more of those purposes, not being a dual-purpose vehicle.
Trailer	means a vehicle drawn by a motor vehicle and is to be interpreted in accordance with paragraphs (9) and (11). For details of paragraphs (9) and (11) please refer to the C&U regulations.
Semi-trailer	a trailer which is constructed or adapted to form part of an articulated vehicle including (without prejudice to the generality of that) a vehicle which is not itself a motor vehicle but which has some or all of its wheels driven by the drawing vehicle.
Towing implement	a device on wheels designed for the purpose of enabling a motor vehicle to draw another vehicle by the attachment of that device to that other vehicle in such a manner that part of that other vehicle is secured to and either rests on or is suspended from the device and some but not all of the wheels on which that other vehicle normally runs are raised off the ground.

3. Length of vehicle combinations.

Regulation 83 of C&U sets out the number of trailers vehicles are permitted to draw. Regulation 7 sets out the maximum length permitted by motor vehicles, trailers and any combination of motor vehicle and trailer(s). However, it should be noted that specific requirements apply in circumstances where more than one trailer is drawn.

In circumstances where regulation 83 permits a motor vehicle to draw two or more trailers, regulation 7(5) restricts the overall length of the motor vehicle to a maximum of 9.2 metres and the overall vehicle combination length to 25.9m, unless the conditions specified in paragraphs 1 and 2 of schedule 12 of C&U are observed (please refer to section 6 for details).

Where a motor vehicle is drawing two trailers, only one of the trailers may exceed an overall length of 7m. Where 3 trailers are being drawn, none of those trailers may exceed an overall length of 7m.

Please note that this is a very brief summary of some of the requirements set out in regulation 7 and for the definitive requirements, the regulations should be consulted. Details of how to obtain the C&U regulations can be found at section 8 of this information sheet.

4. Towing implements.

A 'heavy motor car' or 'motor car' (e.g. the motor vehicle forming part of an articulated vehicle) may only draw one trailer. The exception to this rule is that such a vehicle may draw two trailers in situations where one of the trailers is a towing implement and part of the other is secured to and rests on or is suspended from that implement.

A towing implement is defined in regulation 3 (of C&U) as: *"a device on wheels designed for the purpose of enabling a motor vehicle to draw another vehicle by the attachment of that device to that other vehicle in such a manner that part of that other vehicle is secured to and either rests on or is suspended from the device and some but not all of the wheels on which that other vehicle normally runs are raised off the ground."*

Towing implements are a device constructed and used for the special purpose of vehicle recovery. In recognition of this, regulation 4(4), item 7 in the table, and regulation 4(5) of C&U provide exceptions for such devices from the full requirements of C&U. These exceptions allow the device to be constructed and used in such a way that enables the recovery of broken down vehicles.

5. Composite trailers.

Regulation 3 defines a composite trailer as 'a combination of a converter dolly and a semi-trailer', both of which are trailers when considered individually. However, such a combination is treated as one trailer for certain aspects of the C&U Regulations, in particular regulations 7 and 83. Please refer to regulation 3(11) of C&U for further details.

6. Showman's vehicles.

The C&U Regulations do not set out specific requirements for Showman's vehicles towing more than one trailer. However, derogation is provided in regulation 7 for a showman's vehicle that is drawing one trailer. Where a 'showmen's vehicle' (as defined in the Vehicles Excise Act 1971) is drawing a trailer "used primarily as living accommodation by one or more persons and is not also used for the carriage of goods or burden which is not needed for the purpose of such residence in the vehicle", such a combination is permitted to have an overall length of 22m.

It should be noted that regulation 7(9) sets out specific requirements for trailers that exceed an overall length of 18.65m, namely that "No person shall use or cause or permit to be used on a road, a trailer with an overall length exceeding 18.65m unless the requirements of paragraphs 1 and 2 of Schedule 12 are complied with".

Paragraphs 1 and 2 of schedule 12 provide details of the advance notice that should be given to the police and rules about the attendants that should accompany the vehicles:

1. Advance notice to police

- (a) Before using on a road a vehicle or vehicles to which this paragraph applies, the owner shall give notice of the intended use to the Chief Officer of Police for any area in which he proposes to use the vehicle or vehicles. The notice shall be given so that it is received by the date after which there are at least two working days before the date on which the use of the vehicle or vehicles is to begin, and shall include the following details—
- (i) time, date and route of the proposed journey, and
 - (ia) in a case to which regulation 7(9) applies, the overall length of the trailer,
 - (ii) in a case to which regulation 82(2) applies, the overall length and width of the vehicle by which the load is carried and the width of the lateral projection or projections of its load,
 - (iii) in a case to which regulation 82(4)(a) applies, the overall length and width of each vehicle by which the load is carried, the length of any forward or rearward projection and, where the load rests on more than one vehicle, the distance between the vehicles,
 - (iv) in a case to which regulation 82(4)(b) applies, the overall length of the combination of vehicles and the length of any forward or rearward projection of the load, and
 - (v) in a case to which regulation 82(7) and (8) applies, the overall length of the vehicle and the length of any forward or rearward projection of the load or special appliance or apparatus.

The Chief Officer of Police for any police area may, at his discretion, accept a shorter period of notice or fewer details.

- (b) The vehicle or vehicles shall be used only in accordance with the details at (a) subject to any variation in the time, date or route which may be directed by—
- (i) any such Chief Officer of Police to the owner of the vehicle or vehicles, or
 - (ii) a police constable to the driver in the interests of road safety or in order to avoid undue traffic congestion by halting the vehicle or vehicles in a place on or adjacent to the road on which the vehicle or vehicles are travelling.
- (c) In this paragraph—
- “Chief Officer of Police” has, in relation to England and Wales, the same meaning as in the Police Act 1964, and in relation to Scotland, the same meaning as in the Police (Scotland) Act 1967,
- “working day” means a day which is not a Sunday, a bank holiday, Christmas Day or Good Friday, and
- “bank holiday” means a day which is a bank holiday by or under the Banking and Finance Dealings Act 1971, either generally or in the locality in which the road is situated.

2. Attendants

At least one person in addition to the person or persons employed in driving a motor vehicle to which this paragraph applies shall be employed—

- (a) in attending to that vehicle and its load and any other vehicle or vehicles drawn by that vehicle and the load or loads carried on the vehicle or vehicles so drawn, and
- (b) to give warning to the driver of the said motor vehicle and to any person of any danger likely to be caused to any such other person by reason of the presence of the said vehicle or vehicles on the road.

Provided that, where three or more vehicles as respects which the conditions in this paragraph are applicable are travelling together in convoy, it shall be a sufficient compliance with this paragraph if only the foremost and rearmost vehicles in the convoy are attended in the manner prescribed in this paragraph.

For the purpose of this paragraph when a motor vehicle is drawing a trailer or trailers—

- (i) any person employed in pursuance of section 34 of the 1972 Act in attending that vehicle or any such trailer shall be treated as being an attendant required by this paragraph so long as he is also employed to discharge the duties mentioned in this paragraph; and
- (ii) when another motor vehicle is used for the purpose of assisting in their propulsion on the road, the person or persons employed in driving that other motor vehicle shall not be treated as a person or

persons employed in attending to the first-mentioned vehicle or any vehicle or vehicles drawn thereby.

7. Speed restrictions.

Schedule 6 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 sets out the speed limits for vehicles of certain classes. This schedule specifies a limit of 40mph on motorways and 20mph on all other roads for goods vehicles that consist of a motor vehicle drawing more than one trailer. For Locomotives and Motor tractors drawing one trailer, a limit of 40mph on motorways and 30mph on all other roads is specified. In situations where Locomotives and Motor tractors are drawing more than one trailer, a 20mph limit applies regardless of the road classification.

Please note that additional requirements apply in certain cases – please consult the regulations for a definitive view.

8. The Road Vehicle (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986.

These regulations are not available on the internet and have been amended many times which makes it difficult to piece together the latest form of the regulations. However these regulations are available in a consolidated format in most city reference libraries, from companies who publish law. One example is 'Sweet and Maxwell' who publish the "The Encyclopaedia of Road Traffic Law and Practice". This publication is continually updated and Volume 4 contains a full version of the above-mentioned regulations in consolidated format. Other possible suppliers include InterRegs, who charge around £160 for a fully consolidated version of the Construction and Use Regulations. This can be obtained from:

<http://www.selectregs.com/details.php?id=GBR-SI1078>

Alternatively, it is possible to purchase printed copies of the Statutory Instruments that comprise the Regulations from the TSO at the following address:

The Stationery Office
TSO Orders/Post Cash Dept
PO Box 29
Norwich
NR3 1GN
Tel: 0870 600 5522
Fax: 0870 600 5533

e-mail: customer.services@tso.co.uk

Online ordering: <http://www.tsoshop.co.uk/bookstore.asp>

Customer service: <http://www.tso.co.uk/contact/customerservices/>

9. Important information about this Information Sheet.

The views expressed in this Information Sheet are based on the Department's current understanding of what the law means and are not definitive. If you are in any doubt about your legal obligations, you should take independent legal advice as this Information Sheet is not a substitute for such independent legal advice.

10. Further Information.

This information sheet was last updated in July 2009. If you have any enquiries regarding the contents, please contact the DfT at the address below:

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