



Clarification of national speed limits for vans

It is very important for drivers to bear in mind that vans (and all goods vehicles not exceeding 7.5 tonnes) are subject to lower national speed limits than cars on both single and dual carriageway roads.

Whilst a car may travel at up to 60 mph on single carriageways and 70 mph on dual carriageways vans are only allowed to travel up to 50 mph on single carriageway roads and 60 mph on dual carriageway roads.

[Remember that the speed limits quoted here are national limits, a lower speed limit will apply in built up areas and on many local roads. Where a lower speed limit is signed you must comply with those lower limits].

Q. Where do these different speed limits for vans come from?

A. The national speed limits are set out in Schedule 6 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act of 1984 and they are summarised in regulation 124 of the Sept 2007 version of the Highway Code.

Q. Why should vans have lower speed limits than cars when they now have modern advanced braking systems like cars?

A. The main reason for these lower speed limits is that goods vehicles are designed to be able to carry heavier loads and when laden they will tend to take longer to slow down than a car travelling at the same speed.

Q. Why are the speed limits different when very often cars & vans are in the same tax class for DVLA registration purposes?

A. Some people make the mistake of thinking that if a van is in the same tax or registration class as a car then it is subject to the same speed limits. However the two issues are unrelated and they are governed by different legislation. National speed limits are set out in the 1984 legislation are based on the possible load capacities of the vehicle and whether or not it is used for carrying passengers.

Q. Are there any exemptions from these lower speed limits for vans?

A. There is one (small) group of vans which have the same speed limits as cars by virtue of the definitions in Schedule 6 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act of 1984. These are vans that are **both** derived from a car chassis **and** also have a maximum laden weight of no more than 2 tonnes. This means that the weight of the vehicle and the payload it is designed to be able to carry when added together do not exceed 2 tonnes. The van design must be a derivative of a car body, it is not sufficient that it looks similar to a particular car.

Q. Which vans meet the criteria to be considered car derived vans for speed limit purposes?

A. Very few vans will meet the criteria to benefit from the same speed limits as a car. Those that do are likely to be similar to a Ford Fiesta van, Vauxhall Corsa or Renault Clio van in having maximum payloads of around 500kgs so that when combined with the weight of the vehicle unladen (normally around 1.4 tonnes) the maximum laden weight of the whole vehicle will not exceed 2 tonnes.

What this means is that vans such as the Ford Transit and (and of course the larger panel vans) will not meet the definition of car derived vans set out in part IV section 2 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. Therefore these vehicles will be subject to speed limits of 50mph on single carriageways and 60 mph on dual carriageways.

Q. When did these rules come in and shouldn't they be changed now?

A. These speed limit rules have been in place for well over 20 years and there are no plans to change these limits to allow vans to be driven at higher speeds because ministers remain to be convinced that it would be safe to do so.

Q. Do these speed limits apply if the van is travelling without a load?

A. The national speed limits apply to the vehicle type and it makes no difference whether the vehicle at a particular time is fully loaded, partially loaded or travelling without a load.

Q. If my van is fitted with a speed limiter then it can't do more than 56 mph anyway so why should I worry about these speed limits?

A. The only non HGV goods vehicles that are required to have a speed limiter are those which were registered after 30th September 2001 and have a gross design weight of over 3.5 tonnes. Therefore most vans will not be fitted with a limiter. In any case on particular local roads the speed limits may be lower than these national ones. It is vital to keep within the speed limits specified on road signs and also to vary your vehicle's speed according to the prevailing weather or traffic conditions.