



Rail Vehicles

The Government is committed to providing an accessible public transport system in which disabled people have the same opportunities to travel as other members of society.

The Rail Vehicle Accessibility Regulations 1998 (RVAR) have applied to all new rail vehicles entering service since 31 December 1998. RVAR introduced considerable access improvements for disabled passengers to new rail vehicles, covering wheelchair accessibility (including the design of on-board accessible toilets), the size and location of handrails, handholds and control devices as well as the provision of audible warnings and other equipment. In addition, the requirements for both visual and audible information enable passengers with sensory impairments to use rail vehicles with greater confidence.

On 1 July 2008, a new European standard for the accessibility of heavy rail vehicles, the Technical Specification for Interoperability for Persons with Reduced Mobility (PRM TSI) came into force. The PRM TSI applies to all trains used on the interoperable rail system, which comprises the major lines of the mainline rail system in the UK.

In practice, this is likely to be all trains used on the national railway network which are now subject to the standards in the PRM TSI. These are similar to RVAR but, as a European standard, the PRM TSI automatically takes precedence. The PRM TSI also covers the accessibility of railway stations and other infrastructure.

The definition of "persons with reduced mobility" under the PRM TSI is broader than the definition of "disabled person" used within the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 under which RVAR was introduced. PRM covers all those who were considered to have a disability under the 1995 Act but also includes others who may experience reduced mobility, such as pregnant women and parents travelling with small children.

To avoid dual regulation of heavy rail vehicles by domestic and European accessibility regimes, it was necessary to develop new legislation. Following public consultation, the Rail Vehicle Accessibility (Interoperable Rail System) Regulations 2008 came into force on 7 July. These regulations remove those trains used on the interoperable rail system from the scope of RVAR although there remains a requirement for train operators to maintain their vehicles to the standards to which they were built, ie RVAR. They also set an "end date", of 1 January 2020, by which time all heavy rail vehicles must be accessible.

RVAR continues to apply to light rail and metro services such as the London Underground. We intend to consult on amendments to the RVAR regime, which will include proposals for setting an end date for these rail vehicles and reflecting its reduced scope following the introduction of the PRM TSI, in due

course.

Legislation

Published:
13 May 2005

Research

Published:
16 November 2005

RVAR Exemption orders

Publications and other resources

Access for disabled and older people - Rail publications together with links to any related literature and other resources that may be of interest.

For related documents, pages and internet links, see the column on the right.