

The road user and the law

Road traffic law

The following list can be found abbreviated throughout the Code. It is not intended to be a comprehensive guide, but a guide to some of the important points of law. For the precise wording of the law, please refer to the various Acts and Regulations (as amended) indicated in the Code. Abbreviations are listed below.

Most of the provisions apply on all roads throughout Great Britain, although there are some exceptions. The definition of a road in England and Wales is 'any highway and any other road to which the public has access and includes bridges over which a road passes' (RTA 1988 sect 192(1)). In Scotland, there is a similar definition which is extended to include any way over which the public have a right of passage (R(S)A 1984 sect 151(1)).

It is important to note that references to 'road' therefore generally include footpaths, bridleways and cycle tracks, and many roadways and driveways on private land (including many car parks). In most cases, the law will apply to them and there may be additional rules for particular paths or ways. Some serious driving offences, including drink-driving offences, also apply to all public places, for example public car parks.

Acts and regulations [abbreviations in brackets]

Acts and regulations from 1988 can be viewed on the Office of Public Sector Information website (OPSI). Acts and regulations prior to 1988 are only available in their original print format which may be obtained from The Stationery Office. For further information visit the Stationery Office website (TSO).

Acts and regulations prior to 1988

Chronically Sick & Disabled Persons Act 1970 [CSDPA]
Functions of Traffic Wardens Order 1970 [FTWO]
Greater London (General Powers) Act 1974 [GL(GP)A]
Highway Act 1835 or 1980 (as indicated) [HA]
Motor Cycles (Protective Helmets) Regulations 1980 [MC(PH)R]
Motorways Traffic (England & Wales) Regulations 1982 [MT(E&W)R]
Motorways Traffic (England & Wales) Amended Regulations
[MT(E&W)(A)R]
Pedal Cycles (Construction & Use) Regulations 1983 [PCUR]
Public Passenger Vehicles Act 1981 [PPVA]
Road Traffic Act 1984, 1988 or 1991 (as indicated) [RTA]
Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 [RTRA]
Road Vehicles (Construction & Use) Regulations 1986 [CUR]
Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 [R(S)A]

Acts and regulations from 1988 onwards

Horses (Protective Headgear for Young Riders) Act 1990 [H(PHYR)A]
Horses (Protective Headgear for Young Riders) Regulations 1992
[H(PHYR)R]
Motor Cycles (Eye Protectors) Regulations 1999 [MC(EP)R]
Motorways Traffic (Scotland) Regulations 1995 [MT(S)R]
Motor Vehicles (Driving Licences) Regulations 1999 [MV(DL)R]
Motor Vehicles (Wearing of Seat Belts) Regulations 1993 [MV(WSB)R]
Motor Vehicles (Wearing of Seat Belts) (Amendment) Regulations 2006
[MV(WSB)(A)R]
Motor Vehicles (Wearing of Seat Belts by Children in Front Seats)
Regulations 1993 [MV(WSBCFS)R]
New Roads and Streetworks Act 1991 [NRSWA]
Powers of Criminal Courts (Sentencing) Act 2000 [PCC(S)A]
Police Reform Act 2002 [PRA]
Prohibition of Smoking in Certain Premises (Scotland) Regulations 2006
(SI no 90) [PSCP(S)R]*

Road Safety Act 2006 [RSA]
Road Traffic Act 1988 [RTA]
Road Traffic Act 1991 [RTA]
Road Traffic (New Drivers) Act 1995 [RT(ND)A]
Road Traffic Offenders Act 1988 [RTOA]
Road Vehicles (Display of Registration Marks) Regulations 2001
[RV(DRM)R]
Road Vehicles Lighting Regulations 1989 [RVLR]
Road Vehicles (Registration & Licensing) Regulations 2002 [RV(R&L)R]
Traffic Management Act 2004 [TMA]
Traffic Signs Regulations & General Directions 2002 [TSRGD]
Use of Invalid Carriages on Highways Regulations 1988 [UICHR] (opens
Vehicle Excise and Registration Act 1994 [VERA])
Zebra, Pelican and Puffin Pedestrian Crossings Regulations and General
Directions 1997 [ZPPPCRGD]

*Specific legislation applies to smoking in vehicles which constitute workplaces.