The Happy Truckers’ Survival Guide

Unite – fighting for your rights
Being a professional driver on the UK roads is a hard job. Long gone are the days of the open road and the freedom to determine your own route and schedule. For many drivers you are faced with ever busier roads and impatient car drivers. Employers are increasingly using in cab technology to monitor every aspect of the job and drivers are feeling the strain.

This guide is aimed at giving some basic information on the job but also to provide some details of how you can stay fit and healthy too.

Driving can be a lonely job but there is always a place in Britain and Ireland’s largest and most influential road transport union.
Acquiring a licence
To become a HGV driver of any class you must apply for a provisional licence, take a medical exam, a theory test, get the driver Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) certification, receive training from a DVLA approved instructor and take a practical test.

To get a provisional licence you must have a full driving licence and be over 18 years old. To apply for a provisional licence go to https://tinyurl.com/y57rfcdq

Driver Certificate of Professional Competence
To qualify as a HGV driver you need to acquire a Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC). Once you have acquired your provisional licence you take the various tests. For further details on booking the test and how this works please go to https://tinyurl.com/y46tsgwm

As part of your qualification process you will be required to undertake a medical. The eye test element must be undertaken by a qualified optician.

When you take the various tests you must bring with you one of the following:
- A UK photocard driving licence
- A Northern Ireland photocard driving licence and paper counterpart
- An EU photocard driving licence (and paper counterpart, if you have one)

If you don’t bring the correct information, your test will be cancelled.

If you have recently qualified you can drive professionally while waiting for your card, in other cases you can be fined £50 for driving without one.

In every five year period you must undertake 35 hours of driver CPC training to keep your card, this can be done by completing one 7 hour module each year. If you are over 65 you must reapply every year.

Further details on this and what to do if you lose, damage your card or change your address can be found at hhttps://tinyurl.com/y27wy7xo

Full details on all the fees for qualifying and maintaining your card and your qualification can be found at https://www.gov.uk/become-lorry-bus-driver/fees

Once qualified it is likely that you will need a digital tachograph driver’s card. Often your employer can apply for this on your behalf but if you need to do this yourself go to https://www.gov.uk/apply-for-a-digital-tachograph-driver-smart-card

The card currently costs £32.

These are the fees from official sites and unofficial sites may charge more.

Driving hours and rest periods
It is vital that all HGV drivers understand and comply with the driving hours’ rules.

The main European Union (EU) rules on driving (which will continue to apply if and when the UK leaves the EU) are:
- Drivers can drive for nine hours a day which can be extended to 10 hours twice a week.
- They can undertake 56 hours of driving in a week
- And a total of 90 hours of driving in any two consecutive weeks.
- All driving must be recorded on a tachograph.

Breaks and rest
The principle points of the EU rules on breaks and rest are you must take:
- At least 11 hours rest every day, which can be reduced to nine hours rest three times, between any two weekly rest period.
- An unbroken rest period of 45 hours every week – you can reduce this to 24 hours every other week. The 45 hour rest period cannot be taken while staying in a lorry. Ignoring this rule could lead to prosecution.
A break or breaks totalling at least 45 minutes must be taken after no more than four hours and 30 minutes driving.

Your weekly rest should occur after six consecutive 24 hour periods of working, starting from the end of the last weekly rest period taken.

In an emergency a driver can drive beyond their normal time but the reason must be strictly recorded on the tachograph. Potential emergencies include:

- Danger to the life or health of people or animals
- Serious interruption of essential public services (gas, water, electricity or drainage), of telecommunication and postal services, or in the use of roads, railways, ports or airports
- Serious damage to property.

For further details of all the possible exemptions from the driving hours rules please go to [https://tinyurl.com/hcxgh2t](https://tinyurl.com/hcxgh2t)

Medical examinations
When applying for your CPC licence for the first time you have to pass a medical examination and prove you are in relatively good health.

After the age of 45 a driver has to have a medical examination every five years. After the age of 65 this increases to a medical examination every year.

The medical examination which is on a D4 form can be undertaken by any registered doctor. The doctor makes the assessment but the decision on whether you are fit to drive is taken by the Driver and Vehicle Licencing Agency (DVLA).

The examination consists of two parts the first is where the doctor asks a series of questions. It is important to answer truthfully as any untruths could later have serious consequences. The second part of the assessment is a physical examination.

Issues to be aware of include:

- **EYESIGHT** – The eyesight requirement for HGV drivers is more stringent than for car drivers. You will need to be able to see adequately out of each eye individually, with or without corrective lenses. If you have a complete loss of vision in one eye, you may still be eligible to drive professionally if you can pass the vision test.

- **NEUROLOGICAL PROBLEMS** – You will be asked questions relating to things such as epilepsy, seizures, blackouts, memory problems, Parkinson’s or Alzheimer’s disease, narcolepsy and cataplexy, stroke, prior brain surgery, or chronic neurological conditions such as multiple sclerosis.

- **MENTAL HEALTH** – HGV drivers must be in good mental health. Doctors will want to discuss all sorts of mental health issues including depression, hospitalisation for psychiatric issues, dementia, and cognitive impairment.

- **ALCOHOL AND DRUGS** – It is illegal to operate HGV with drugs or alcohol in your system. During the HGV medical, a doctor will look for signs of chronic drug and alcohol use.

- **DIABETES** – The condition will not automatically disqualify a student from becoming a professional driver, but their diabetes must be well-managed to proceed.

- **HEART CONDITIONS** – Doctors check for any potential heart conditions including murmurs, peripheral arterial disease (PAD), aneurysms, and the like.

- **SLEEP DISORDERS** – A leading cause of serious accidents among HGV drivers is a lack of sleep. The examination looks for signs and symptoms of sleep disorders. A sleep disorder does not necessarily mean automatic disqualification. As long as the disorder can be managed, the candidate should be able to proceed.
Accidents and safety

Accidents involving lorries frequently occur. In 2017, 267 people died following road traffic accidents, including 50 drivers.

Your company should have clear procedures about how accidents are recorded. You should be aware of these procedures and follow them if you are involved in an accident.

If you are involved in an accident and are concerned that your employer is treating you in an unfair manner you should contact your Unite shop steward or your regional officer for further advice.

If you are injured at work, including in a road traffic accident and you believe your employer or someone else was at fault you should phone 0800 709007 for advice, information, support and to lodge a legal case.

Safety

You have a legal right not to place yourself in danger at work. If you believe that you are being asked to drive when it is unsafe, for example due to weather conditions or the road worthiness of the vehicle, you have the right to refuse to drive. If you find yourself in this situation contact your Unite shop steward for further advice.

Also your employer should have risk assessments and procedures in place for your non driving duties, for example manual handling (lifting and carrying) rules when undertaking deliveries. It is important that you follow these procedures. If such procedures are not in place contact your Unite health and safety rep.

Driver Care

Unite members who are professional drivers are entitled to join the DriverCare scheme which guards against the loss of your licence due to accident, illness or injury.

For an additional £1.10 a week drivers are entitled to:

- A lump sum of up to £8,000 following loss of licence due to injury, disability or illness
- Up to £30,000 for death or permanent disability
- Up to £80 a day up to a maximum of £4,000 following an assault at work
- £50 per day for hospitalisation following an accident/assault at work
- Financial support for legal costs incurred while working as a professional driver
- Help with legal costs and consequential hardship when charged with certain traffic offences.

For an additional monthly contribution of £4.33 drivers will be entitled to:

- Up to an additional £15,000 if you join the Supplementary loss of Licence (top-up scheme)

For an additional weekly contribution of £2 drivers will be entitled to:

- £100 per week following a successful loss of licence claim if the member suffers a reduction in gross taxable pay in excess of 25% if you join the wage support payments scheme

For further details go to [http://www.unitedrivercare.org.uk/index.html](http://www.unitedrivercare.org.uk/index.html)
Penalty points

All drivers should remember that speeding kills and that speeding offences for HGV drivers are particularly serious.

If you receive 12 penalty points in a three year period you will be barred from driving. Points and offences accrued in your own car apply to your HGV licence.

If you have a HGV licence and you are caught speeding, you will be referred to the Traffic Commissioner who could require you to attend a driver conduct hearing and this could result in your licence being withdrawn even if the offence took place in your private vehicle outside of work. If caught speeding in a HGV your employer has a legal duty to report you to the Traffic Commissioner.

Since April 2017 the rules on fines and penalty points for speeding have become much stricter with higher fines, based on your weekly income and the severity of the offence.

For the most severe band c offences as well as a fine and 6 points on your licence you could be banned from driving for 56 days. A ban of this length results in you losing your licence and having to reapply.

For further information see: https://tinyurl.com/yxbuvkqj or https://tinyurl.com/y3bglrha and https://www.gov.uk/driving-disqualifications

Roadside checks and penalties

The Driver Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) has the power to make roadside checks. If you or your vehicle is found to have contravened the law you could receive a fixed penalty fine and potentially points on your licence.

The DVSA uses these powers to deal with brakes, steering, overloaded vehicle, tyres and driving hours.

For further information go to: https://tinyurl.com/y5lzug69

London Lorry Control Scheme (lorry ban)

There are strict rules about where and when HGV's over 18 tonnes can drive at night and weekends in London.

There are routes which HGV's can use without permission at any time called the Excluded Road Network (ERN). The scheme applies to other roads known as restricted roads.

Restrictions

The restricted roads can't be used:

Monday – Friday from 21:00 – until 07:00 (including Saturday morning)
Saturday: from 15:00 – until 07:00 Monday morning (including all day Sunday)

However, even if you drive during the allowable times a lorry driver is still at risk of a penalty charge notice (PCN). You must minimise your use of restricted roads.

If you need to use a restricted road, you have to travel to the closest point on the ERN then use the shortest direct route to the destination. Alternatively if your journey begins on a restricted road then the shortest route must be taken from there to the ERN.
Penalties and appeals

The PCN applies to both the driver and the company and the fines are: driver £130 and company £550.

You can appeal against a PCN if:
- You were not driving at the time of the alleged breach
- There was no breach of the lorry ban order.

Avoiding fines

The London lorry route approver is an online tool which automatically approves routes to avoid fines www.londonlorryrouteapprover.com

Diesel emissions

Diesel fumes are cariogenic (cause cancer) and can cause other long-term health problems including: reduced lung capacity, breathlessness, asthma and being more prone to colds and flu.

Your employer has a duty of care to ensure you are not needlessly exposed to diesel fumes. If you are exposed to diesel fumes you should record it in Unite’s diesel emissions register which is at https://tinyurl.com/ybtfc6sq

By registering an exposure it allows Unite to put pressure on your company to improve its procedures and it also ensures that if your health is adversely affected in the future it might be easier to take legal action on your behalf.

Also, if you are exposed to diesel fumes you should contact your Unite health and safety rep who will be able to assist you in getting the problem resolved.

Smoking

There is a total ban on smoking in the workplace and your lorry cab is classified as a workplace. Therefore you must not smoke in your cab at any time.

Welfare regulations

The lack of welfare provisions is a serious issue for many HGV drivers. In 2017 Unite secured an important new right for HGV drivers. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) ruled that employers in control of non-domestic premises are required to allow all visitors to their premises and who is not their employee to use their toilets and washing facilities.

Therefore if a HGV driver is making a delivery they have a legal right to use the welfare facilities of the company where they are making a delivery. The toilets provided should be clean and provide both cold and hot running water.

The right to use toilets should dramatically reduce the problem of drivers being forced to go behind bushes or to ‘hold on’. Holding on is linked to a series of health problems such as: urinary tract infections, damage to the bladder and bowel and can lead to toxins building up in the body.

If a commercial property fails to provide access to welfare facilities, despite being informed of the requirement to do so, you should contact your Unite shop steward or regional officer.

Healthy eating

Lorry drivers have a poor reputation for their diet. This is not surprising given the long hours, shifts and working away from home drivers contend with. However, research has found that lorry drivers attitude to food is changing, a survey by RAC Truck Rescue found that more than four out of 10 HGV drivers are looking for healthier low fat or sugar free food, such as salad or wraps.

The lack of such options is a source of frustration for drivers who need to eat quickly but don’t want chips with everything. If you struggle to eat healthily you could be storing up long term and serious health problems.
Some tips for healthier eating include:
- Plan two or three days a week to eat healthily
- Make small changes and gradually change how you eat
- Don’t skip breakfast, this is linked with an increase in obesity
- Have a full English breakfast as a treat – not a daily occurrence
- Eat fruit, yogurt, muesli or porridge for breakfast
- Try to eat at least one piece of fruit a day
- Drink a lot of water, don’t become dehydrated
- Fizzy drinks have a large amount of sugar
- If you have to eat fast food, choose the healthiest option
- If possible try to take a lunch with you and try to make it as healthy as possible.

Heart health
The challenges of health eating, the sedentary nature of lorry driving and other factors such as smoking mean many lorry drivers are, increasing the dangers of developing coronary heart diseases, or dying from a heart attack or stroke.

The facts are stark three out of four cardiovascular diseases are preventable, but it kills 100 people under 75 in the UK every day.

Coronary heart disease is the single biggest killer in the UK, killing over 72,000 people a year. The good news is small changes can improve your heart health. The most obvious is to quit smoking which is attributed to one in six heart disease and nearly one in 10 stroke deaths.

By cutting down on salt and eating more fruit and vegetables, you can lower your blood pressure, which is a major risk for heart attacks and strokes. Even short bursts of exercise such as taking 10 minutes a few times a day to do something active such as a brisk walk, or climbing the stairs helps.

Tips
- Improve your diet
- Quit smoking. For tips and advice visit: www.nosmokingday.org.uk
- Try walking or cycling to work or getting off the train or bus a stop early
- Take part in a pedometer (steps) challenge to get more active.

Diabetes
Diabetes is a big problem in the UK with over three million diagnosed with the condition and over 600,000 undiagnosed.

By 2025 it is expected over 5 million people could be suffering with the condition.

Diabetes is a condition where the amount of glucose in your blood is too high and your body can’t use it properly either because your pancreas isn’t producing insulin or not enough insulin. Insulin is essential as it allows glucose to enter the body’s cells and provides energy to the body.

Type 2 diabetes is the most common form and amounts to 90 per cent of cases. The risk factors for type 2 diabetes are being overweight particularly if you are large around the middle (a waist of over 37 inches for men and 31.5 inches for women), you are African-Caribbean, black African, Chinese or South Asian, you are aged over 40 (or 25 if South Asian), or you have a parent, child, brother or sister with diabetes.
Type 2 diabetes is a serious condition, it is not ‘a less serious’ form of diabetes. Type 2 diabetes, if not properly managed can lead to life threatening complications such as heart disease, stroke, amputation, blindness and kidney failure. However, if you maintain a healthy weight, have a fit and healthy lifestyle and you manage your condition properly, there is no reason why you can’t live for a long time.

**Signs and symptoms of diabetes**

Signs that you might have developed diabetes include: feeling tired, losing weight, feeling very thirsty, having to go to the toilet more often (especially at night). Other symptoms include wounds healing more slowly and general itching.

For further information about living with diabetes advice and support go to [www.diabetes.org.uk](http://www.diabetes.org.uk)

**Stress**

Stress is the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them.

All stress is damaging and many lorry drivers experience stress at work, which is likely to be caused by a lack of control over your work, being under pressure and having responsibilities you find overwhelming. This can be a result of long hours, pressure from management to complete your work, or as a result of traffic jams and other road issues.

Stress is one of the top two causes of sickness absence. Although stress is not in itself a mental health issue, being stressed can cause mental health problems and mental health problems can cause stress.

**Common signs of stress**

Including: Being irritable, aggressive, impatient or wound up, anxious, nervous or afraid, racing thoughts, feeling neglected or lonely, depressed, uninterested in life, a sense of dread, unable to enjoy yourself.

Changes to your behaviour include: finding it hard to make decisions, avoiding difficult situations, snapping at people, nail biting, skin picking, unable to concentrate, over eating or starving yourself, smoking or drinking too much, restlessness, feeling tearful or crying.

Stress might affect you physically resulting in: Shallow breathing or hyperventilating, panic attacks, blurred eyesight, problems sleeping or nightmares, sexual problems, tiredness, grinding your teeth, headaches, chest pains, high blood pressure, indigestion or heartburn, constipation or diarrhoea, feeling sick, dizzy or fainting.

No one should experience workplace stress that makes them ill. If you are experiencing workplace stress you should speak to a Unite health and safety rep or shop steward for assistance. Your employer has a duty of care to ensure you do not experience stress in your workplace and should take action to alleviate it.

For more information the TUC guide on tackling workplace stress is useful [https://tinyurl.com/hsmjdso](https://tinyurl.com/hsmjdso)

While your employer should alleviate the triggers to workplace stress there are also some steps you can take to reduce your stress levels including:

- Get good sleep
- Be more physically active – even if this is just going for a short walk
- Eat healthily – when you are stressed you can often eat too much or too little, eating well can make a big difference feel
- Make sure you take your breaks and holiday.

For more information go to [https://tinyurl.com/y5vm9txp](https://tinyurl.com/y5vm9txp)
Mental Health
At least one in four people in the UK will experience a mental health issue during their lifetime and lorry drivers are at particular risk of developing mental health problems. Factors that increase the suicide risk are closely aligned to what lorry drivers frequently experience including: low and inconsistent pay, low job security, working away from home, family estrangement, debt, mental health stigma, isolation and poor working conditions.

The most common forms of mental health issues are: mood disorders (depression and bipolar disorders), anxiety and personality disorders. Your employer has a duty of care for both your physical and mental health. The conciliation service Acas advises employers that unhealthy workplaces are characterised by poor management, a bullying culture, high levels of absence unreasonably high workplace demands.

If your mental health is being affected, your employer they should introduce measures to protect and remove the issues making you ill.

The golden rule, if you are suffering from a mental health problem is, don’t delay getting help. Speak to your Unite health and safety representative, your shop steward or your regional officer who can provide assistance and advice, on a confidential basis.

For further information go to http://www.mind.org.uk

Debt and money issues
The problem of debts and money problems is dramatically increasing. Short term contracts, zero hours contracts and agency working has pushed thousands of workers into hardship.

Research by Citizens Advice reveals that 21 per cent of workers on variable incomes (which will include many lorry drivers) went without food and other essentials last year.

Tackling your debts
Make a realistic budget of what you have coming in and going out. Be careful to set realistic amounts for essentials such as food, initially exclude any arrears payments and credit card payments. Be careful how you average your income, don’t use a high amount if you are about to enter a period of lower paid employment.

If your budget shows more going out than coming in seek advice. Alternatively, the website Turn2us is excellent at showing how you can do this on your own.

Deal with you priority debts first, these are those which could result in you losing your home, essential items and services. Examples are mortgage, rent, council tax, utility bills (gas, electricity and water) TV licence and child maintenance.

If you don’t have money for priority debts get advice.

Once you have dealt with priority debts you need to deal with non-priority debts that are not secured on anything. These include credit cards and catalogue debts or utility bills from a previous home.

Non-payment might result in a record being made on your credit file or eventually being taken to a county court but you can’t lose your home.

Emergencies
If you are about to be evicted, have your electricity cut off or have a bailiff at the door get immediate advice. An adviser can help you make immediate contact with your creditors and get a repayment plan agreed.

Who to contact
The best first point of contact is Citizens Advice their details are: https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/contact-us/ Citizens Advice operates an advice line which is available between 09:00 to 17:00 Monday to Friday, call 03444 111444.
Ideally before contacting them:
1. Gather your paperwork together so you can show income and outgoings
2. Think what has caused the debt problem
3. Take a deep breath. Advisers ask a lot of questions but will not judge you
4. Advisers will want to know how you feel so they can support you. They have probably helped someone in similar circumstances.

Gambling
Gambling is a risky activity. There are many reasons people gamble. The thrill it provides can seem like an escape from other worries, or the tedium of daily life.

However if gambling becomes an issue it can affect all aspects of a person's life including both at work and at home and can affect people's relationships and mental health.

Problems with gambling can result in a loss of concentration this is especially dangerous for lorry drivers.

Lorry drivers are at particularly at risk of developing gambling problems. Due to:
- Long period away from home and ensuing boredom
- Seasonal peaks and troughs in earning
- Peer pressure – other drivers boasting about their winnings.

If you think you may have a problem do any of the following apply:
- Bet more than you can afford to lose
- Been criticised for your betting
- Felt guilty about your gambling.

If answering yes to any of these questions you may need to seek help. One organisation which provides assistance is GamCare which operates the National Gambling HelpLine which is available seven days a week from 8am – Midnight on Freephone 0808 8020 133 or on web chat and for further information go to at www.gamcare.org.uk

If you want to gamble some tips to remember:
- Only spend what you can really afford
- Set your limits for time and money
- Gambling is not an answer to a problem
- If you are angry or upset gambling is not a good idea
- Gambling should not interfere with personal relationships.
Useful contacts
Unite regional and national offices

EAST MIDLANDS
Tel: 01332 548400
membership.eastmids@unitetheunion.org

IRELAND
Dublin
Tel: 00 353 1 873 4577
membership.ireland@unitetheunion.org

Belfast
Tel: 02890 232381
membership.ireland@unitetheunion.org

LONDON AND EASTERN
Tel: 0208 800 4281
membership.londoneastern@unitetheunion.org

NORTH EAST, YORKSHIRE AND HUMBERSIDE
Tel: 0113 236 4830
membership.northeastyorks@unitetheunion.org

NORTH WEST
Tel: 0151 203 1907
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Tel: 01753 313820
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Tel: 0117 923 0555
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