Restrictions

On March 17th, the government has taken new measures, which include advising British nationals against all non-essential international travel.

The advice against non-essential travel is not intended to apply to international and domestic freight transport. Thus, haulage continues under no extra restrictions in the UK officially.

A first guidance note on Coronavirus (Covid-19) and freight transport has been published by the UK Department for Transport, followed by a second guidance note on Covid-19 for the transport sector.

In cases of non-resident drivers becoming unwell with the coronavirus (Covid-19) symptoms while in the UK, the national authorities recommend the following:

- If emergency/clinical care is needed, an ambulance should be called;
- The official guidelines must be followed, i.e. immediate self-isolation; it is the responsibility of the freight company to safeguard employee well-being and therefore place them in suitable individual accommodation;
- Foreign nationals can also approach their embassy for assistance;
- In exceptional circumstances, depending on capacity, it may be possible to arrange accommodation at the London Isolation Centre.

Relieves

The Department for Infrastructure (DfI) has issued notification of a relaxation in the drivers' hours rules for Northern Ireland. This temporary relaxation applies from 00:01 on Wednesday 18 March 2020 and will run until 23:59 on Thursday 16 April 2020. Initially, this will apply for the drivers of vehicles involved in the delivery of food, non-food (personal care and household paper and cleaning) and over the counter pharmaceuticals when undertaking the following journeys:
- Distribution centre to stores (or fulfilment centre).
- From manufacturer or supplier to distribution centre (including backhaul collections).
- From manufacturer or supplier to store (or fulfilment centre).
- Between distribution centres and transport hub trunking.
- Transport hub deliveries to stores.

This exemption does not apply to drivers undertaking deliveries directly to consumers.

Operators are reminded that this relaxation does not excuse them from their duty of care to drivers and that drivers should not be allowed or required to drive whilst tired. Operators seeking to use the exemption should read the DfI notice in detail; this can be found here.

On 22 March, the Department for Transport (DfT) has also introduced a temporary and limited urgent relaxation of the enforcement of EU drivers’ hours rules in England, Scotland and Wales.

This applies to those undertaking carriage of goods by road in all sectors, between 00.01 on Monday 23 March and 23.59 on Tuesday 21 April (continuation of the relaxation past 5 April is subject to review).

The EU drivers’ hours rules can be temporarily relaxed as follows:

- Replacement of the EU daily driving limit of 9 hours with one of 11 hours.
- Reduction of the daily rest requirements from 11 to 9 hours.
- Lifting the weekly (56 hours) and fortnightly driving limits (90 hours) to 60 and 96 hours respectively.
- Postponement of the requirement to start a weekly rest period after six-24 hours periods, for after seven 24 hours period; although two regular weekly rest periods or a regular and a reduced weekly rest period will still be required within a fortnight.
• The requirements for daily breaks of 45 minutes after 4.5 hours driving replaced with replaced with a break of 45 minutes after 5.5 hours of driving.

Drivers must not use relaxation ‘a’ and ‘d’ at the same time. This is to ensure drivers are able to get adequate rest. DfT guidance can be found here. In addition to these measures, from Monday 23 March, all road user charging schemes in the capital will be temporarily suspended until further notice. This includes the Congestion Charge, the central London ULEZ and the London-wide LEZ.

**SOURCE:** RHA and FTA