

Some responses to frequently asked questions

OVERVIEW

What are the key new road safety measures for young drivers being introduced by the Government?

New learner requirements and a one year P1 and three year P2 licence will be introduced.

People under the age of 21 years, applying for a probationary licence:

- Must hold a learner permit for a minimum of 12 months
- Must obtain a minimum of 120 hours on-road supervised learner driving experience;
- Must go on to a minimum one year P1 licence, followed by a minimum three year P2 licence.

People aged 21 to under 25 years will be required to hold their learner permit for a minimum of six months and then go directly on to a minimum three year P2 licence.

People aged 25 years and over will be required to hold their learner permit for a minimum of three months and then go directly on to a minimum three year P2 licence.

Other new measures include:

- An improved driving test for all probationary licence applicants
- A ban on all mobile phone use for learner and P1 drivers
- A requirement for a good driving record to progress to the next stage of licence
- Alcohol interlocks for first time drink driving offenders on Ps or aged under 26 years
- A revised high powered vehicle restriction for P1 and P2 drivers
- Support programs for new drivers, supervising drivers, and driving instructors.

Why are these measures necessary?

These measures will help reduce the number of serious crashes involving young drivers. This is important because:

- Despite significant road toll reductions, young drivers continue to have more casualty crashes than any other group of drivers.
- Probationary drivers are involved in casualty crashes at triple the rate of experienced drivers, and one-third of the road toll results from crashes involving 18 - 25 year old drivers.
- More young people die from road crashes than from any other cause.

Has the community been consulted?

A discussion paper called *Young Driver Safety and Graduated Licensing* was released to the community and interested parties in August 2005. The community was invited to attend public information sessions and to make written submissions by November 2005. The paper received a high level of support for the new measures across all interested groups – including young people. This information was given to the Government.

Is there evidence that the new measures will improve young driver safety?

- Yes. There is consistent scientific evidence that the measures will have a positive effect on safety based on what has previously happened in Victoria, other Australian states, New Zealand and parts of Canada and the United States.
- The new measures are improvements to our graduated licensing system that address specific road safety problems for young drivers – such as the effect of inexperience and distraction caused by mobile telephones.
- The support programs will extend the effect of the measures and will help improve the quality of driving instruction.

Why are there more requirements for people aged under 21?

The Government wants to ensure the new measures target one of the most vulnerable groups on the roads – people aged under 21. The new 120 hour requirement, 12 month minimum learner period and P1 licence will apply to people aged under 21 years because 90% of first year P drivers who crash are in this age group.

WHEN

When will the new measures be introduced?

The new measures are being introduced gradually over two years:

- The alcohol interlock measure will be introduced in January 2007.
- The new learner requirements will apply from July 2007.
- The new high powered vehicle restriction for P drivers will start in July 2007.
- The new P1/P2 probationary driver requirements and a new driving test will apply from July 2008.

This staged introduction will allow young learners to prepare adequately for the new test and P Plate requirements. It also ensures that a community-based supervised driving program for disadvantaged learners can be trialled before the learner requirements commence.

LEARNERS

New learner requirements will apply from July 2007.

All learner drivers will have to carry their learner permit with them when driving and they will be banned from using a mobile phone, including hands-free, while driving.

Learners who are under 21 years of age when applying for a probationary licence will need to have a minimum learner period of 12 months and a minimum of 120 hours of supervised learner driving experience. If the learner permit is issued before 1 July 2007 this requirement will not apply.

Learners aged 21 years or more when applying for a probationary licence must hold a learner permit for at least six months if under 25 years of age, or three months if 25 years or older. These learners will not have to meet any minimum experience requirements.

How will the 120 hour requirement be enforced?

There will be a system to check that learner drivers get the required amount of experience:

- Learners will have to keep a record of their driving experience in an official Practice Diary and will have to get their supervising driver or instructor to sign each entry.
- Learners and their supervising drivers will have to present a special Statutory Declaration or a "Declaration of Completion" along with an official practice diary before attempting the licence test.
- Practice diaries will be checked.

What information will be recorded in the Practice Diary?

The number of hours of driving, the roads driven on (e.g. freeway, local road), the road conditions (e.g. wet, dry) and the name of the supervising driver with phone number will be recorded as a minimum.

How will the Government assist learners without access to supervised experience to achieve the 120 hour requirement?

The Government wants to ensure that no young people are disadvantaged by the new graduated licensing system, but it is possible that some young people will find it difficult to get 120 hours of supervised experience. Some learners may find it difficult to access a car or a person to supervise them.

A community-based volunteer-supervisor and mentoring program will be trialled and implemented, if successful, to provide opportunities for disadvantaged young people to get driving experience. There will be an exemption from the 120 hour requirement in cases of hardship. This would allow a highly restricted licence for essential travel for new drivers aged 18 - 20 years who are unable to access a community-based supervised driving program.



PROBATIONARY DRIVERS

New P1 and P2 licences will apply from July 2008.

From 1 July 2008, the new P1 and P2 licences will be issued and everyone applying for a probationary licence will need to pass the same tests. (Drivers with a probationary licence issued before 1 July 2008 will be licensed under the old system.)

Probationary drivers aged under 21 years when first licensed will have a minimum of 12 months on a P1 licence, where all mobile phone use is banned and there is a restriction on towing unless it is for work or the P1 driver is under instruction.

Probationary drivers who are aged 21 years or older when first licensed will move directly to a P2 licence.

All P1 and P2 licence holders will also be subject to new restrictions on driving high powered cars and will need a good driving record to graduate to the next type of licence. If a P1 or P2 licence is suspended as a result of a driving offence, accumulation of demerit points, or a penalty imposed by a Court, the probationary period will be extended by six months plus the suspension period. P1 drivers will also be subject to a passenger limit for the balance of their P1 period.

What is the difference between a P1 and P2 licence?

- A P2 licence is similar to the current probationary licence, with some new rules relating to high powered vehicles and how serious traffic offenders are treated.
- A P1 licence is an extra licensing stage for young new drivers as they are known to have a high risk of crashing. The P1 licence will include the same provisions as the P2 licence, and will also include a restriction on all use of mobile phones and a restriction on towing with exemptions for work purposes and when under instruction.

Will P Plates need to be displayed for the P1 and P2 probationary periods?

Yes, P Plates will need to be displayed for the entire P1 and P2 periods. The P1 Plate will have a white P on a red background - the same as the current P Plate. The P2 Plate will have a white P on a green background.

What will happen if a P1 or P2 driver does not have a good driving record?

If a P1 or P2 driver has their licence suspended or if they are caught drink driving with a BAC under 0.05 or drug driving, the P1 or P2 period will be extended by six months plus the suspension period. P1 drivers will also be subject to a passenger limit for the balance of their P1 period.

Consistent with the current provision, probationary drivers who commit a drink driving offence with a BAC of 0.05 or above will have their licence cancelled and must start their probationary period again when relicensed.

Will there be any exemptions for the “no mobile phone use” and “no towing” restrictions?

There will be no exemptions for the “no mobile use” rule, for any reason.

There will be exemptions for the “no towing” rule when driving for work-related purposes (including towing for farm-related purposes) and when under supervised instruction.

What is the new restriction on high powered vehicles?

The Government will introduce a new high powered vehicle restriction for new drivers as part of the graduated licensing system. This will improve the safety of new drivers by restricting their access to these vehicles until they have accrued some solo driving experience. The revised restriction will make it easier for probationary drivers to follow the law and for police to enforce it.

The restriction will prevent probationary drivers from driving vehicles with:

- engines with eight or more cylinders
- turbocharged or supercharged engines
- nominated high performance six cylinder engines
- engines that have been modified to increase the vehicle's performance.

Offences will attract a fine and three demerit points.

Exemptions for diesel powered engines and low powered turbo engines will apply (on a type by type basis), and where a high powered vehicle is required in the course of a person's employment or in exceptional circumstances (as is currently permitted on a case by case basis).

Why not introduce passenger limits or restrictions on driving at night?

The Government does not intend to introduce such restrictions at this stage because of concerns about the mobility of young people.

However there will be a promotional campaign to encourage new solo drivers to limit the amount of driving they undertake in high risk situations – such as with multiple passengers and late at night.

There is already a passenger restriction for offenders – if a probationary driver has their licence cancelled or suspended within 12 months of licensing, passenger restrictions are imposed on returning to driving. Under the graduated licensing system, P1 drivers who have their licence cancelled or suspended will have a passenger restriction for the remainder of their P1 period.

ALCOHOL INTERLOCKS

What are alcohol interlocks and why are they being used with drink drivers under 26 years of age or on Ps?

Alcohol interlocks are devices that are fitted to the vehicle to make it impossible to start the car unless the driver blows into a breath test unit and is not affected by alcohol. They are being used with young drink drivers because:

- Drink driving deaths are an ongoing problem for young drivers, with half of 21 - 25 year old drivers killed on our roads impaired by alcohol.
- Alcohol ignition interlocks are a well-established drink driving measure. They provide a practical rehabilitation tool for drink drivers and are currently mandatory in Victoria for drink drivers with multiple offences.
- Extending their use to all young offenders will help deter initial and repeat drink driving.

VEHICLE IMPOUNDMENT

What are the new vehicle-impoundment rules?

The Government has introduced new rules, separate from the changes to the licensing system, to allow for impoundment or forfeiture of a motor vehicle in some circumstances.

If a driver intentionally causes the car's wheels to lose traction or engages in other serious unsafe behaviours such as high level speeding or drag racing, there are now provisions that allow the Police or the Courts to impound the vehicle. For repeat offences, the impoundment period can be longer, and it is possible for the vehicle to be forfeited. These provisions also apply to drivers who repeatedly drive while disqualified.

It is expected that these rules, when they are implemented in July 2006, will help deter drivers from behaving in a way that places themselves and other people at risk of injury or death.

MOTORCYCLES

How will motorcycle riders be treated under the new system?

All relevant probationary and age-based provisions will also apply to motorcycle riders, except for learner, towing, and high powered vehicle restrictions that are already dealt with separately for motorcycle riders.

WHAT ARE THE KEY CHANGES, AND WHY ARE THEY BEING INTRODUCED?

Group	New Measure	Current Situation	Reasons
Learner Drivers Applying for a probationary licence test when under 21 years of age	Must have at least 120 hours of driving experience, including 10 hours at night	No requirement for minimum amounts of driving experience	<p>Inexperience is the most significant crash factor for young drivers.</p> <p>Research shows that learners who practise more are safer as newly licensed drivers.</p> <p>Learners with 120 hours supervised practice have a 30 percent lower crash risk in the first two years of licensed driving than learners with only 40 hours of supervised practice.</p>
	Must have held a learner permit for at least 12 months	Must hold a learner permit for at least six months (or three months if 25 years or older)	<p>New learners who complete a short learner period are estimated to have had less practice and have an increased crash risk.</p> <p>Spreading practice over longer time periods improves skill development.</p>
All learner drivers	Must carry a learner permit while driving	Not required to carry a learner permit while driving	Effective traffic law enforcement relies on being able to identify the licence status of drivers.
Learner and Probationary (P1) Drivers	No mobile phone use, hands-free or hand-held, or any messaging of any kind	Unable to use a hand-held mobile telephone (the same as other drivers)	<p>Young drivers are more likely to have a mobile telephone with them when driving compared to other drivers.</p> <p>Mobile telephone use of any kind increases the risk of fatality by at least four times.</p> <p>Young drivers are more susceptible to distraction than more experienced drivers.</p>
Probationary Drivers	A two-stage probationary licence system with a P1 licence for the first 12 months, and then a P2 licence for 3 years. Drivers first licensed at 21 years of age or older will skip the P1 licence and go straight to a P2 licence.	A single three year probationary licence for all new drivers	<p>New, young probationary drivers have the most crashes.</p> <p>Adding a new more-restricted P1 licence before moving to a three year P2 licence reinforces the importance of the first step into solo driving.</p> <p>A P1 licence will protect new drivers by limiting their exposure to high-risk situations.</p>
	Must have a good driving record to progress through each licence stage. A poor driving record extends the P1 or P2 licence by six months.	No requirement for a good driving record to progress through the licence stages.	<p>Requiring new drivers to demonstrate a good driving record to progress to a less restricted licence stage has been estimated to reduce crashes by around five percent.</p> <p>Provides an incentive for a safer driving behaviour.</p>
	For P1 drivers, towing not permitted except for work or when under instruction	No restriction on towing	Towing adds complexity to the driving task, and new drivers are more likely to be affected by this. New drivers need to consolidate their driving skills without additional distractions.
	<p>New high powered vehicle restriction will prevent probationary drivers from driving vehicles with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> engines with eight or more cylinders turbocharged or supercharged engines nominated high performance six cylinder engines engines that have been modified to increase the vehicle's performance. <p>Exemptions will be available and offences will attract a fine and three demerit points.</p>	<p>Power/weight restriction on driving high powered vehicles, but the restriction needs to be clarified to make it easier to identify which vehicles cannot be driven by probationary drivers.</p> <p>No demerit points apply to this offence.</p>	<p>New solo drivers generally have a high risk of crash involvement. Speed and risk-taking behaviours are strong contributors to this high risk.</p> <p>Restricting access to high powered vehicles will help limit the potential negative consequences of these risky driving behaviours.</p> <p>A revised restriction will make it easier for probationary drivers to follow the law.</p>
Drivers aged under 26 years and probationary drivers	All drink driving offenders (including first-time offenders) will have to fit an alcohol ignition interlock when relicensed, for a minimum of six months	Alcohol interlock requirements exist for repeat offenders	<p>Alcohol is involved in 50 percent of deaths for 21 - 25 year old drivers.</p> <p>Repeat drink driving is a significant road safety issue and often starts from a young age.</p> <p>Alcohol interlocks are a well-established drink driving measure – they provide a practical rehabilitation tool for drink drivers and will help deter initial and repeat drink drivers.</p>