
STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

1999 No.

ROAD TRAFFIC

The Road Vehicles (Registration Marks) Regulations 1999

<i>Made</i>	<i>1999</i>
<i>Laid before Parliament</i>	<i>1999</i>
<i>Coming into force</i>	
<i>for the purposes of</i>	<i>[] 1999</i>
<i>regulation 16</i>	
<i>for all other purposes</i>	<i>1st September 2000</i>

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1. Regulations revoked.
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The Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, in exercise of the powers conferred by sections 23(3) and (4), 57 and 62(1) of the Vehicle Excise and Registration Act 1994(a), and of all other powers enabling him in that behalf, hereby makes the following Regulations:-

PART 1

PRELIMINARY

Citation, commencement and revocation

1. - (1) These Regulations may be cited as the Road Vehicles (Registration Marks) Regulations 1999 and shall come into force -

- (a) for the purposes of regulation 16 on [*approx. 21 days after making of regulations*] 1999, and
- (b) for all other purposes, on 1st September 2000.

(2) The regulations specified in Schedule 1 to these Regulations are hereby revoked.

Interpretation

2. - (1) In these Regulations, unless the context otherwise requires, the following expressions shall have the following meanings -

“the Act” means the Vehicle Excise and Registration Act 1994;

“agricultural machine” means a vehicle which is -

- (a) an agricultural tractor, as defined in paragraph 4B(2) of Schedule 1 to the Act(b), or
- (b) an off-road tractor, as defined in paragraph 4B(4) of that Schedule, or
- (c) a light agricultural vehicle, as defined in paragraph 4C(2) of that Schedule, or
- (d) an agricultural engine, or
- (e) a mowing machine;

(a) 1994 c.22. Section 57(1) was amended by the Finance Act 1996(c.8), Schedule 2, paragraph 16; in section 62(1) see the definition of “registration mark”.

(b) Paragraphs 4B and 4C of Schedule 1 were inserted by the Finance Act 1995, Schedule 4, paragraph 10.

“the Council Regulation” means Council Regulation (EC) No. 2411/98(a) on the recognition in intra-community traffic of the distinguishing signs of member states in which motor vehicles are registered;

“diagonal length”, in relation to a relevant area, means the length of a line drawn diagonally across the square enclosing the area (so that the extent of the relevant area may thereby be delimited);

“motor cycle” means -

- (a) a vehicle having 2 wheels, the unladen weight of which does not exceed 450 kilograms, including a motor cycle used for drawing a trailer,
- (b) a vehicle of that description in combination with a sidecar, and
- (c) a vehicle having 3 wheels, the unladen weight of which does not exceed 450 kilograms;

“plate” means a plate fixed to a vehicle and displaying a registration mark;

“prescribed font” means the style shown for each character in Schedule 4;

“relevant area”, in relation to a registration mark on a vehicle, means the area contained in a square described on the ground -

- (a) in front of the vehicle in the case of a registration mark displayed on the front of the vehicle, and
- (b) behind the vehicle in the case of a registration mark displayed on the rear of the vehicle,

where one corner of the square is below the middle of the registration mark and the diagonal of the square from that corner is parallel to the longitudinal axis of the vehicle;

“relevant date” means -

- (a) in Great Britain, 1 October 1938, and
- (b) in Northern Ireland, 1 January 1948;

“works truck” means a vehicle which is -

- (a) designed for use in private premises, and
- (b) used on public roads only -

(a) OJ No. L 299, 10.11. 98, p.1.

- (i) for carrying goods between private premises and a vehicle on a road in the immediate vicinity, or
- (ii) in passing from one part of private premises to another or between private premises and other private premises in the immediate vicinity, or
- (iii) in connection with road works at or in the immediate vicinity of the site of the works.

(2) Unless the context otherwise requires, -

- (a) any reference in these Regulations to a numbered regulation or Schedule is to the regulation or, as the case may be, the Schedule bearing that number in these Regulations, and
- (b) any reference in a regulation or a Schedule to a numbered paragraph is to the paragraph bearing that number in that regulation or, as the case may be, that Schedule.

Exempt vehicles

3. Nothing in these Regulations applies to -

- (a) an invalid vehicle, that is a vehicle the unladen weight of which does not exceed 254 kilograms and which is specially designed and constructed, and not merely adapted, for the use of a person suffering from a physical disability and solely used by that person; or
- (b) a pedestrian-controlled vehicle, that is a vehicle the unladen weight of which does not exceed 450 kilograms which is neither constructed nor adapted for the carriage of a driver or passenger.

PART 2

PLACING AND ILLUMINATION OF REGISTRATION MARKS

Placing of marks: vehicles registered on or after the relevant date

4. - (1) This regulation applies to vehicles, other than works trucks, road rollers and agricultural machines, first registered on or after the relevant date.

(2) The registration mark of a vehicle to which this regulation applies must be fixed and displayed -

- (a) in a vertical position or, where that is not possible, in a position as close to the vertical as is reasonably possible,

- (b) except as provided in paragraph (3), on both the front and back of the vehicle so that in normal daylight the characters are easily distinguishable from every part of a relevant area having a diagonal length of 22 metres except any part of the area lying within 3 metres of the vehicle.

(3) Where the vehicle is a motor cycle -

- (a) no registration mark shall be fixed and displayed on the front of a vehicle first registered on or after 1st September 2000,
- (b) a registration mark need not be fixed and displayed on the front of a vehicle first registered before 1st September 2000, and
- (b) paragraph (2) shall apply as if for “22 metres” there were substituted “18 metres”.

Placing of marks: vehicles registered before the relevant date

5. - (1) This regulation applies to vehicles, other than works trucks, road rollers and agricultural machines, first registered before the relevant date.

(2) The registration mark of a vehicle to which this regulation applies must be fixed and displayed -

- (a) except in a case to which paragraph (3) applies, on both the front and rear of the vehicle,
- (b) in each case in a vertical position or, where that is not possible, in a position as close to the vertical as is reasonably possible, and
- (c) so that every character of the mark is easily distinguishable, in the case of a mark displayed on the front of the vehicle, from in front of the vehicle and, in the case of a mark displayed on the rear of the vehicle, from behind the vehicle.

(3) In the case of a motor cycle, the registration mark need not be fixed and displayed on the front of the vehicle.

Placing of marks: works trucks, road rollers and agricultural machines

6. The registration mark on a works truck, a road roller or an agricultural machine must be fixed and displayed in a vertical position or, where that is not possible, in a position as close to the vertical as is reasonably possible, either -

- (a) on both sides of the vehicle, so that it is easily distinguishable from both sides of the vehicle, or
- (b) on the rear of the vehicle, so that it is easily distinguishable from behind the vehicle.

Placing of marks: trailers

7.- (1) Subject to paragraph (3), where one or more trailers are attached to a vehicle (“the towing vehicle”) there must be fixed and displayed on the rear of the trailer or the rearmost trailer, as the case may be, the registration mark of the towing vehicle as if the trailer were a vehicle of the same class or description as the towing vehicle.

(2) Where the registration mark of a vehicle is fixed to and displayed on a trailer attached to it in accordance with paragraph (1), the requirements of these Regulations as to the fixing and display of a registration mark on the back of the towing vehicle shall not apply.

(3) Where the vehicle is an agricultural machine, the registration mark fixed and displayed on the trailer in accordance with paragraph (1) may, instead of being that of the towing vehicle, be that of any other agricultural machine kept by the keeper of the towing vehicle, and in such a case paragraph (1) shall apply as if the other agricultural machine were the towing vehicle.

Illumination of marks at night

8. - (1) Subject to paragraph (2), a vehicle shall not be used on a road between sunset and sunrise unless the registration mark displayed on the rear of -

- (a) the vehicle, or
- (b) if the vehicle is drawing a trailer, the trailer or, as the case may be, the rearmost trailer,

is illuminated so it is easily distinguishable from every part of a relevant area having a diagonal length -

- (i) in the case of a motor cycle, of 15 metres, and
- (ii) in any other case, of 18 metres.

(2) Paragraph (1) shall not apply to -

- (a) a works truck,
- (b) a road roller, or
- (c) an agricultural machine.

PART 3

PLATES DISPLAYING REGISTRATION MARKS

Specifications for plates

9. - (1) A registration mark must be displayed on a plate fixed to the vehicle which conforms to the requirements prescribed by this regulation.

(2) In the case of a vehicle which is first registered on or after 1st September 2000, the plate must conform to the requirements set out in Part 1 of Schedule 2.

(3) Subject to paragraph (4), in the case of a vehicle which is first registered on or after 1 January 1973 but before 1st September 2000, the plate must conform either to the requirements set out in Part 2 of Schedule 2, or to those set out in Part 1 of that Schedule.

(4) Where on or after 1st September 2000 a new plate is fixed to a vehicle to which paragraph (3) applies to replace a plate previously fixed thereto, the plate must conform to the requirements set out in Part 1 of Schedule 2.

(5) In the case of a vehicle which is first registered before 1 January 1973, the plate must conform to the requirements set out in Part 3 of Schedule 2, or to the requirements set out in Part 2 of that Schedule, or to any one of the requirements set out in Part 1 of that Schedule.

(6) The corners of a plate may be rounded off.

(7) Where a vehicle carries the distinguishing sign of the United Kingdom adjacent to the registration mark in the manner prescribed by the Council Regulation, the place where the sign is carried shall not be treated as part of the plate for the purpose of these Regulations.

Further requirements for plates

10. - (1) No reflex reflecting material may be applied to any part of a plate, and the plate must not be treated in such a way that the characters of the registration mark become, or are caused to act as, reflex reflecting or retro-reflecting characters.

(2) A plate must not be treated in any other way which impairs the legibility of the characters of the registration mark, or which would prevent the making of a true photographic image of the plate.

(3) A plate must not be fixed to a vehicle -

- (a) by means of a screw, bolt or other fixing device of such a colour,
- (b) by the placing of a screw, bolt or other fixing device in such a position, or
- (c) in any other manner,

which has the effect of changing the appearance or legibility of any of the characters of the registration mark.

PART 4

LAYOUT, DIMENSIONS AND FORM OF REGISTRATION MARKS

Interpretation of Part 4

11. - (1) In this Part of these Regulations and in Schedule 3 -

- (a) “diagram” means a diagram shown in Part 2 of Schedule 3, and a reference to a numbered diagram is a reference to the diagram identified by that number in that part of that Schedule,
- (b) “Table A” means the table in Part 1 of Schedule 3,
- (c) “Table B” means the table in Part 3 of Schedule 3,
- (d) a reference to “relevant character height” is a reference to the height of the characters in the registration mark shown at the head of column (2), (3) or (4) of Table B as the case may be,
- (e) a reference to the top, bottom or lateral edge of a plate means, where the plate comprises a non-reflective border, the inside edge of that border.

(2) Any provision as to measurement contained in this Part of these Regulations or in Schedule 3 shall be taken to be complied with if the dimension of the character or the spacing between characters or groups of characters is not more than 1 millimetre more or less than the measurement prescribed herein.

Size of characters

12. - (1) Subject to paragraphs (2), (3), (4), and (5), each character in a registration mark must be 79 millimetres high and 57 millimetres wide.

(2) In the case of a registration mark fixed on a vehicle (other than a motor cycle, agricultural machine, works truck or road roller) first registered before 1st September 2000, subject to paragraph (5), a character in a registration mark may be 89 millimetres high and 64 millimetres wide.

(3) In the case of a registration mark required to be fixed on a motor cycle, agricultural machine, works truck or road roller, subject to paragraph (5), each character of the mark must either comply with paragraph (1) or be 64 millimetres high and 44 millimetres wide.

(4) Where a vehicle carries the distinguishing sign of the United Kingdom adjacent to the registration mark in the manner prescribed by the Council Regulation, subject to paragraph (5) each character of the mark must [either comply with paragraph (1) or be 64 millimetres high and 44 millimetres wide].

(5) In the case of the letter “I” and the figure “1” none of the foregoing requirements as to character width shall apply.

(6) The width of every part of the stroke forming a character in a mark must be that shown in line 1 of Table B in relation to the relevant character height prescribed by this regulation.

Layout of marks

13. - (1) Subject to paragraph (2), a registration mark of a description specified in column (1) of Table A must be laid out on a plate in conformity with one of the diagrams specified in relation to that description in column (2) of Table A.

(2) A mark may not be laid out in conformity with diagram 1a, 2a, 3a or 7a if it is fixed and displayed on a motor cycle unless it is a vehicle having 3 wheels the unladen weight of which does not exceed 450 kilograms.

(3) The spacing between characters within a group in a mark must be -

- (a) in the case of two characters neither of which is “I” or “1”, that shown in line 2 of Table B in relation to the relevant character height,
- (b) in the case of two characters one of which is “I” or “1”, not less than the smaller distance nor greater than the larger distance shown in line 3 of Table B in relation to the relevant character height,
- (c) in the case of two characters both of which are “I” or “1”, not less than the smaller distance nor greater than the larger distance shown in line 4 of Table B in relation to the relevant character height,

but where one or more characters in a group is “I” or “1” all the characters within that group must be evenly spaced.

(4) The horizontal spacing between groups of characters in a mark must be that shown in line 5 of Table B in relation to the relevant character height.

(5) The vertical spacing between groups of characters in a mark must be that shown in line 6 of Table B in relation to the relevant character height.

(6) The width of a margin between the mark and the top, bottom and lateral edges of the plate must be not less than that shown in line 7 of Table B in relation to the relevant character height.

Style of characters

14. - (1) Where on or after 1st September 2000 -

- (a) a vehicle is first registered, or
- (b) a new plate is fixed to a vehicle first registered on or after 1st January 1973 and before 1st September 2000 to replace a plate previously fixed thereto,

each of the characters of the registration mark must be in the prescribed font.

(2) Save as provided in paragraph (1), in the case of a vehicle first registered before 1st September 2000 each of the characters of the registration mark must either be in the prescribed font or in a style which is substantially similar to the prescribed font so that the character is easily distinguishable and in particular, but without prejudice to the generality of those requirements, characters must not be formed in any way described in paragraph (3) or in a manner which is similar to any of them.

(3) The ways of forming characters referred to in paragraph (2) are their formation -

- (a) in italic script,
- (b) using a font, other than italic script, in which the characters are not vertical,
- (c) using a font in which the curvature or alignment of the lines of the stroke is substantially different from the prescribed font,
- (d) using multiple strokes,
- (e) using a broken stroke,
- (f) in such a way as to make a character or more than one character appear like a different character or characters.

PART 5

MISCELLANEOUS

International distinguishing signs and other material

15. - (1) No material other than a registration mark may be displayed on a plate unless it complies with the requirements of the relevant British Standard referred to in Schedule 2.

(2) Where the international distinguishing sign of the United Kingdom is also displayed adjacent to the plate in accordance with the Council Regulation, no part of it must encroach beyond the extreme left of the mark (that is to say within the margin prescribed by these Regulations).

Saving for early compliance

16. Where, on or after [*about 21 days after making of Regulations*] 1999 a registration mark on a vehicle -

- (a) is displayed on a plate conforming to the requirements set out in regulation 9 and Part 1 of Schedule 2,
- (b) complies with the requirements set out in regulations 10, 11, 12 and 13, and
- (c) comprises characters each of which is in the prescribed font,

regulation 17 of the Road Vehicles (Registration and Licensing) Regulations 1971(a) (form of registration marks) shall not apply to that vehicle.

Signed on behalf of the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions

1999 Parliamentary Under Secretary,
Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions

(a) S.I. 1971/450.

SCHEDULE 1

Regulation 1(2)

REGULATIONS REVOKED

<i>Title of Regulations</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Extent of revocation</i>
The Road Vehicles (Registration and Licensing) Regulations 1971	1971/450	Regulations 17 to 22 and Schedules 2 and 3.
The Road Vehicles (Registration and Licensing) (Amendment) Regulations 1972	1972/1865	Regulation 6.
The Road Vehicles (Registration and Licensing) Regulations (N.I.) 1973	S.R. & O. (N.I.) 1973 No. 490	Regulations 18 to 23 and Schedules 2 and 3.
The Road Vehicles (Registration and Licensing) (Amendment) Regulations 1975	1975/1089	The whole instrument.
The Road Vehicles (Registration and Licensing) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations (N.I.) 1976	S.R. (N.I.) 1976 No. 2180	Regulation 2(6), (8) and (9).
The Road Vehicles (Registration and Licensing) (Amendment) Regulations 1984	1984/814	The whole instrument.

SCHEDULE 2

Regulation 9

REQUIREMENTS FOR PLATES DISPLAYING REGISTRATION MARKS

PART 1

VEHICLES REGISTERED AND NEW PLATES FITTED ON OR AFTER 1ST SEPTEMBER 2000
(MANDATORY SPECIFICATION)

1. The plate must be made of retro-reflecting material complying with the requirements laid down by the British Standard specification for retro-reflecting number plates published on 15 January 1998 under number BS AU 145d.

2. Where the registration mark is displayed on the front of the vehicle, it must have black characters on a white background.

3. Where the registration mark is displayed on the back of the vehicle, it must have black characters on a yellow background.

PART 2

VEHICLES REGISTERED ON OR AFTER 1ST JANUARY 1973 AND BEFORE 1ST SEPTEMBER 2000 (OPTIONAL SPECIFICATION)

1. The plate must be made of reflex reflecting material complying with the requirements laid down by the British Standards Specification for reflex reflecting number plates, published on 11 September 1972 under the number BS AU 145a.

2. Where the registration mark is displayed on the front of the vehicle, it must have black characters on a white background.

3. Where the registration mark is displayed on the back of the vehicle, it must have black characters on a yellow background.

PART 3

VEHICLES REGISTERED BEFORE 1ST JANUARY 1973 (OPTIONAL SPECIFICATIONS)

A. Requirements where the mark is displayed on a plate which is designed and constructed so as to be illuminated from behind by means of the translucency of the characters in the mark.

1. The registration mark must be formed of white translucent characters on a black background on the surface of that plate.

2. When the registration mark is illuminated during the hours of darkness, the characters on that plate must appear white against a black background.

B. Requirements where the vehicle carries a plate which is not so designed and constructed.

Either of the following -

1. The plate must be made of reflex reflecting material complying with the requirements laid down by the British Standard Specification for reflex reflecting number plates published on 31 October 1967 under the number BS AU 145 and -

- (a) Where the registration mark is displayed on the front of the vehicle, it must have black characters on a white background, and
- (b) Where the registration mark is displayed on the back of the vehicle, it must have black characters on a yellow background.

2. The plate -

- (a) must comprise white, silver or light grey letters and numbers on a black surface having every character indelibly inscribed on the surface or so attached to the surface that it cannot readily be detached from it, and
- (b) may either
 - (i) be made of cast or pressed metal with raised characters, or
 - (ii) consist of a plate to which separate characters are attached, or
 - (iii) consist of an unbroken rectangular area on the surface of the vehicle which is either flat or, if there is no flat area where the mark is required to be displayed, an area which is almost flat.

SCHEDULE 3

Regulations 11, 12(6) and 13

LAYOUT OF REGISTRATION MARKS

PART 1

TABLE A

PERMITTED LAYOUTS FOR REGISTRATION MARKS

<i>(1) Description of mark</i>	<i>(2) Permitted layouts</i>
1. A group consisting of a single letter and not more than 3 numbers followed by a group of 3 letters (for example T460 GDB).	Diagrams 1a, 1b and 1c.
2. A group of 3 letters followed by a group consisting of not more than 3 numbers and a single letter (for example GBD 460T).	Diagrams 2a, 2b and 2c.
3. A group of 4 numbers followed by a single letter or a group of 2 letters (for example 4609 DB).	Diagrams 3a and 3b.
4. A group of not more than 3 numbers followed by a group of not more than 3 letters (for example 460 DB).	Diagram 4.
5. A group of not more than 3 letters followed by a group of not more than 3 numbers (for example DB 460).	Diagram 5.
6. A single letter or group of 2 letters followed by a group of 4 numbers (for example DB 4609).	Diagram 6.
7. A group of 3 letters followed by a group of 4 numbers (for example GDB 4609 being a form of mark issued in Northern Ireland).	Diagrams 7a and 7b.

PART 2

DIAGRAMS SHOWING PERMITTED LAYOUTS

Diagram 1a

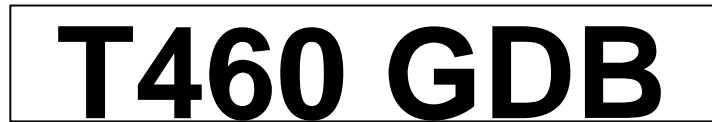


Diagram 1b



Diagram 1c



Diagram 2a

GDB 460T

Diagram 2b

GDB
460T

Diagram 2c

GDB
460
T

Diagram 3a

4609 DB

Diagram 3b

46
09
DB

Diagram 4

460
DB

Diagram 5

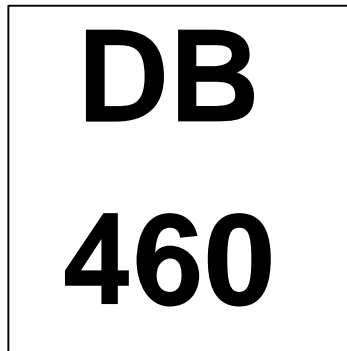


Diagram 6

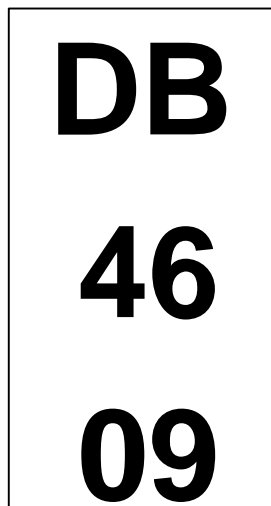
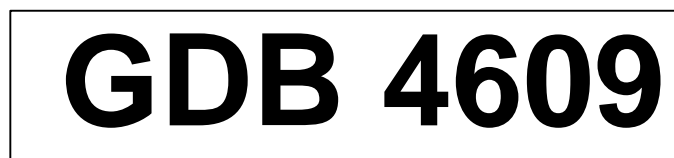


Diagram 7a



PART 3

TABLE B

STROKE WIDTH, SPACING AND MARGINS

<i>(1) Relevant dimension</i>	<i>Relevant character height:-</i>		
	<i>(2) 89 mm.</i>	<i>(3) 79 mm.</i>	<i>(4) 64 mm.</i>
1. Stroke width	16 mm.	14 mm.	10 mm.
2. Space between characters within group	13 mm.	11 mm.	10 mm.
3. Space between “I” or “1” and another character	13 to 37 mm.	11 to 33 mm.	10 to 25 mm.
4. Space between characters if both “I” or “1”	13 to 60 mm.	11 to 54 mm.	10 to 40 mm.
5. Horizontal space between groups	38 mm.	33 mm.	30 mm.
6. Vertical space between groups	19 mm.	19 mm.	13 mm.
7. Minimum margin	13 mm.	11 mm.	11 mm.

SCHEDULE 4

Regulation 14

PRESCRIBED FONT

23456789
ABCDEFGHI I
JKLMNOPQR
STUVWXYZ

EXPLANATORY NOTE

(This note is not part of the Regulations)

These Regulations consolidate, with modifications and amendments, regulations 17 to 22 of the Road Vehicles (Registration and Licensing) Regulations 1971 and instruments amending those regulations. Unlike the provisions which they replace, these Regulations extend to Northern Ireland.

The principal amendments made to the previous provisions are:-

- (a) The introduction of a mandatory requirement for the use of registration plates conforming to British Standard specification BS AU 145d (“the mandatory plates”) on all vehicles first registered on or after 1st September 2000 and on other vehicles registered on or after 1st January 1973 if their existing plates are replaced. *(See regulation 9 and Schedule 2.)*
- (b) The introduction of a mandatory standard character font (“the prescribed font”) for registration marks on vehicles first registered on or after 1st September 2000 and on other vehicles registered on or after 1st January 1973 if their existing plates are replaced. *(See regulation 14(1) and Schedule 4.)*
- (c) As regards registration marks on other vehicles, the prohibition both of fonts which are not substantially the same as the mandatory font and of layouts which make a mark relatively difficult to read or which disguise one character as another or part of another. These provisions take effect from 1st September 2000. *(See regulation 14(2) and (3)).*
- (d) The prohibition of plates fitted or treated in such a manner as to obscure or disguise the mark or make it difficult or impossible to photograph. *(See regulation 10.)*
- (d) The use of the mandatory plates and the prescribed font is made optional (if used together) on vehicles either currently registered or first registered before 1st September 2000 from the date when these Regulations come into force. *(See regulation 16.)*
- (e) The exemption of small invalid vehicles and pedestrian-controlled vehicles from the requirement to carry registration marks. *(See regulation 3.)*

A number of drafting changes have been made, particularly in *regulations 11 to 13 and Schedule 3*, to make use of tables instead of lengthy text.