

Important Information for Bus Owners

It is the legal responsibility of a bus owner and driver to ensure that their vehicle, and all components of that vehicle, is in such a condition that no danger is likely to be caused to any person. This was set out in the Information Note regarding "Changes to roadworthiness test from 29 October 2010 for buses fitted with safety belts" sent to bus owners in July 2010.

A bus with a safety belt installation that is not fit for purpose is likely to cause a danger to its user. This may be as a result of the safety belts not being installed to a minimum standard (including the seat and seat belt anchorages); or the incorrect function, damage or degradation of key components of the safety belt installation and not replacing or repairing these immediately.

Driving a dangerously defective vehicle or driving a vehicle without having fixed a dangerous defect is illegal. The driver of such a vehicle will receive a direct summons to court and penalty points/fine on conviction. Bus owners who are found negligent about maintaining a bus may also be prosecuted.

A bus's safety belt installation may be checked at a roadside inspection to ensure it is fit for purpose, in good working order and not likely to cause a danger. These roadside inspections are carried out by the Gardai, in many cases with the assistance of RSA Vehicle Inspectors.

The Gardai have the powers to put vehicles off the road and/or have it submitted for a roadworthiness test at a commercial vehicle test centre if, in their opinion, the vehicle has a defect which constitutes a risk to any road users. This could be the case for vehicles found to have defective safety belt installations.

From October 29 2011, the Roadworthiness Test requires that certification be provided for a bus's safety belts to show they were installed to a minimum standard. If no such certification is presented for the bus then it will fail its roadworthiness test.

Presenting false or invalid safety belt certification so that a bus can pass its roadworthiness test is a serious matter. If safety belt certification is presented at a roadworthiness test and is subsequently identified as being invalid, or not for the vehicle being tested, then this may result in cancellation of the vehicles Pass Statement or Certificate of Roadworthiness. Such incidents will also be reported to the Gardai.