



Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency

British Numberplate Manufacturers Association

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency

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Your Ref:
Our Ref:

Date: 25 May 2021

Dear [REDACTED]

Re: Update on Spacing Requirements for the Revised British Standard for Numberplates and 3D/4D Numberplates

I have been asked to write to you to provide you with some further clarification on the spacing and dimension requirements in advance of the revised British Standard for Retroreflective Number Plates and associated legislative changes becoming mandatory for number plates that are supplied or first fixed to vehicles from 1 September. It would be helpful if you could relay this information to your members.

As your members already know, the British Standard number BS AU 145e, means of identifying the supplier or manufacturer of the parts used to assemble the registration plate and name and postcode of the supplying outlet of the assembled registration plate must be displayed below the registration number. The distance between the bottom of the registration number and these markings must at least 7 millimetres and must be permanently marked, non-retroreflecting, a single shade of non-retroreflecting colour. They must also be no less than 3 millimetres high but no more than 10 millimetres high.

There is also, for the first time, a specific provision contained in the Regulations for the display of optional borders. Where an optional border is being displayed it must be permanently marked and be a single shade of non-retroreflecting colour without any design, pattern or texture. The border must be positioned no closer than 10 millimetres from the edge of any character of the registration mark and cannot be positioned above any other markings. It can also no more than 5 millimetres wide but may intersect the other markings.



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As you are aware from previous discussions, there have been a number of questions since the amending Regulations were introduced regarding the legality of those number plates with raised characters that have been attached to the backing plate. I thought it would be helpful to provide some clarification on the Agency's current position.

Firstly, neither the current or new British Standards for retroreflective number plates explicitly state that number plates with raised characters, including "3D" gel and the newer so-called "4D" number plates where the characters have been attached to the plate, are not permitted. Where such characters are being used, the entire number plate must still be able to fully comply with both the British Standard and the legal requirements. This means that a number plate must not be treated in any way which means the characters of the registration number are any less readable by eye or would prevent or impair the making of a photographic image of the plate. It is, therefore, important that both manufacturers and suppliers take steps to ensure that there are no issues with readability when supplying raised character products.

It is already a requirement under the current British Standard that the entire surface of the characters of the registration number must be black and this has carried over to the new standard with the important difference that different shades of black can no longer be utilised to create highlighting or 3D effects. This requirement for the characters being black also includes the sides of the characters. The use of different coloured or clear sides which some suppliers have been endorsing does not, in our view, align with the standard. The characters of the registration number must not be removable, and although "removable" is not specifically defined, we had previously discussed that it would not be unreasonable to expect such characters to meet, at the very least, the same adhesive performance for securing a number plate to a vehicle as outlined in the revised British Standard.

I am sure you will appreciate, that this should not be read as meaning that the Agency in any way endorses the display of raised characters and should we receive evidence that their use is compromising registration number readability or compliance with British Standard more generally, this position will need to be further reviewed and we will engage further with stakeholders, including the BNMA.

I hope this information is helpful for both you and your members, but if you do need anything further in the meantime, please let me know.

Kind regards





Mark Management
Vehicles Policy