

Code of Practice

Self-escorting of Abnormal Loads and Abnormal Vehicles





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1 Introduction

- 1.1** This Code of Practice is voluntary and does not prescribe hard and fast rules, but provides practical guidelines, which may be departed from in appropriate circumstances. It is not intended to be a comprehensive statement of the law's requirements.
- 1.2** This said, it is an authoritative statement of best practice, which has been agreed to by the organisations listed in Appendix 2. It not only points out many of the legal obligations which need to be met, but also contains information and explanations which are designed to ensure that those escorting abnormal loads¹ and abnormal vehicles on the highways do so in a manner which maximises safety. It has also been notified to the European Commission in accordance with Directive 98/34/EC, as amended by Directive 98/48/EC.
- 1.3** Self-escorting offers greater flexibility for scheduling moves and therefore should enable loads to travel at off peak times when there is less traffic. This will both reduce traffic disruption to other road users and improve journey times for the haulier. It will also reduce the burden on the police, who currently undertake this role, thereby allowing them to pursue other important activities.
- 1.4** Legislation² requires hauliers to notify the movement of most abnormal loads and abnormal vehicles to the police before moving them by road. There is also a requirement to notify heavier loads and vehicles to highway and bridge authorities to ensure that bridge structures can accommodate these heavy loads. In Scotland, the term highway authority shall be deemed to be road authority. For the largest and heaviest abnormal loads, prior permission before moving is required from the Highways Agency Abnormal Loads Team. If it is an abnormal vehicle, authorisation is required from the Department for Transport.

1) Abnormal Indivisible Load as defined in Schedule 1, paragraph 2 by The Road Vehicles (Authorisation of Special Types) (General) Order 2003 (SI 1998) and Indivisible Load as defined by Regulation 3(2) of The Road Vehicles (Construction & Use) Regulations 1986 (SI 1078) – namely a load that cannot without undue expense or risk or damage be divided into two or more loads for the purpose of being carried on a road. STGO 2003 limits gross weight to 150 tonnes, axle weight to 16500kg, length to 30m and/or width to 6.1m, above which a Special Order is required from the Highways Agency. A Highways Agency VR1 permit is required if width exceeds 5m.

2) Schedule 12 of The Road Vehicles (Construction & Use Regulations) 1986 as amended (SI 1986/1078). Schedule 5 of The Road Vehicles (Authorisation of Special Types) (General) Order 2003 (SI 1998).

- 1.5** Hauliers involved in the movement of abnormal loads or abnormal vehicles have a responsibility to ensure that each movement is conducted in a controlled and safe manner. This shall equally apply if the load or vehicle is being self-escorted. Some larger and heavier loads are required to have an attendant. In these cases where the self-escort person is not travelling in the vehicle carrying either the abnormal load, or in the abnormal vehicle, the self-escort person may fulfil both roles provided that the requirements of an attendant are met.
- 1.6** The term self-escorting applies to either a haulier or a private company engaged by a haulier escorting an abnormal load or an abnormal vehicle. An escort person has no powers to stop or direct other road users or pedestrians and is there to warn them of the presence of an abnormal load.
- 1.7** This Code of Practice, which applies throughout England, Wales and Scotland, is intended to provide a nation-wide standard that is recognised by both industry and the police authorities alike. A standard livery helps the general public and in particular other road users to recognise these vehicles, thereby alerting them to the movement of an abnormal load or abnormal vehicle so they can exercise greater caution, as appropriate.
- 1.8** The Code of Practice covers:
- the requirements for an escort vehicle – including details of its appearance, markings, warning beacons, and equipment to be carried³;
 - the person specification for a self-escort person – a description of the roles, responsibilities and duties; and
 - general operating practices – thresholds for self-escorting, documentation to be carried and practices to be adopted whilst actively engaged in self-escorting.

3) References to equipment standards throughout the Code of Practice also cover Turkish standards and standards of EFTA states that are contracting parties to the EEA Agreement.

2 Self Certification

- 2.1 The haulier shall ensure that their self-escort vehicles comply with this Code of Practice and that their personnel have sufficient training and/or experience to carry out self-escorting duties competently and safely in a manner which accords with the requirements of Road Traffic and Health and Safety Legislation⁴.
- 2.2 If the escorting is subcontracted by the haulier, the subcontractor shall ensure that their self-escort vehicles comply with this Code of Practice and their personnel shall have sufficient training and/or experience to carry out self-escorting duties competently and safely, in a manner which accords with the requirements of Road Traffic and Health and Safety Legislation.
- 2.3 When Special Order loads are to be escorted and self-escort vehicles are used, these vehicles shall conform to this Code of Practice.
- 2.4 When notifying the movement of an abnormal load or abnormal load vehicle to the police, they may ask for a self-certificate (a self-escorting declaration is appended to this document as Appendix 1) or other evidence to show that the vehicles and personnel to be used comply with this Code of Practice.

4) The Health & Safety at Work etc Act 1974, Chapter 37, The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (SI 3242) and 'Driving at Work – Managing Work Related Road Safety' which are Department for Transport (DfT) and Health & Safety Executive (HSE) guidelines available from the HSE website – www.hse.gov.uk



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3 Vehicle Requirements

- 3.1 The primary role of any escort vehicle is to alert other road users and pedestrians of the presence of an abnormal load or abnormal vehicle. The escort person in the vehicle shall also act as the contact point with others while escorting the load or vehicle.
- 3.2 The escort vehicle and its occupants shall assist the abnormal load or abnormal vehicle in safely negotiating the transport route.

Vehicle Specification

Size and Type

- 3.3 An escort motor vehicle shall have a minimum of four wheels.
- 3.4 The escort vehicle must afford the driver good visibility. To facilitate good visibility to the rear and side, the vehicle shall be fitted with exterior mirrors on both sides. In addition, it is preferable to have rear windows to the side and rear windows at the back of the vehicle to aid driver visibility. Vehicles with open cargo space are not permitted.
- 3.5 The escort vehicle shall not form any part of the units carrying or hauling the abnormal load or the abnormal vehicle.

Colour

- 3.6 To be conspicuous to other road users and pedestrians the escort vehicle shall be of a uniform colour, being either white, yellow, orange or silver.

Exterior Lights

- 3.7 In addition to the normal vehicle lighting requirements, the escort vehicle shall be fitted with warning beacons as follows.

- 3.8 Flashing amber warning beacons⁵ shall be fitted to the roof of the escort vehicle to warn other road users and pedestrians to the presence of an abnormal load or abnormal vehicle. These shall be full roof width ‘bar’ type, fitted transversely and visible from the front and rear of the vehicle. No more than two banks of lights are permitted. These may be demountable. Warning beacons shall be approved and conform to Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Regulation 65 on Special Warning Lamps.
- 3.9 The amber warning beacons shall only be used whilst the vehicle is actively engaged in escorting an abnormal load or abnormal vehicle. The Lighting Regulations were amended in 2005 to allow the use of these lights on an escort vehicle travelling at more than 25 mph.

[Markings and Identification – see Figures 1 & 2](#)

- 3.10 The front of the vehicle shall be marked clearly to identify that it is an escort vehicle. This shall be done by marking “Escort Vehicle” or “Escort” in solid black first letter upper case, remaining lower case lettering, or lower case in forward script on the front of the vehicle. The marking shall be in plain sans serif font (e.g. Helvetica or Arial), and the lettering a minimum of 150 mm high and a width to height ratio approaching one. Shadowing, italics and other lettering effects are not permitted. No other text or logos shall be located near to this lettering.

5) Beacon defined as visible around 360°

Figure 1 – Illustration of an escort vehicle (not to scale)

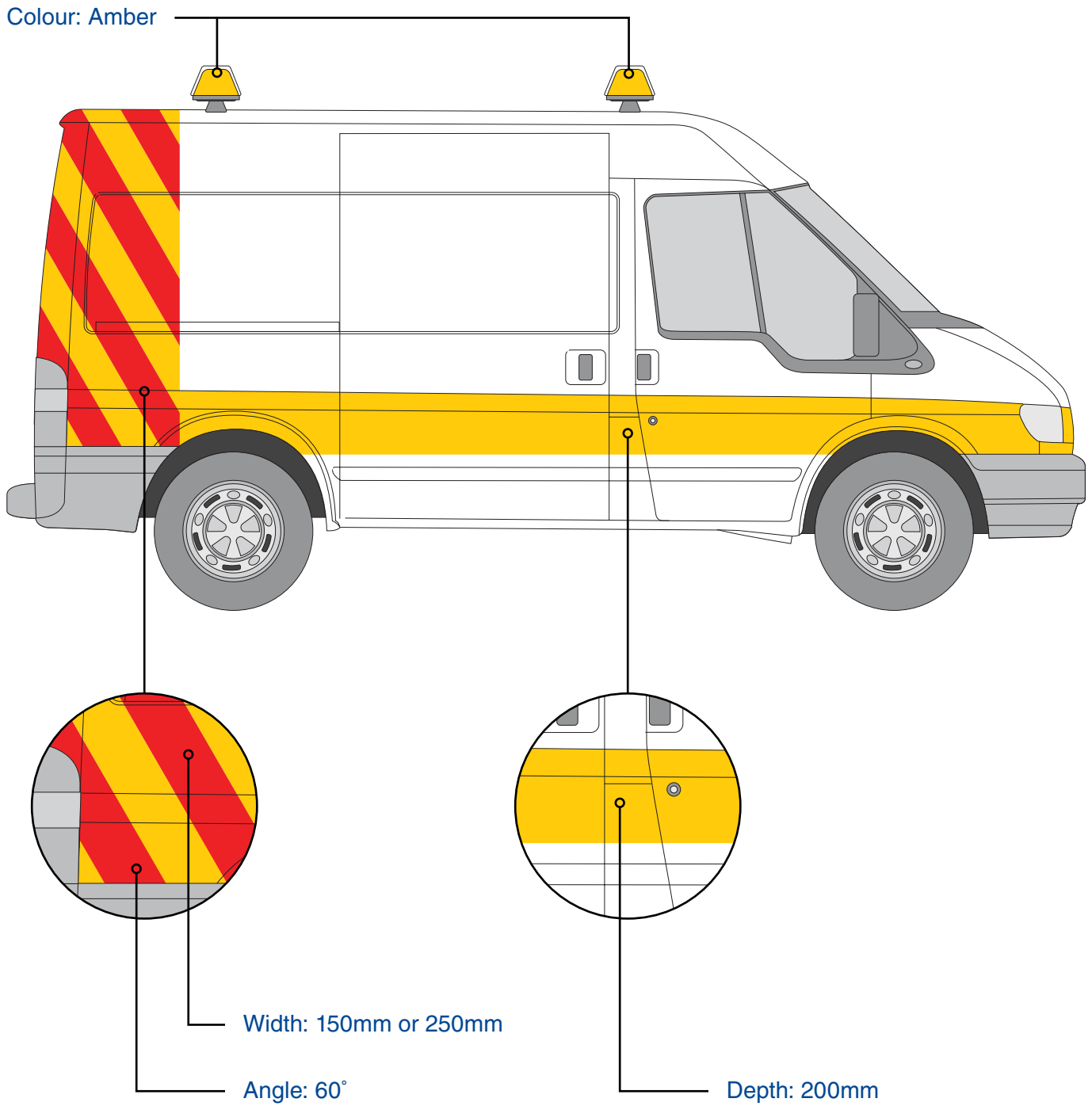
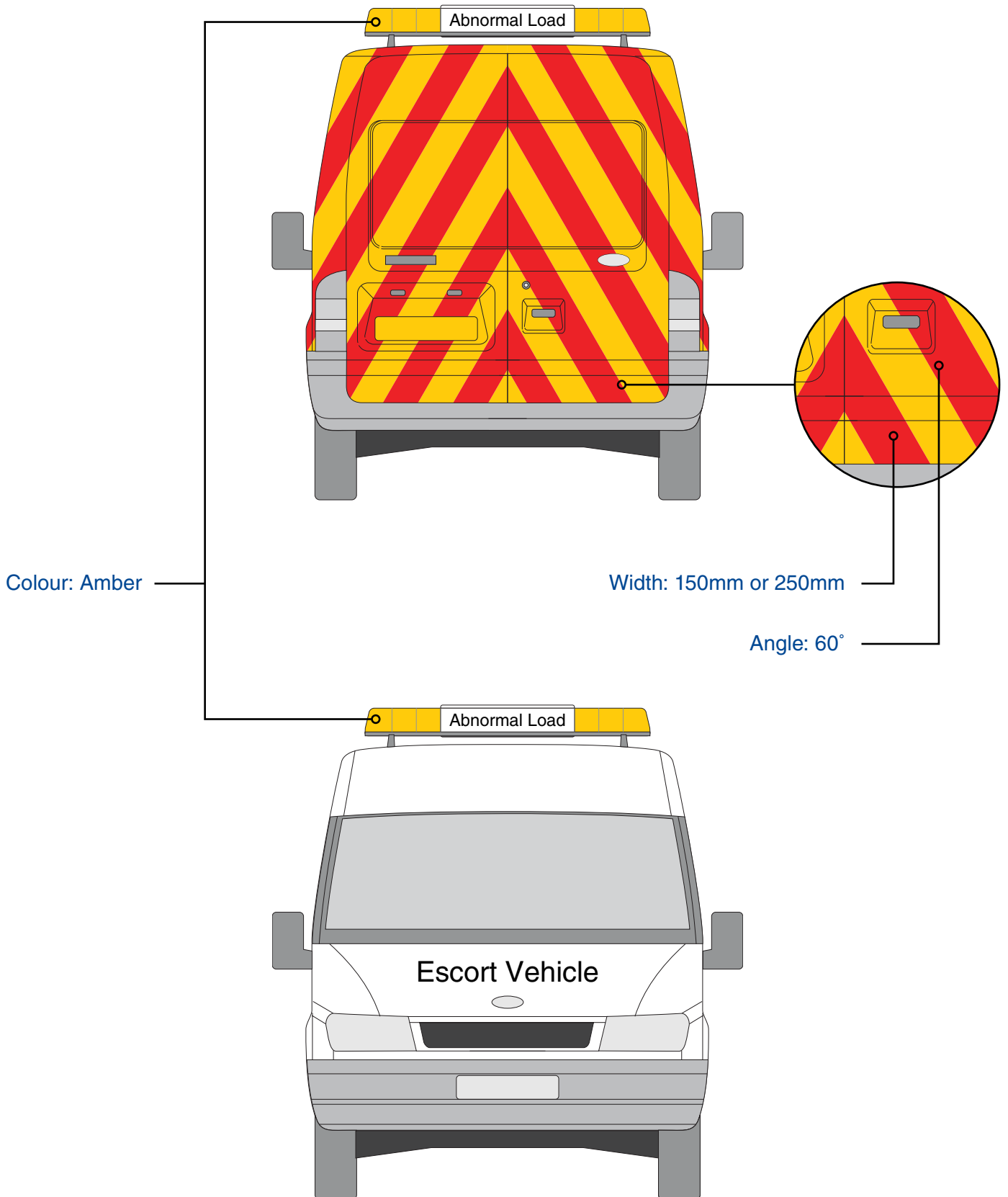


Figure 2 – Illustration of an escort vehicle (not to scale)



- 3.11 There shall be a roof sign displaying “Abnormal Load” in first letter upper case, remaining lower case lettering or lower case lettering using a sans serif font (e.g. Helvetica or Arial) and with a width to height ratio approaching one, which should be clearly visible from both the front and rear. This sign shall be lit when escorting and not be illuminated at any other time. Lighting regulations only permit red lighting to face the rear of the vehicle and any colour other than red to face forward. This should be taken into consideration in the design of any sign (suggested red internal lighting to rear and white to front). This sign may be demountable.
- 3.12 To help alert other road users approaching the escort vehicle from the front, during the day the vehicle shall use dipped beam headlamps when escorting the abnormal load or abnormal vehicle.
- 3.13 To help alert other road users approaching the escort vehicle from the rear, high visibility markings shall be applied to the rear of the vehicle. These will be chevron markings of alternate red retroreflective material and yellow vinyl non-retroreflective material (or equivalent), each with a strip width of 250mm on vans and larger vehicles, and 150mm for cars and car-derived vans.
- 3.14 The chevron markings shall be at 60° to the horizontal plane, with the chevrons pointing upwards and matching colours meeting at the vertical centre line of the vehicle. As much of the rear of the vehicle as possible should be marked in this way and any vehicle fittings should be cut around, e.g. light assemblies, number plates etc.
- 3.15 In addition to the chevron markings on the rear of the vehicle, outline markings consisting of 25mm - 50mm wide red microprismatic retroreflective material shall be fitted along the roof edge and to the outside door pillars in the case of the van and outside edge of the rear window in the case of a car.

- 3.16 When the rear doors of a self-escort van are opened a 25mm – 50mm wide red microprismatic retroreflective strip of material shall be fitted along the rear facing edge of the doors, along the open roof edge and along the floor sill. In the case of a self-escort car the 25mm – 50mm wide red retroreflective prismatic grade strip of material shall be fitted to the rear facing edge of the boot lid or tailgate.
- 3.17 If a piece of equipment is fitted or attached to the rear of the escort vehicle and obscures the chevron markings (e.g. a crash cushion in the upright position), the chevron markings shall be replicated on the equipment, so that the pattern continues to be visible.
- 3.18 To maintain high vehicle visibility from different angles, the red and yellow chevron markings shall be continued in an unbroken pattern onto the side of the vehicle body for a distance of 300mm measured from the rear most corner of the vehicle body. The markings shall be over the full height of the vehicle body.
- 3.19 To alert other road users approaching the vehicle from the side, a single continuous strip 200mm wide of yellow retroreflective tape shall be fitted at or below the horizontal centerline of the vehicle from the extended chevron marking to at least the front wheel arch.
- 3.20 The name of the vehicle operator and/or owner may be displayed upon the side of the vehicle forward of the extended chevron markings, not too close to the side chevron markings or the single retroreflective strip. No company livery shall be displayed on the front or rear of the vehicle.

Equipment and Information to be carried in Escort Vehicle

Road Side Safety Equipment

3.21 To effectively manage road side safety during planned or unplanned stops, each escort vehicle shall be equipped with the following:

- A minimum of 12 traffic cones to BS 873: Part 8:1985⁶, and diagram 7101.1 in TSRGD 2002⁷, or an EC or EEA standard, which in practice provides standards equivalent to those standards contained in a British Standard; and
- A minimum of 4 lighting units with a rate of flashing of not less than 900 flashes per minute, compatible for installation upon traffic cones described above, to BS 3143: Part 2:1990 as amended⁸ or an EC or EEA standard, which in practice provides standards equivalent to those standards contained in a British Standard.

Emergency Safety Equipment

3.22 In the event of an incident during the journey, it is expected that the escort vehicle will be first to the scene. Therefore each vehicle shall be equipped with, (and ideally personnel trained in the use of):

- a powder or CO² Fire Extinguisher Kite marked and British Approval for Fire Equipment (BAFE) approved to BS EN3⁹ or an EC or EEA standard, which in practice provides standards equivalent to those standards contained in a British Standard; and
- a '1 to 10' employee CE approved¹⁰ First Aid Kit.

3.23 The fire extinguisher shall have a valid certificate¹¹, and the First Aid Kit maintained and the contents within their 'use-by-date'.

6) British Standard 873 – Specification for Traffic Cones and Cylinders.

7) Schedule 12 of TSRGD (Traffic Sign Regulations and General Directions 2002 (SI 3113).

8) British Standard 3143 – Specification for Road Danger Lamps.

9) British Standard EN3 – Portable Fire Extinguishers.

10) CE Approved means compliance with European Standards.

11) British Standard 5306 – Maintenance of Portable Fire Extinguishers and British Standard 6643 – Recharging Fire Extinguishers apply, or an EC or EEA equivalent.

Job Specific Reference Information

- 3.24 An escort vehicle shall carry the following information:
- a copy of the route approval, consents and restrictions as appropriate;
 - appropriate maps;
 - contact telephone numbers for Police/Highway Authority Control rooms; and
 - up to date traffic and road work information if applicable.

Communications Equipment

- 3.25 An escort vehicle shall have a:
- communications link to the abnormal load or abnormal vehicle; and
 - communications link to the Police/Highway Authority Control Rooms (and emergency services if required).
- 3.26 A direct radio voice link shall be installed in the escort vehicle to enable communications between the escort vehicles and the abnormal load or abnormal vehicle¹². Either a short-range (under 3km) two-way radio system¹³ shall be used or a long-range (3–8km) radio system accompanied by the appropriate radio licence. The use of hand-held microphones for 2-way radio equipment when driving is not prohibited by the regulations¹⁴ dealing with the use of hand-held mobile phones or similar devices when driving. However there is still a risk of distraction when using a microphone (whether hand-held or hands-free). Consequently, drivers continue to risk prosecution under existing powers dealing with the requirement to have proper control of a vehicle.

12) This type of equipment can be used whilst driving.

13) Short range radio systems are readily available and can be used without the need for a registered frequency licence.

14) The Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) (Amendment)(No 4) Regulations 2003 SI 2695.

3.27 Hand-held mobile phones or similar devices shall not be used by the escort person whilst driving. A mobile phone or other device is defined as ‘hand-held’ if it is, or must be, held at some point during the course of making or receiving a call (or text, or email, or other data – e.g. to/from a GPS navigation device). ‘Driving’ will include pausing at traffic lights or in temporary traffic jams. Hands free equipment is not prohibited. If installed, then the system should be to BS Guide DD 235¹⁵ or an EC or EEA standard, which in practice provides standards equivalent to those standards contained in a British Standard. Note however the warning about the risk of distraction and prosecution in the paragraph above, which applies equally to hands-free mobile phones.

15) British Standard Guide DD 235 – Guide to In-Vehicle Information Systems.



4 Escort Person Specification

- 4.1 It is the responsibility of hauliers to satisfy themselves that their own escort personnel are sufficiently competent to undertake the task of escorting abnormal loads or abnormal vehicles. Competent means that they are suitably trained and/or experienced for the role. Where a subcontractor is employed the subcontractor shall ensure that their staff are competent, through training and/or experience for the role.

Escort Person

Main Duties and Responsibilities

- 4.2 The main duties and responsibilities are to:
- escort the abnormal load/vehicle along the approved transport route acting as a warning to other road users and pedestrians;
 - ensure that any special instructions/restrictions, for example cautions applying to bridges, tunnels or level crossings, either for the escort vehicle or the vehicle carrying the abnormal load, are adhered to;
 - act as a point of contact and to be the communications interface between the abnormal load convoy and Police/Highway Authority control rooms, bridge authorities and emergency services if required;
 - alert the emergency services as appropriate in the event of an incident involving the abnormal load or abnormal vehicle. (If suitably trained, use the First Aid Kit and Fire Extinguisher as appropriate.);
 - place traffic cones and warning beacons around the abnormal load or abnormal vehicle when it is stationary for a period of time in order to warn other road users;
 - ensure that the escort vehicle is 'fit for purpose' and conforms to Code of Practice.

Essential Skills and Qualifications

4.3 Essential Skills and Qualifications required are:

- a minimum age of 21 years old;
- a full standard driving licence held;
- to be able to speak and read the English language¹⁶; and
- to be competent through training and/or experience in the movement and transportation of abnormal loads or abnormal vehicles.

Desirable Skills and Qualifications

4.4 Desirable Skills and Qualifications are:

- basic First Aid Training and Qualification¹⁷; and
- basic use of a Fire Extinguisher Training¹⁸.

Personal Protective Equipment

4.5 Each escort person actively involved in escorting an abnormal load or abnormal vehicle shall be equipped with a long sleeve high visibility fluorescent yellow jacket conforming to BS EN 471¹⁹ or an EC or EEA standard, which in practice provides standards equivalent to those standards contained in a British Standard. This shall be worn at all times when the escort person is outside of the escort vehicle²⁰.

16) Alternatively, the escort person may be accompanied by a colleague, with whom they can communicate fully, who can speak and read English on their behalf.

17) For example – St John's Ambulance 1 day certified course – 'Lifesaver First Aid', or equivalent.

18) For example – Typical Fire Service ½ day Basic Fire Awareness and Hands on Training Course, or equivalent.

19) British Standard BS EN 471 – Specification for High Visibility Warning Clothing.

20) Those undertaking self-escorting operations should also consider the use and/or availability of other personal protective equipment considered as necessary.

5 Operation

- 5.1 This section covers the general requirements and operating practices that shall be conformed to when actively engaged in self-escorting an abnormal load or abnormal vehicle. It also gives general guidance on the minimum threshold above which self-escorting is required.
- 5.2 Some abnormal loads or abnormal vehicles need an attendant, as defined in the relevant legislation²¹. An escort person can also carry out this role, provided they are not travelling in the vehicle carrying the abnormal load or abnormal vehicle, and provided they fully meet the legislative requirements.

General Requirements

- 5.3 The Police Abnormal Loads Officer and haulier shall agree on a case-by-case basis the minimum number of escort vehicles and escort personnel required for the movement.
- 5.4 Escort persons shall check and satisfy themselves that there are no adverse traffic or weather conditions on the agreed transport route prior to the start of the move, or leg of move.
- 5.5 Escort operators shall make contact with each police force traffic control room 30 minutes prior to reaching a suitable safe stopping place, before entering another police force area, or before departure within a force area, and upon leaving the boundary.
- 5.6 The vehicle carrying the abnormal load or the abnormal vehicle shall not divert from the agreed route, unless directed to do so by Police and only then when the appropriate highway and or bridge authorities approval has been obtained.
- 5.7 Drivers of the escort vehicle shall not contravene road traffic legislation.

21) The Road Vehicles (Construction & Use Regulations) 1986 (SI 1078), Schedule 12 paragraph 2. The Road Vehicles (Authorisation of Special Types) (General) Order 2003 (SI 1998), Schedule 6.

- 5.8 On Motorways and Dual Carriageways, an escort vehicle should be positioned to the rear of the abnormal load, at a distance to give adequate warning to other road users of the abnormal load.
- 5.9 On two-way roads and at traffic islands or intersections, an escort vehicle shall be positioned to the front of the abnormal load to give adequate warning to other road users of the abnormal load.
- 5.10 Those engaged in the movement of abnormal loads or abnormal vehicles shall keep the build up of traffic behind them to a minimum, and shall, where practicable, be prepared to stop at suitable locations to relieve traffic congestion.
- 5.11 In case of a vehicle break down, escort personnel shall deploy roadside safety equipment to 'cone off' the abnormal load or abnormal vehicle when it is safe to do so and notify the police/ highway authority control room of the breakdown.
- 5.12 Where self-escort vehicles are changed along the route the appropriate paperwork and information shall be handed over.

Escorting Criteria

General guidance

- 5.13 As general guidance the following dimensions may be applied to decide if the movement of an abnormal load requires an escort. Generally an escort vehicle is required if:

Measurement	For Motorways	For all other roads
Load/vehicle width exceeds	4.6m	4.1m
Overall vehicle length exceeds	-	30.5m
Vehicle gross weight exceeds	130 tonnes	100 tonnes

- 5.14 The above measures are for guidance and may differ between individual police forces. The final decision rests with the police, normally the Police Abnormal Load Officer. Individual police forces may wish to vary these requirements, along with timing of the move on specific stretches of road.
- 5.15 Depending on the situation or location, the police may also require police escorts for all or part of the route. These will be notified to the haulier when an application is made to move an abnormal load or abnormal vehicle to the local Police Abnormal Load Officer.
- 5.16 A haulier can choose to self-escort an abnormal load or abnormal vehicle below these guidelines.
- 5.17 Upon notifying the police, each police authority will advise the haulier if a police escort is required and whether self-escorts can assist the movement.
- 5.18 Certain abnormal load movements due to the extreme nature of the load or complexity of the transport route may require police escorts for all or part of the journey. A combination of self-escort and police escort vehicles may be used, to be agreed by both parties.



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Self-escorting declaration

I the undersigned certify that:

- the following self / escort vehicles, meet the Vehicle Specification contained within the Self-Escorting of Abnormal Loads and Abnormal Vehicles Code of Practice; and
- the driver(s) of the self / escort vehicle(s) meet the Essential Criteria contained within the Self-Escorting of Abnormal Loads and Abnormal Vehicles Code of Practice and are aware of its operating guidance.

Registration Number	Vehicle Type

(Please fill out in Block Capitals)

Name

Name of Company.....

Status in Company

Signature

Date

Appendix 2 Organisational endorsement

This document is endorsed by the following organisations

Association of Chief Police Officers



Association of Chief Police Officers Scotland



Construction Plant-hire Association



Department for Transport



Freight Transport Association



Heavy Transport Association



Road Haulage Association



