

Vehicles exempt from registration and licensing

This factsheet explains the difference between vehicle registration and vehicle licensing, and the different situations when your vehicle could be exempt from registration, licensing and related fees.

Before you drive

Before you can drive a vehicle on the road, it must be registered and licensed (unless it's exempt from registration and licensing).

A vehicle must be registered first, before it can be licensed.

Vehicle registration

Registration is paying a one-off fee to add a vehicle's details to the motor vehicle register. When it's added to the register, we issue number plates for it.

Vehicle licensing

Vehicle licensing is paying a regular fee so that your vehicle is allowed to use the road. When you pay the fee, you get a licence label (showing the licence expiry date) which you must display on the vehicle.

Your vehicle licence is often referred to as your rego, but it isn't the same thing as registration.

What exemption means

If an exemption applies, that means certain law doesn't apply.

In some situations:

- your vehicle may not have to be registered or licensed
- your vehicle may have to be registered, but not licensed
- your vehicle may have to be registered and licensed, but you don't have to pay some of the registration and licensing fees or other levies.

Exemptions from registration and licensing

In some limited situations, you may use an unregistered vehicle on a road. An unregistered vehicle can't be licensed, which means in the two situations that follow, your vehicle doesn't have to be registered or licensed.

Using an unregistered vehicle on a private road

Your vehicle doesn't have to be registered if you only ever use it on a private road.

Private road means a road, place or arcade (eg a covered passage giving access to a number of shops) laid out or formed on private land by the owner of that land.

Using an unregistered vehicle on any other road

Using an unregistered vehicle on any road other than a private road is illegal.

However, if you're fined, you may have a defence. It's your responsibility to prove that you're entitled to use an unregistered vehicle in that situation.

You'll have a defence if the vehicle is:

- an official vehicle of a visiting military force
- being used on a road that's closed to vehicles by the road controlling authority (eg the council or the NZ Transport Agency)
- a motor vehicle normally propelled by mechanical power that is being temporarily towed (one time, not regularly) without the use of its own power
- a trailer attached to a tractor, traction engine, forklift or self-propelled machine that's designed for specialist industrial use*
- a trailer attached to a self-propelled machine that's designed for agricultural use*
- a trailer designed only for agricultural operations being used on a road only when:
 - going to or from a farm*, or
 - being inspected, serviced or repaired
- a trailer attached to an exempt vehicle as defined in the Land Transport Management (Apportionment and Refund of Excise Duty and Excise-Equivalent Duty) Regulations 2004
- an overseas visitor's vehicle.

An overseas visitor's vehicle is a vehicle that's registered overseas and will be in New Zealand usually for less than 12 months. Some may stay in New Zealand for up to 18 months with permission from the New Zealand Customs Service.

For more information about overseas visitors' vehicles, please see Factsheet 35 *Importing a vehicle temporarily*.

For the bullet points marked with an asterisk () above, you won't have a defence if the vehicle is a heavy trailer carrying goods, travelling at more than 40km/h.

Exemptions from licensing only

In some limited situations you may use a registered but unlicensed vehicle on a road. In the two situations that follow, you'll have a defence if you get a ticket for using an unlicensed vehicle.

Taking a vehicle for inspection, servicing and repairs

Your vehicle doesn't have to have a current licence if you're driving it on the road only to get a warrant of fitness (WoF), certificate of fitness (CoF), servicing or repairs.

You must be taking it **directly** to an appropriate place where you'll be getting those services.

The vehicle must still be safe to be used on the road, even if it needs repairs in order to pass an inspection.

Using a vehicle to cross the road

You can also drive an unlicensed vehicle on the road only to cross the road.

Crossing the road doesn't mean you can drive down the road for any distance. You must be crossing in a direct line from one side of the road to the other.

Warning! Make sure your vehicle is correctly registered and licensed for the way it's used. Law enforcement agencies may prosecute you if you're caught with a vehicle that isn't registered for the correct road use.

Exemptions from fees and/or levies

There are two types of vehicles that don't have to pay certain fees or levies: Exempt Class A and Exempt Class B vehicles.

Exempt Class A vehicles

Exempt Class A vehicles have to be registered and licensed, but you don't have to pay the registration fee or the vehicle licence portion of the licensing fee.

You still have to pay for the other fees and levies included in the total licensing fee (eg the ACC levy and the fees for number plates and licence labels).

Exempt Class A vehicles are:

- a pedestrian-controlled goods service vehicle
- a motor vehicle propelled and supported solely by self-laying tracks
- an all-terrain vehicle
- a logging truck or logging trailer that is:
 - unladen (isn't carrying logs), and
 - only used on a road while being taken directly to an appropriate place for inspection, servicing or repair, or to get evidence of vehicle inspection
- any mobile machinery* used on roads only in road construction zones, in accordance with notices declaring those zones.

*Mobile machinery:

- means a motor vehicle designed and used primarily for earthmoving or constructing and maintaining roads, bridges, ditches, or buildings
- includes an off-road dump truck
- excludes any motor vehicle designed primarily for carrying passengers or goods, including those that have had machinery added onto them.

Exempt Class B vehicles

Exempt Class B vehicles don't have to pay some ACC levies or tax on the fuel they use (known as fuel excise duty or equivalent).

They include farm vehicles, mobile machinery and other miscellaneous types of vehicle. The following types of vehicles are Exempt Class B vehicles.

Exempt Class B - farm vehicles

- A motor vehicle (not a trailer):
 - designed for agricultural operations, and
 - used on a road only for agricultural operations, and
 - including mobile huts, galleys and similar motor vehicles used on a road only for those agricultural operations, and
 - not including a vehicle designed for carrying or spreading lime or fertiliser when it's used on the road to carry lime or fertiliser, or when it's used on the road as a weed sprayer on a truck chassis.
- A motor vehicle (not a trailer):
 - owned by a farmer, and
 - used on a road only for agricultural operations, and
 - only used on the road to go from one part of the farm to another part of the same farm, or from one farm to another farm owned or managed by the same person.
- A tractor or traction engine:
 - used on the road only for agricultural operations, or
 - used mainly for agricultural operations and otherwise only for road construction and maintenance.
- A tractor owned by a farmer, used on a road only for:
 - the owner's agricultural operations, and/or
 - carrying milk, cream or whey to or from a dairy factory, and/or
 - carrying any farm produce, implements, stock or other necessary farm items:
 - from one farm to another farm owned or managed by the same person, or
 - for a maximum round trip (there and back) of 21 kilometres of public highway.
- A tractor owned by an agricultural contractor, used on a road only for:
 - carrying farm implements for a maximum round trip (there and back) of 21 kilometres of public highway, or
 - towing a farm implement or farm machine.
- A tractor that:
 - is designed and used partly for loading lime or fertiliser into topdressing aircraft, and
 - is designed and used partly for pulling a trailer that is designed and used only for carrying aviation fuel in a permanently attached tank, for use in topdressing aircraft, and
 - isn't used for any other purpose, and
 - isn't taken on any round trip (there and back) of more than 21 kilometres of public highway.

Exempt Class B - mobile machinery

Any vehicle (other than a tractor) with machinery permanently attached, designed to be used on the road for driving, carrying or propelling:

- airport runway sweepers
- electrical substations
- filters for transformer oil
- stationary log haulers
- aero engine test benches.

Exempt Class B - miscellaneous

- Self-propelled grass mowers used only for the upkeep of grounds (cemeteries, recreation or education grounds) or for cutting grass verges on roads.
- Mobile huts, galleys or similar vehicles used only for constructing or maintaining roads.
- Traction engines.
- Forklifts.
- Airport crash tenders (specially-designed fire engines used at airports) when only used on the road in emergencies.
- Vehicles used:
 - only for loading and unloading ships, including embarking and disembarking passengers, baggage, mail and other cargo
 - on a public highway only when unladen (not carrying anything) and going from one wharf to another wharf, or from its usual place of storage to a wharf.
- Tractors used by local authorities only for constructing, maintaining and mowing stopbanks and the banks of other watercourses (eg rivers, streams, drains and canals).
- Tractors used only for shunting railway rolling stock.
- Trailers being towed by any vehicle described in the Exempt Class B - mobile machinery and miscellaneous examples in this factsheet.

What agricultural operations means

We mention agricultural operations a number of times in our farm vehicle examples.

Agricultural operation is defined in the Land Transport Management (Apportionment and Refund of Excise Duty and Excise-Equivalent Duty) Regulations 2004.

Agricultural operation means any operation concerned directly with the management of a farm; and includes the transport on a road of the produce of a farm, farm implements, stock, or other requisites of any kind whatsoever for a farm, if they are transported:

- from a part of a farm to another part of the same farm or from a farm to another adjoining farm that is owned or managed by the same person, or

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- from a farm to another farm owned or managed by the same person if the motor vehicle carrying the goods is not taken during any one trip along more than 21 kilometres of public highway in going from the owner's farm or other place of garage and in returning to that farm or place.

Exemptions from WoF and CoF

This factsheet doesn't focus on exemptions from getting a warrant of fitness (WoF) or certificate of fitness (CoF).

If you need more information on WoF, CoF and safety requirements, please check our website at www.nzta.govt.nz/vehicles/warrants-and-certificates or call us on 0800 108 809.

However, because parts of this factsheet do focus on agricultural vehicles, please note the following information about WoFs and CoFs for those vehicles:

- Agricultural vehicles that are operated at speeds of 40km/h or less don't have to have a WoF or CoF, but they must meet WoF standards.
- Agricultural vehicles that are operated at speeds of more than 40km/h must have a WoF.
- If your Exempt Class A or B vehicle isn't an agricultural vehicle, it must still have a WoF or CoF.

An agricultural vehicle is a vehicle that is designed, constructed or completely adapted for agricultural purposes, and includes an agricultural tractor and an agricultural trailer.

Cars, utes, vans, trucks and similar vehicles that are designed for general road use aren't agricultural vehicles.

Contact details

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