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| Vehicles and Equipment |
| Non-emergency patient transport |
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# References

Non-Emergency Patient Transport Regulations 2016 Part 9

Non-Emergency Patient Transport Regulations 2016 Part 12

# Introduction

The introduction of new patient and staff safety measures with changes to the Non-Emergency Patient Transport Regulations 2016 (the regulations) include new requirements for vehicles and equipment. This guidance sheet explains the requirements of vehicle and equipment maintenance, along with specifications for new applicants and existing holders of Non-Emergency Patient Transport (NEPT) licences in Victoria.

# Maintenance records and reporting requirements

Every provider must keep an accurate maintenance schedule for all vehicles and equipment used when providing NEPT services - this extends to:

* the vehicle itself
* any medical equipment carried within the vehicle
* any ancillary equipment such as the stretcher.

Likewise, every provider must maintain a record of all maintenance and repairs to vehicles and equipment as it arises and must retain this maintenance schedule for the entire lifespan of the vehicle/equipment.

It is also important to be aware that if a vehicle changes category code as defined under the Road Safety (Vehicles) Regulations 2021 the NEPT provider must not use this vehicle unless the change has been reported to the Department of Health and forwarded a copy of the vehicle assessment signatory scheme approval certificate or a photograph of the second stage of manufacture plate.

All records of maintenance must be made available to the Department of Health on request.

# Interior of vehicle

There are important requirements for the interior of vehicles which directly affect the provision of safe and effective patient care and crew safety.

## Vehicle access

NEPT vehicle interiors must be laid out so that every person travelling in the vehicle has adequate seating and that attendant(s) are provided with sufficient room to provide adequate patient care and monitoring. To ensure this requirement is being met in double-stretcher vehicles, a new minimum separation of 350mm between stretchers has been mandated to allow sufficient space for patient access.

## Amenities

It is a requirement that all NEPT vehicles have:

* Sufficient air conditioning and heating to provide patient comfort during transport
* Windows fitted to all doors and to ensure that these windows are tinted to ensure that patient privacy is maintained. The tint must be to a level as defined under Schedule 2 of the Road Safety (Vehicles) Regulations 2021 which essentially specifies a ‘road legal’ level of tint
* Interior lighting for the purposes of patient comfort, monitoring and management in the vehicle which can be adjusted from both within the patient compartment but also from the driver’s compartment.

## Internal surfaces and fixtures

To maintain a clean environment for patient care, transport vehicles must have smooth, impermeable and seamless materials for the surface of floors and walls. In addition:

* The interior of a vehicle must be well maintained and in good repair at all times and is subject to inspection
* All fixtures and fittings must be tight and secure and must be checked and serviced at 200,000km, 400,000km, and (in the case of an approval of a rural vehicle life extension) annually until reaching 600 000km.

# Required Equipment

## Clinical equipment to be carried

It is a requirement that any NEPT stretcher vehicle will carry all equipment on board to care for a patient during their transport with respect to their acuity level. This includes (as a minimum) but is not limited to: an Automated External Defibrillator (AED), Portable Oxygen Unit, Suction, and a Bag Valve Mask.

## Manual Handling equipment

All NEPT stretcher vehicles will be required to be fitted with a powered stretcher and a powered lifting cushion as a requirement under the 2021 amendments. Other manual handling equipment is not specified under the regulations but is encouraged to be carried by all providers to provide a safe environment for patients and NEPT workers.

## Communications equipment

Communications equipment is required in all vehicles and must be of a standard that provides ready and reliable communication to the NEPT base, destination (i.e hospital, health service etc) and also to Ambulance Victoria.

# Vehicle Mileage

A vehicle must not be used for the transport of patients if the mileage of the vehicle exceeds 400 000km unless an exemption has been granted by the secretary. An exemption maybe provided for NEPT vehicles used only for rural transports to extend the vehicle life up to 600 000km however this will be a determination on individual vehicles following an application to the department. NEPT licence holders who wish to apply for a vehicle life extension will be required to provide evidence of the following:

* That the vehicle has only been used for rural transport
* Installation of a new engine and new transmission
* Installation of new shock absorbers
* Installation of a new driver's seat
* Engineers certificate certifying compliance with requirements under the Road Safety (vehicles) Regulations 2021, Vehicle Standards Bulletin Compliance 14 (VSB14), and Australian Design Regulations (ADR). This certification must then be renewed and supplied to the department annually until the maximum limit of 600 000 km is reached

# Transitional provisions

To assist with business planning the regulations include provision for a period of transition to new requirements.

It is important to note that this only applies to vehicles that were being used in the provision of NEPT prior to the commencement of the 2021 amendments which are in effect as of the 30 November 2021 and so any new vehicles acquired after this date will be subject to all new conditions. All providers are encouraged to complete these requirements as soon as practicable.

1. 30th of November 2024 Power lift Stretchers and lifting cushions will have until to be fitted to all applicable NEPT vehicles.
2. 30th November 2026 minimum 350 mm between stretchers.to all applicable NEPT vehicles
3. 30th November 2026 maximum 400 000km limit on vehicles (unless exemption granted)

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