

Vehicle Standards Information 19

June 2021

This information sheet supersedes all previous copies of VSI 19.

Modifying seats or seating capacity

This Vehicle Standards Information sheet outlines the requirements when modifying the seats in a vehicle by replacing seats, adding more seats or reducing the number of seats.

This information sheet applies to vehicles 4.5 tonne GVM or less. For heavy vehicle requirements please refer to the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator website at nhvr.gov.au

Introduction

Regulation 252 of the *Road Safety (Vehicles) Interim Regulations 2020* requires all modifications to a vehicle to either have specific approval from VicRoads or to be carried out in accordance with guidelines published by VicRoads. This information sheet is a published guideline for the purposes of the Regulations.

Fitting additional or replacement seats or removing seats is a modification and may require a Vehicle Assessment Signatory Scheme (VASS) approval certificate.

A list of VASS signatories qualified to issue approval certificates is available from any VicRoads Customer Service Centre or the VicRoads website.

Seats are divided into three categories to allow them to be designed for occupants of different size and mass:

Category 1

Seats capable of being used by adults.

Category 2

Seats suitable for children approximately 4 to 12 years of age and capable of accommodating a child restraint.

Category 3

Seats suitable for children approximately 4 to 7 years of age and not capable of accommodating a child restraint.

Category 2 and 3 seats may have shoulder height markers on the seat which identify whether the seat is suitable for an occupant. If a person's shoulder height is outside of the upper and lower range indicated on the seat then it must not be used. Where shoulder height markers are not present, a plate or label made of durable material identifying the seat category must be fitted in a conspicuous place on or near the additional seat.

Design, construction and installation requirements

Category 1 seats must comply with the relevant Australian Design Rules that apply to the vehicle the seats are intended to be installed in.

Vehicle Standards Bulletin (VSB) 5 – Manufacture and Installation of Seats, provides a nationally agreed set of requirements for the design, construction and installation of category 2 and 3 seats. VSB 5 is available on the Commonwealth Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities (DIRDAC) website.

Prohibited modifications

Seats fitted with integrated seatbelts, airbags, seat position sensors, or active head restraints by the vehicle manufacturer may only be replaced with seats with identical fittings, safety systems and crash performance. They must not be replaced with aftermarket seats lacking these features.

Seat modification requiring a VASS certificate

The following modifications require approval by a VASS signatory:

- installing additional seats not offered as an option by the vehicle manufacture
- modifying the structure or mounting of original seats
- reupholstering seats that incorporate airbag systems
- replacement of original seats with aftermarket seats.

It is recommended that a VASS signatory be consulted prior to undertaking modifications to a vehicle to ensure that they are carried out in an appropriate manner, and the vehicle will be able to be certified upon completion.

Note

Modifications to seats in vehicles manufactured prior to 1969 do not require VASS approval provided that the seats structure and mounting is at least that of the original seat. If there is any doubt about the seat mounting or structure, a VASS signatory should be consulted.

Replacing seats with optional seats provided by the vehicle manufacturer

Seats supplied as an option by the vehicle manufacturer may be fitted without the need for a VASS approval certificate provided:

- the seat is one supplied by the vehicle manufacturer as an option for that vehicle and requires no further modifications to the vehicle
- the original seat mountings are used
- appropriate seat belts are fitted.

Installation of Category 2 and 3 seat in accordance with VSB 5

Seats in these categories must be fitted in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions by a suitably qualified person. The seat must comply with the requirements of VSB 5 and once installed, be permanently affixed with manufacturer and installer plates in accordance with VSB 5. A VASS signatory should be consulted if instructions are not available, or if there is any doubt about the compliance of the installation, particularly if the seat being installed has been removed from another vehicle.

Wheelchair accessible vehicles

Please refer to Vehicle Standards Information (VSI) sheet 8 – *Guide to Modifications for Motor Vehicles for requirements for Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles*.

Increased seating capacity

Additional category 1 (adult) seats fitted to a vehicle will often change the vehicle category from a goods carrying vehicle (NA) to a passenger carrying vehicle (MA, MB or MC) which is generally subject to higher safety standards. A goods carrying vehicle becomes a passenger carrying vehicle when the total number of seating positions multiplied by 68kg is 50% or more of the vehicle's load carrying capacity.

If a new vehicle is modified in this way, it must be certified as a vehicle which has undergone a second stage of manufacture, and be affixed with a second stage of manufacture compliance plate, prior to being presented for first registration at a VicRoads Customer Service Centre.

If a vehicle, which has already been registered and used, is converted to a passenger carrying vehicle by the fitting of additional seats, a VASS approval certificate is required to ensure that the vehicle meets the applicable higher safety standards.

When the installation is complete, the vehicle must be presented at a VicRoads Customer Service Centre, together with the VASS approval certificate for a change of description.

Notifying VicRoads when seats are added or removed

VicRoads must be notified when a category 1 (adult seat) is added or removed from a vehicle.

In some cases, a VASS certificate will be required if one or more seats has been removed from a vehicle (see Table 1).

Note

Further vehicle modification may also be required.

Category 2 and 3 seats do not alter the seating description of the vehicle. Therefore, there is no need for the vehicle to be presented at a Customer Service Centre to have the seating description upgraded.

For further information

Further information is available on the VicRoads website: vicroads.vic.gov.au or by calling VicRoads on **13 11 71** (TTY **13 36 77**, Speak and Listen **1300 555 727**).

Table 1: Modifying the Number of Seating Positions

General Requirements for an Approval Certificate

Original number of seating positions	Number of seating positions after seat modification			
	2 to 3	4 to 9	10 to 12	13 or more
1 to 9	Approval Certificate not required.	Approval Certificate not required.	<i>Refer to Section Increased seating capacity.</i>	
10 to 12	Approval Certificate not required provided the seats are in the front row only.	An Approval certificate is required if the vehicle was built after 1970.	<i>Refer to Section Increased seating capacity.</i>	
More than 12	Approval Certificate not required provided the seats and seatbelts are in the front row only and original type seat belts are fitted.	An Approval Certificate is required if the vehicle was built after 1970.	An Approval Certificate is required if the vehicle was built after 1986 and the vehicle's GVM is 5.0 tonne or less.	Approval Certificate not required.

Note: An Approval Certificate is not required for reducing the number of seats on a vehicle built before 1971. An Approval Certificate is required for a vehicle converted to a Motor Home. See Vehicle Standards Information (VSI) sheet 5.