

INFORMATION UPDATE

Bus travel in hazardous areas

Snowfields

Introduction

In accordance with Chapter 9 of *The Road Safety (Vehicles) Regulations 2009*, areas of the Victorian Alpine region, in which it can be hazardous to drive during the snow season, have been declared as hazardous areas during the period in each year 1 June to 10 October, inclusive. Depending on season conditions, restrictions may be extended beyond those dates. Contact should be made with VicRoads to confirm dates.

Hazardous Areas

The following roads have been declared as hazardous areas:

Mount Buller: The Mount Buller Road from the junction of the Mount Stirling Road to the Mount Buller Alpine Village.

Mount Hotham: The Great Alpine Road from Harrietville over Mount Hotham to Omeo.

Falls Creek: The Bogong High Plains Road from Mount Beauty via Falls Creek to the Omeo Highway.

Mount Buffalo: The road from the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) control gate situated at the base of Mount Buffalo to the Horn.

Mount Baw Baw: The Mount Baw Baw Road from Tanjil Bren to Mount Baw Baw Alpine Village and the South Face Road from the Mount Baw Baw Road to the Tyers-Thompson Valley Road.

Lake Mountain: The Marysville-Woods Point Road from the Lake Mountain turnoff to Cumberland Junction.

Mount Donna Buang: The Acheron Way between Donna Buang Road and St Fillans, and the Donna Buang Road from Panton Gap to the intersection of the Acheron Way.

Mount Saint Gwinear: The Thomson Valley Road from the Thomson Dam Road intersection to Rocky Knob and the Mount Saint Gwinear Road from Rocky Knob to the Mount Saint Gwinear car park.

Mount Stirling: The Mount Stirling Road from the intersection of the Mount Buller Road at Mirimbah to Telephone Box Junction.

Mount Torbreck: The Barnwell Plains Road.

Mount Tamboritha: The Mount Tamboritha Road between the last crossing of the Wellington River and Mount Tamboritha.

Licola Area: The Target Creek Road between Licola and Glencairn and the Jamieson-Licola Road between Licola and Violet Hill.

Requirements for Buses and Bus Drivers

Chapter 9 of the *Road Safety (Vehicles) Regulations 2009* imposes certain requirements on buses and bus drivers when in a hazardous area.

These requirements apply to:

- a. A vehicle that seats more than 12 people (including the driver) that is operated by a person who is accredited under the *Bus Safety Act 2009*, and that is being used for the carrying of passengers:
 - i. for hire or reward;
 - ii. as part of a courtesy service; or
 - iii. for or in connection with the activities of a religious, philanthropic, educational, sporting or social body; or
- b. A vehicle that seats more than 30 people (including the driver).



A driver can only use a vehicle described above, in a hazardous area if the vehicle has:

- a. A full dual circuit service braking system;
- b. Adequate demisting and saloon heating systems;
- c. A spare wheel, jack and wheel brace;
- d. Wheel chains of a design approved by VicRoads.
The chains must be in good condition (Manufacturers' recommendations should be followed) and capable of being attached to the outer drive wheels of the vehicle. (Approved wheel chains are diamond pattern or similar design. Ladder design chains are not permitted. For further information on approved wheel chains, contact VicRoads on Tel: 1300 360 745);
- e. Wheel chocks;
- f. A torch or portable lead light; and
- g. A shovel.

It is recommended that all buses entering Hazardous Areas should also:

- a. Carry at least 20 litres of appropriate size grit to assist traction if required; and
- b. Be fitted with open tread pattern tyres in roadworthy condition.

Hazardous Area Authority

The driver of a vehicle described in the previous section must hold a Hazardous Area Authority when driving in a declared hazardous area.

To obtain a Hazardous Area Authority, a four-day training course, which is only conducted during the snow season, must be successfully completed. Details of successful completion of this course must then be forwarded to VicRoads for the issue of a Hazardous Area Authority. A list of training organisations can be obtained at vicroads.vic.gov.au or by calling 1300 360 745.

There are two types of Hazardous Area Authorities:

- a. Declared areas other than Mt. Hotham – this allows the holder to drive in any area except Mt. Hotham; and
- b. Mt. Hotham – this allows the holder to drive in any declared hazardous area, including Mt. Hotham.

The Hazardous Area Authority does not allow the holder to drive a vehicle if an appropriate class of driver licence is not held. When driving in a declared hazardous area, the driver must carry a Hazardous Area Authority.

Renewal of a Driver's Hazardous Area Authority

A Hazardous Area Authority is valid for six years.

While VicRoads sends renewal information to all Hazardous Area Authority holders in February/March of the year the authority is due to expire, it is the responsibility of drivers to ensure that they have a current authority.

The following renewal requirements apply to a Hazardous Area Authority that is due to expire, or one that has not expired by more than five years:

To drive in any declared hazardous area, except Mt. Hotham

Drivers must either:

- Satisfactorily complete a one and one half day re-assessment of skills associated with bus operations in hazardous areas; or
- Complete a statutory declaration that states that the driver has driven a bus in a hazardous area at least five times during the period 1 June to 10 October in last two years. Work diary pages or other verification may be required.

To drive in any declared hazardous area, including Mt. Hotham

Drivers/applicants must satisfactorily complete a one and one half day re-assessment of skills associated with bus operations in hazardous areas.

Re-assessment of skills courses can be undertaken at the same organisations that conduct the hazardous area authority training course.

Further information

For further information about driving buses in declared hazardous areas visit vicroads.vic.gov.au or at VicRoads registration and licensing offices.