

Additional or Replacement Seats

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For further information please write to the Manager – Vehicle Safety & Policy
60 Denmark Street, Kew, 3101 or contact your local Customer Service Centre.

Introduction

Regulation 257 of the Road Safety (Vehicles) Regulations 2009 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. Fitting additional or replacement seats to a vehicle is a modification.

This document is a published guideline for the purposes of Regulation 257.

Detailed requirements for the manufacture and installation of additional seats are published in Vehicle Standards Bulletin (VSB) 5. Additional seats are divided into three categories to allow seats to be designed for occupants of different size and mass.

The seat categories are:

- Category 1 Seats capable of being used by adults;
- Category 2 Seats restricted to use by children up to 12 years of age and weighing not more than 38kgs;
- Category 3 Seats restricted to use by children up to 8 years of age and weighing not more than 26kgs.

A plate or label made of durable material identifying the seat category should be fitted in a conspicuous place on or near the additional seat.

VSB 5 can be viewed or downloaded from the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government (DITRD LG) website at www.infrastructure.gov.au

General Requirements

Seats fitted with integrated seatbelts, airbags, seat position sensors or active head restraints by the vehicle manufacturer for occupant protection may only be replaced with seats with identical fittings, safety systems and crash performance.

Seats that incorporate airbag systems may only be re-upholstered in accordance with the vehicle manufacturer's instructions or with the approval of a member of the Vehicle Assessment Signatory Scheme (VASS).

The addition of category 1 (adult) seats which are not available as an option by the vehicle manufacturer will require an approval certificate issued by a member of the Vehicle Assessment Signatory Scheme (VASS).

Careful consideration should be given to the suitability of the vehicle before additional seats are fitted. Some aspects that must be considered when assessing the suitability of the installation of additional seats are:-

- The space available in the vehicle must be sufficient to accommodate the additional seats and occupants. See VSB 5 for details.
- The load carrying capacity of the vehicle must be sufficient to accommodate the weight of the additional seats and occupants.

Additional seats should not be installed in the trays of utilities or trucks unless adequate roll-over protection is provided. Fibreglass, plastic and light steel canopies do not provide adequate roll-over protection;

- Additional seats should not be installed in the vehicle in a location where there is a high probability that occupants will be injured in a crash. For example, there is a high probability that an occupant in a rear facing seat in the rear of a small station wagon would suffer leg injuries in a rear end collision, because the occupant's legs are located in an area that will crumple as a result of the impact forces. See VSB 5 for details on head and leg space requirements;
- Additional seats must not impose any loads on existing seats, unless it is demonstrated that the original seats can carry the additional loads;
- Access to and from all seats should be sufficient to allow a person to enter and exit the vehicle, operate door latches, folding seat controls, etc without assistance. The installation of seats in a vehicle's load space is not acceptable where the only access can be obstructed by the load;
- Where existing seats are modified to improve access, the modifier must demonstrate that the modified seats continue to comply with ADR 3.
- An assessment of the effect of the additional seats, head restraints (if fitted) and occupants on rearward visibility should be made. Additional rear vision mirrors may be required in cases where rearward vision is restricted.

Please visit www.vicroads.vic.gov.au

Seats and Anchorages

All seats must be securely anchored to the vehicle structure and provided with seat belts as required by the applicable Standards for Registration. VSI 21 provides a summary of the seat belt requirements. The seat frames and fittings must not have any sharp edges or protrusions and the seat padding and upholstery should be designed to reduce injury to vehicle occupants in an impact.

Where the installation of additional seats requires the relocation of the spare wheel, provision must be made for securing the spare wheel. If the spare wheel is relocated within the vehicle, the mounting must be of sufficient strength to withstand twenty times the weight of the spare wheel and its mounting in the forward, rearward or sideways direction. The spare wheel and its mounting must not cause a hazardous projection for the vehicle's occupants.

The additional seats and relocated spare wheel or any other fittings must not prevent or restrict the use of existing safety devices such as seat belts and child restraints unless alternative complying belts or anchorages are fitted.

Seat anchorages must meet the strength requirements of Australian Design Rule (ADR) 3 - Seat Anchorages, so that the seat is not likely to break loose in an impact.

Seat Belts and Anchorages

Seat belts must be firmly fixed to the vehicle for all additional seats and must comply with the requirements of the ADR applicable to that vehicle. See VSI 21. In cases where the ADR for seat belts does not apply, then the seat belts must be of an approved type. In either case, the seat belt anchorage should meet the strength and location requirements of ADR 5 - Seat Belt Anchorages.

All seating positions must be fitted with the correct type of seat belt as set out in VSI 21. Side-facing seats may only be fitted with lap belts.

Child Restraint Anchorages

If the Standards for Registration require child restraint anchorages to be fitted to the additional seating positions, they must be fitted and comply with applicable standards. An approval certificate from a member of the Vehicle Assessment Signatory Scheme (VASS) will be required.

Replacement Seats

Seats supplied as an option by the vehicle manufacturer may be fitted. A VASS approval certificate is not required for this type of seat replacement provided;

- The seat is one supplied by the vehicle manufacturer as an option for that vehicle and is actually replacing an existing seat.
- The original seat mountings are used, and
- Appropriate seat belts are fitted.

In cases where the replacement seat is not one offered as an option by the vehicle manufacturer and the vehicle was manufactured on or after 1 January 1969 a VASS approval certificate showing continued compliance with the applicable ADRs will be required.

For vehicles manufactured before 1969 the seat anchorages must be of at least equivalent strength to the original anchorages. A VASS member should be consulted if there is any doubt regarding the strength of the anchorage or any part of the seat installation.

Certification of Installation

Category 1 (adult) seats

Additional 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). These are generally subject to higher safety standards. Therefore, if additional seats are fitted to a new vehicle which result in a change of vehicle category from a goods carrying vehicle (NA) to a passenger carrying vehicle (MA MB or MC) the modified vehicle 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.

If a vehicle, which has already been registered and used, is converted to a passenger carrying vehicle by the fitting of additional seats, engineering evidence must be provided showing that the vehicle meets the applicable 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.

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

For a new vehicle, a second manufacturer's Compliance Plate will need to be fitted to the vehicle when presented for first registration.

A list of VASS members qualified to issue approval certificates is available from VicRoads Customer Service Centres, the VicRoads internet site or by contacting VicRoads on 1300 360 745.

Category 2 and 3 Seats

Seats in this categories must be fitted in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. A VASS member should be consulted if instructions are not available or if there is any doubt about the compliance of the installation.

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.