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## **New Irish Driving Regulations December 2010**

New Irish driving regulations have come into effect since December 2010 which brings us in line with wider European regulations through the implementation of a European directive. Full details of the regulations may be seen on the Road safety Authority website [www.rsa.ie](http://www.rsa.ie) under the heading Medical Aspects of Driver Licencing.

**A summary of the main points of the regulations in respect of epilepsy are as follows:-**

### **Group 1: Cars, Light Vans and Motorcycles**

**The main seizure freedom period for personal driving in categories A1, A, B, EB, M or W (car light van or motorcycle) remains the same at one year of seizure freedom.**

Summary of the main relevant points

**Provoked seizures:** a person who has had a provoked epileptic seizure due to a recognizable provoking factor that is unlikely to recur at the wheel may be declared able to drive **on an individual basis subject to neurological opinion.** (Previously six months)

**Sleep seizures:** For persons who have seizures exclusively in sleep they may be declared fit to drive once this pattern has been established for **no less than one year.** (Previously 2 years). If a further occurrence of a seizure happens in waking a one year seizure freedom period is required.

**Seizures without influence on consciousness or the ability to act** – persons with who have never had any seizures other than seizures which have been demonstrated to affect neither consciousness nor cause any functional impairment can be declared fit to drive once this pattern has been established for **no less than one year** (was previously subject to neurological opinion). If there is an occurrence of any other kind of seizure then a one year seizure freedom period is required.

**Initial or isolated seizures:** a person who has had an initial seizure or loss of consciousness should be advised not to drive and a specialist report is required regarding the period of driving prohibition and follow up to be undertaken.

**First or single unprovoked seizures:** a person who has had a first unprovoked epileptic seizure may be declared fit to drive after a period of **six months seizure freedom** with an appropriate medical assessment preferably a Neurological assessment.

**Seizures associated with a physician directed change or reduction of anti-epileptic therapy:** in such cases the person may be advised not to drive from the beginning of the period of withdrawal and for **six months** after stopping of treatment. Seizures which occur during the physician advised change or withdrawal of medication require **three months** off driving if previously effective treatment is reinstated.

**Surgery** In cases where a person has had curative epilepsy surgery the seizure freedom period prior to licencing is the same as the main seizure freedom period for epilepsy i.e.1 year.

The new regulations provide definitions of epilepsy and provoked seizures.

- Epilepsy: common medical disorder characterised by recurrent seizures....as defined by having had 2 or more epileptic seizures less than five years apart.
- Provoked epileptic seizure: seizure which has a recognisable causative factor that is avoidable.

The new regulations state that all drivers with epilepsy should be under annual licence review until they have been seizure free for a period of at least five years.

Persons with epilepsy will not meet the criteria for unconditional licencing (10 year licence) and notification should be given to the licensing authority.

### **Group 2: Lorries, Buses, Heavy Goods Vehicles**

In the case of applicants with epilepsy for licencing in respect of heavy goods vehicles C1, C, D1, D, EC1, EC, ED1 or ED the directive permits for persons to be licenced to drive in these categories provided **10 years of seizure freedom** have been achieved **without the aid of anti-epileptic drugs**. A permit may be granted in less time in the case of those with good prognostic indicators and in similarly in cases of juvenile epilepsy. Appropriate medical follow up must be completed and satisfactory result on neurological investigations. All persons are to be under licence review until they have been seizure free for at least 5 years.

Persons who have had a provoked seizure due to a recognizable provoking factor that is unlikely to recur at the wheel may be declared eligible to drive on an **individual basis subject to neurological opinion** with appropriate assessments having been completed after the acute episode.

**First or single unprovoked seizures** the person may be declared fit to drive in these categories once **5 years seizure freedom** has been achieved **without the aid of anti-epileptic drugs**. Drivers with good prognostic indicators may drive sooner.

Seizures due to drug or alcohol misuse, sleep deprivation or structural abnormality are not considered provoked seizures for licencing purposes. Reports of seizures due to side effects of prescribed medication do not automatically imply that such events will be considered as provoked.

Seizures which may be considered provoked include eclamptic seizures, reflex anoxic seizures, immediate seizure seconds after head injury, seizure in the first week post head injury not associated with damage on CT or MRI nor with post amnesia of more than 30 minutes, seizures at

time of stroke/TIA or within 24 hours of same, seizures during inter-cranial surgery or the ensuing 24 hours.

Seizures associated with acute exacerbation of Multiple Sclerosis or Migraine need to be assessed on an individual basis by a Neurologist.

**For full details see: [www.rsa.ie](http://www.rsa.ie) Medical Aspects of Driver Licensing - Epilepsy: Group 2**

## DRIVING SAFELY

**AVOID** driving for many hours or if you are fatigued. If you have to drive a long distance, take breaks every couple of hours or, better still, share the driving with someone else.

**ENSURE** you always take your medication as prescribed and follow your doctor's advice

**DO NOT** drive while your medication is being changed or discontinued, until your doctor advises you that it is safe to do so.

**AVOID** driving if you are suffering side-effects from your medication that are likely to affect your performance while driving.

**DO NOT** drink alcohol if you are driving. Even small amounts can interfere with medication and affect your driving ability.

## MOTOR INSURANCE

It is advisable to firstly shop around for the most competitive quote you can get and then declare that you have epilepsy. Whether or not you have to pay an extra loading on your premium will depend on the policy of the insurance company and the details of your particular case. By seeking the quote before declaring you have epilepsy you will at least know by how much you are being loaded. There is considerable risk attached to not revealing your condition. Failure to disclose epilepsy could mean that in the event of an accident, your policy could be declared null and void. Extra loading may be a small price to pay in the long run.

If you have difficulty obtaining a quotation, the Insurance Information Service of the Insurance Federation can help to arrange cover for you under the Declined Cases Agreement. You must be refused by three different companies before the Insurance Federation will take up your case. The Insurance Federation will need to know the exact order in which you approached the companies and details of any insurance cover you may have had.

Also the Irish Insurance Federation of Ireland in 39 Molesworth St, provide an information service on all insurance matters.

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