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The measures - which also strengthen requirements for driving examiners and impact on the rules for drivers towing trailers - will come in to force on 19 January 2013 as part of new European requirements aimed at improving road safety.

The changes are being implemented by the Department for Transport in conjunction with the Driving Standards Agency (DSA) and the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA).

The main aspects of the new rules are:

* Motorcyclists - Access to more powerful bikes will be staged subject to competence, age and previous experience. The minimum age to ride the largest bikes without previous experience will rise from 21 to 24.

* Licence renewals for bus and lorry drivers - At present, drivers of medium-sized and large buses and lorries need to renew their licences every five years once they reach the age of 45. Over 45s also need to demonstrate their fitness to drive through a full medical report. From 2013, all new or renewed bus and lorry licences will be renewable every five years. However, drivers under 45 will not require a full medical report and will still only need to renew their photograph every 10 years. All other drivers and riders will continue to renew their driving licences every 10 years as is currently the case.

* Driving examiners - Compulsory initial qualification, periodic training and quality assurance checks will be required for driving examiners. Britain already fulfils most of these requirements but the new rules will enhance the Driving Standards Agency's existing arrangements.

* Trailer towing - Under the new rules car drivers will be limited to towing 3.5 tonnes.

DSA chief executive, Rosemary Thew, said:

"Britain already has some of the safest roads in the world. These changes build on our existing standards and recognise the importance of our examiners' professionalism. They will also help to ensure that new motorcyclists gain the right skills and experience before riding bigger bikes."

DVLA chief executive, Simon Tse, said:

"These changes will provide a useful additional reminder for bus and lorry drivers. They will help to ensure that drivers of these vehicles will continue to operate to high levels of levels of safety by ensuring that they are fit to drive."

The European requirements are being introduced in Great Britain in line with feedback from a public consultation, which included responses from driver and rider training bodies, trade associations and road safety groups.

Source: Driving Standards Agency

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