



# JOHN PAUL II HIGH SCHOOL – GREYMOUTH

## NEW RESIDENTS AND VISITORS

### DRIVING IN NEW ZEALAND

The information in this fact sheet applies to licences for cars and motorcycles.

#### Can I drive in New Zealand?

Do you have a current overseas driver licence or international driving permit?

#### **No — I don't have a current overseas driver licence or international driving permit**

If you don't have a current overseas driver licence or international driving permit, you cannot drive. You must apply for a New Zealand driver licence.

#### **Yes — I do have a current overseas driver licence or international driving permit**

If you **do** have a current **overseas driver licence** or **international driving permit**, you can drive using that for a **maximum of 12 months** from the date you arrive in New Zealand. (You can only drive the types of vehicle covered by your overseas driver licence or international driving permit.)

Each time you visit New Zealand, you can drive for a further 12-month period on a valid overseas licence or international driving permit, as long as you stay for no more than a year at a time.

#### **What happens after one year?**

If you are using an overseas licence or an international driving permit, you must convert it to a New Zealand driver licence **before** one year has passed. (Apply for a conversion early, to make sure you have a new licence before the one year is up.)

Forms to use to apply for an overseas licence conversion are available from Land Transport New Zealand, driver licensing agents.

You will have to pass a **theory test** and, depending on the country you have come from, you may have to pass a **practical driving test** as well.

## Questions and answers

#### **Why do I have to sit a theory test?**

All drivers must know the road rules, what the road signs mean and how to drive safely. Learning the road rules is particularly important because of New Zealand's unique 'Give way' rule (when you are turning left, you must give way to vehicles that are coming from the opposite direction and turning right). You can find out more about this rule and others in the [Road code](#).

## Does everyone sit the practical test?

No. Some countries require similar driving skills and have similar licensing systems to New Zealand's. The law recognises that drivers from these countries usually have adequate driving skills, and they may not have to sit the practical driving test.

You **don't** have to sit the practical test if:

- you have a licence from Australia, Canada, Norway, a member state of the European Union, South Africa, Switzerland or the United States of America, **and**
- your licence is current (or has expired within the past 12 months), **and**
- you've held that licence for more than two years.

## Notes

- If you are in this group, you still need to pass the **theory** test. If you don't pass the theory test, you cannot drive.
- Some countries have driver licensing systems that are very different from New Zealand's. People from these countries **do have to** sit a practical test. Phone our Driver Licensing Call Centre to find out more (freephone 0800 822 422).
- \*Applicants from the **European Union** are only exempt from the practical driving test if they have held, for two years or more, a licence that was issued from the country while it was a member of the EU.

## What about motorcycles and heavy vehicles?

Different types of vehicle are grouped into 'classes'. There are different theory tests and practical tests for different classes:

- **Class 1** includes cars and other light-weight motor vehicles.
- **Classes 2 - 5** include different types of truck.
- **Class 6** covers motorcycles.

Most people will sit the theory and practical tests for Class 1 vehicles. However, if you rode a motorcycle or drove trucks before coming to New Zealand and want to do so here, make sure you tell the driver licensing agent which vehicle class you want to sit a test for.

Contact your nearest Land Transport New Zealand, regional office or phone our Driver Licensing Call Centre on 0800 822 422 to find out more.

## Do I have to carry my licence with me when I'm driving?

In New Zealand, you must have your driver licence or international driving permit with you at all times when you're driving. If your overseas licence or permit is not in English, we suggest you carry a translation from an official source (eg, a translation service or language centre).

## Do I have to pass any physical tests?

If you cannot see properly, you cannot drive safely. Your eyesight will be checked:

- when you apply for a new licence
- each time you renew your licence
- when you apply for a new licence class or endorsement.

An eyesight machine will check how well you can see at a distance and to the sides. If the check detects a problem, you will need to present an eyesight or medical certificate before your licence is issued.

## Where you can find out more

- If you've moved to New Zealand to live, read the *New resident drivers* brochure. This provides an overview of New Zealand driving rules and behaviours that you'll need to know about before you begin driving on our roads. It's available in English, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Fijian, Samoan, Hindi and Malay. Phone our Helpdesk on (freephone) 0800 699 000 to order a copy.
- If you're in New Zealand for a short stay, read the [What's different about driving in New Zealand?](#) brochure.
- Read some of the other resources on the Land Transport Safety Authority's website: [www.ltsa.govt.nz](http://www.ltsa.govt.nz)
  - [Factsheets](#) on other aspects of driver licensing and road safety
  - [Information for motorists](#)
  - The [Road rules](#) section of *The official New Zealand Road code*.
- If you're a driver who is new to our roads, if you're learning to drive or if you're wanting to gain a new licence class, you must make use of the appropriate version of *The official New Zealand road code*. (There are different versions for cars, motorcycles and heavy vehicles.) *The road code* contains information you need to know to get a driver licence. It also has lots of information to help drivers be safe and courteous on the road. You can get copies of the *Road code* from bookstores, driver licensing agents and some public libraries.
- If you have questions about driver licensing, phone our Driver Licensing Call Centre: (freephone) **0800 822 422**.
- If you prefer, you can write to us: Contact and Registry Services (Land Transport New Zealand), Private Bag, Palmerston North.