

Escort vehicles

& abnormal load

code of practice

Although there is no legislation that you have to abide by, there is a code of practice from the Highways Agency which outlines the lighting and marking for abnormal load self escorting vehicles. However, Legally enforceable standards do exist for the notification of abnormal load movement to both Chief Constables and the Highway Authorities. The police are not responsible for ensuring the safe operational passage of abnormal loads on the roads; this is the role of the operator. Although the code of practice is not intended to be a comprehensive statement of the law's requirements, it points out many of the legal obligations which need to be met, and also contains information and explanations which are designed to ensure that those escorting abnormal vehicles on the highways do so in a manner which maximises safety. Below are the guidelines as found in the Highways agency code of practice.

Markings and signing. See figure 1 and 2.

- 2.10** The vehicle shall be marked clearly to identify that it is an escort vehicle. This shall be done by marking "Escort Vehicle" or "Escort" in solid black first letter upper case, remaining lower case lettering, or lower case in forward script on the front of the vehicle. The marking shall be in plain sans serif font (e.g. Helvetica or Arial), and the lettering a minimum of 150mm high and a width to height ratio approaching one. Shadowing, italics and other lettering effects are not permitted. No other text or logos shall be located near to this lettering.
- 2.11** In addition, a fixed or removable sign may be fitted to the front and rear of the vehicle. The sign should only be displayed when the vehicle is actively engaged in escorting an abnormal load. The wording on this sign shall be ABNORMAL LOAD or WIDE LOAD as standard with SLOW LORRY or LONG LOAD as an option. The sign shall be mounted such that the sign face is perpendicular to the road surface and the text is horizontal. The sign shall be mounted either on the roof of the escort vehicle or preferably below the front grille, ensuring that the front number plate is still legible and does not affect the operation of the vehicle. The rear sign shall be mounted preferably below the rear number plate of the vehicle. If the sign is roof mounted, it must not obscure the roof mounted flashing amber warning beacon.
- 2.12** The sign should have black lettering on a yellow retroreflective background. The height of the lettering shall be a minimum height of 100mm. If the sign is mounted below the front grille of the escort vehicle, the retroreflective material used shall be to a minimum standard of Class RA1 or equivalent. The rear sign shall display the same legend as the front mounted sign and conform to the same standard of material. If the sign is mounted on the roof of the escort vehicle, the retroreflective material used shall be to a minimum standard of Class RA2 or equivalent.

- 2.13** Marker boards may be fitted to both ends of the sign. The width of the marker board and associated plates shall be the same as the width of the vehicle.



- 2.14** There shall be a roof sign displaying "Abnormal Load" in first letter upper case, remaining lower case lettering or lower case lettering using a sans serif font (e.g. Helvetica or Arial) and with a width to height ratio approaching one, which should be clearly visible from both the front and rear. This sign shall be lit when escorting and not be illuminated at any other time. Lighting regulations only permit red lighting to face the rear of the vehicle and any colour other than red to face forward. This should be taken into consideration in the design of any sign (suggested red internal lighting to rear and white to front). This sign may be demountable.

Side Markings

- 2.15** To alert other road users approaching the vehicle from the side, a continuous 200mm wide horizontal strip of yellow retroreflective material shall be fitted along the length of the vehicle to at least the front wheel arch. At the rear, side of the vehicle a 300mm wide vertical chevron strip of retroreflective yellow and non retroreflective red shall be fitted. An alternative option shall be to block fill the side of the vehicle with fluorescent material.
- 2.16** The name of the vehicle operator and/or owner may be displayed upon the side of the vehicle forward of the extended chevron markings. The name and any logos shall not be retroreflective. No company livery shall be displayed on the front or rear of the vehicle. In addition, the following rules shall be followed:

the number of the letters/characters shall be less than fifteen
the height of the letters/characters is between 300mm and 1,000mm
no long designs are used e.g. addresses and phone numbers.

Rear Markings

- 2.17** To help alert other road users approaching the escort vehicle from the rear, high visibility markings shall be applied to the rear of the vehicle. These will be chevron markings of alternate red retroreflective material and yellow vinyl non retroreflective material (or equivalent), each with a strip width of 250mm on vans and larger vehicles, and 150mm for cars and car-derived vans.
- 2.18** The chevron markings shall be at 60° to the horizontal plane, with the chevrons pointing upwards and matching colours meeting at the vertical centre line of the vehicle. As much of the rear of the vehicle as possible should be marked in this way and any vehicle fittings should be cut around, e.g. light assemblies, number plates etc.
- 2.19** In addition to the chevron markings on the rear of the vehicle, outline markings consisting of 25mm-50mm wide red microprismatic retroreflective material shall be fitted along the roof edge and to the outside door pillars in the case of the van and outside edge of the rear window in the case of a car.

- 2.20** When the rear doors of a self escort van are opened a 25mm–50mm wide red microprismatic retroreflective strip of material shall be fitted along the rear facing edge of the doors, along the open roof edge and along the floor sill. In the case of a self escort car the strip of material shall be fitted to the rear facing edge of the boot lid or tailgate.
- 2.21** If a piece of equipment is fitted or attached to the rear of the escort vehicle and obscures the chevron markings (e.g. a crash cushion in the upright position), the chevron markings shall be replicated on the equipment, so that the pattern continues to be visible.
- 2.22** To maintain high vehicle visibility from different angles, the red and yellow chevron markings shall be continued in an unbroken pattern onto the side of the vehicle body for a distance of 300mm measured from the rear most corner of the vehicle body. The markings shall be over the full height of the vehicle body. See 2.15 also.

Figure 1 - Illustration of an escort vehicle

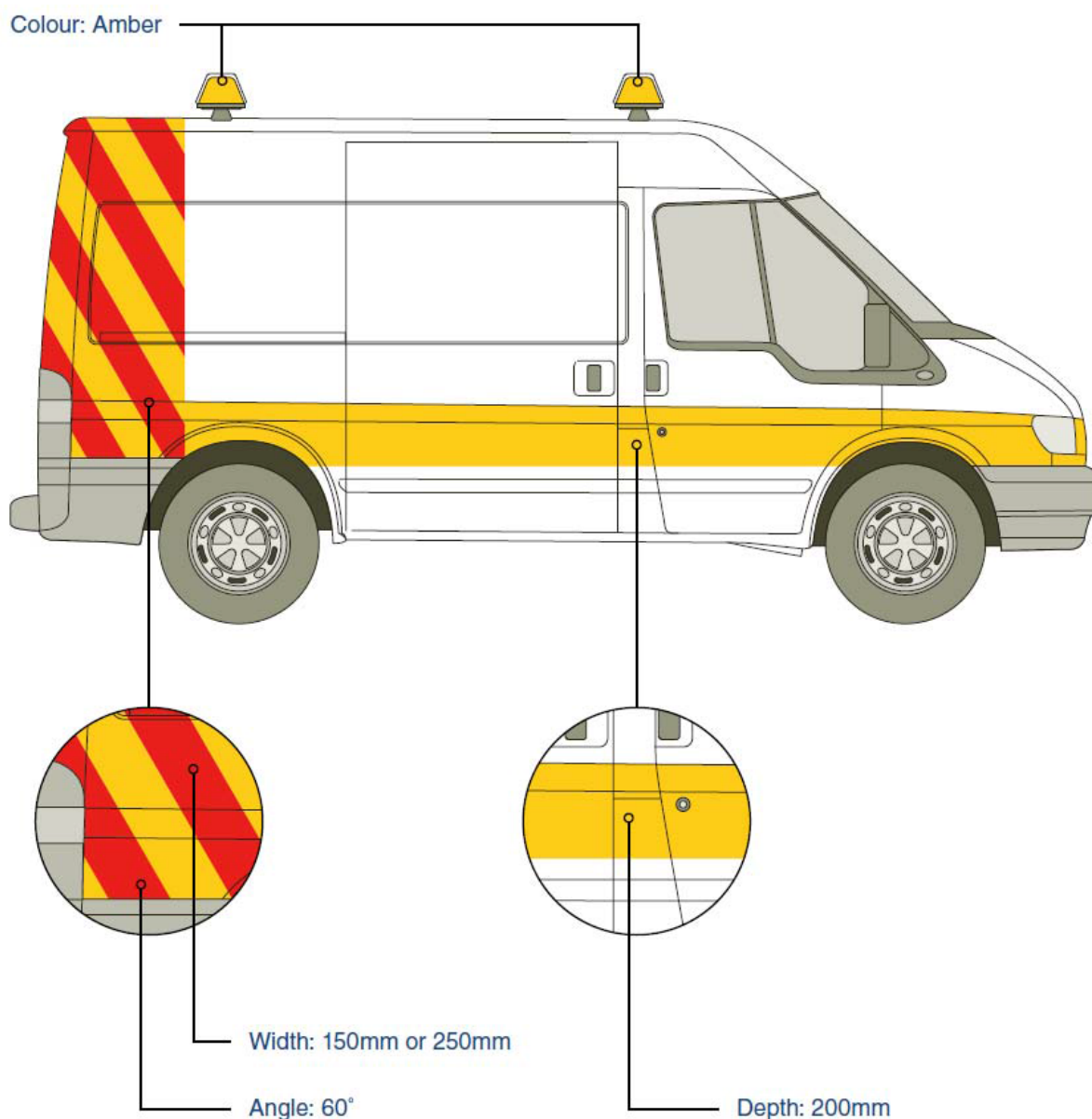


Figure 2 - Illustration of an escort vehicle

