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COLLECTION AND DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION

Information on changes in the national road traffic safety regulations

Transmitted by the Russian Federation

Changes and additions have been made to the Highway Code and the Basic Regulations on the authorization of vehicles for use and the duties of road safety officials. They were made by Decision No. 67 of the Government of the Russian Federation dated 24 January 2001, entitled "Amendment and supplementing of the decision of the Government of the Russian Federation on road traffic safety issues", and came into force on 1 April 2001.

This was the fifth adjustment of the above-mentioned rules since their approval by decision No. 1090 of the Council of Ministers (Government) of the Russian Federation dated 23 October 1993.

The first changes and amendments, made in 1996 and 1997, concerned the use of flashing yellow and orange beacons (Highway Code, section 3). In 1998, changes were made to section 2 of the Highway Code following the entry into force of the International Road Traffic (State Monitoring and Responsibility for Breaches of Procedure) Act. Subsequently, substantial changes were made to numerous aspects of the Highway Code and the Basic Regulations on 1 July 2000. They were aimed at putting into better order the rules governing the fitting of certain vehicles with special light and sound signals.

The latest, fifth series of changes and amendments, which took effect on 1 April 2001, concerned most sections of the Highway Code and of the Basic Regulations.

They resulted not only from the need to clarify the sense of certain rules, but also from the entry into force of new standards for road markings (GOST R 51256-99) and road signs (GOST R 51582-2000) and from a desire to make roads safer for users.

The principal innovations are described below.

Four new expressions have been included in the list of terms: “road traffic”, “dangerous load”, “organized carriage of groups of children” and “passenger”. The term “road traffic accident” has been aligned with the Road Traffic Safety Act and the terms “overtaking”, “pedestrian crossing” and “traffic policeman” have been more clearly defined. Henceforward, only militia (police) officers and, in specified circumstances, officials of the Russian Transport Inspectorate of the Ministry of Transport of the Russian Federation are empowered to check drivers' documents (formerly, this entitlement extended to members of volunteer patrols and auxiliary militia officers).

The following important additions have been made to the list in paragraph 2.7 of the Highway Code of actions that drivers are prohibited from performing:

“Following a road traffic accident in which the driver was involved or the halting of the vehicle on the orders of a militia officer, consumption of alcoholic drinks or narcotic, psychotropic or other stupeficient substances prior to the performance of an examination to determine the driver's sobriety or prior to a decision to waive that examination;

Driving of a vehicle in violation of the rules on working and rest time established by the competent government authority or, in the case of international road transport activities, by international agreements of the Russian Federation;

Use while the vehicle is in motion of a telephone not equipped for hands-free use.”

The need for the introduction of the last-named provision can be judged from foreign research in connection with the strong rise in mobile-phone ownership. According to information from specialists, the risk of a vehicle's being involved in an accident increases twofold owing to the mere presence of a phone in the vehicle and nine-fold if the driver uses the phone while driving.

The list of vehicles whose drivers are required to turn on a flashing yellow or orange beacon has been extended to include vehicles engaged in picking up or transporting damaged or broken-down vehicles or other vehicles in the cases provided for by law. Appropriate changes have been made in paragraph 3.4 of the Highway Code and paragraph 16 of the Basic Regulations.

A further important change concerns primarily drivers of vehicles used in cities who are given to a particular style of driving, that is known as “slaloming”. Henceforward, pursuant to paragraph 9.4 of the Highway Code, “in heavy traffic, when all traffic lanes are occupied, lane-changing is permitted only for the purposes of turning left or right, making a U-turn, stopping or driving round an obstacle” (formerly, overtaking was also permitted in such circumstances).

Parking is perhaps one of today's worst problems in urban areas. With a view to increasing the traffic capacity of urban streets, the Highway Code permits parking on the edge of the pavement provided it will not prevent the passage of pedestrians. Many drivers interpret this rule to suit themselves and park their cars across the pavement, leaving only a narrow space for pedestrians to get through. For this reason, an important stipulation has been inserted in paragraph 12.2 of the Highway Code; it is that, unless signs and markings prescribe otherwise, cars may henceforward only be parked in a single row and parallel to the edge of the carriageway.

To improve operating conditions for scheduled buses and trolley buses, stopping of other vehicles within 15 m of designated bus stops is now permitted for one purpose only -- the embarking or disembarking of passengers (formerly, stopping of all kinds was permitted), and provided that this will not hinder the movement of scheduled vehicles (highway code, para. 12.4)

Section 21 of the Highway Code provides that driver training may now only be undertaken by an appropriately "certified" driver, meaning someone who has a driver-training licence, and not, as was previously the case, by any driver with more than three years' experience. The result is that the responsibility of people who carry out driver training has been increased and private training by questionable "specialists" is banned. Furthermore, pursuant to paragraph 5 of the Basic Regulations, absolutely all motor vehicles used for driver training must not only carry the distinctive sign "Driver training vehicle" but also be fitted with dual clutch and brake pedals and with a rear-view mirror for the instructor.

As mentioned above, a new term, "organized carriage of groups of children" has been introduced. This has made it possible to formulate more clearly the provisions relating to the carriage of children by various types of vehicle and, in the final analysis, to improve the safety of what is the most vulnerable category of road users. Henceforward, the organized carriage must be carried out in accordance with special rules and only in buses or, in extreme circumstances, in lorries with a box body. The rule that has been superseded (Highway Code, para. 22.6) also permitted children to be carried on lorries with drop-sided load beds, i.e. under the same conditions as adults.

Some changes have been made in the size limits below, indicating which vehicles may use public roads without special permits: the overall width of a vehicle must now not exceed 2.55 m (2.6 m in the case of refrigerated or isothermal bodies), as opposed to 2.5 m in the earlier wording (Highway Code, para. 23.5).

The list of road signs that may be used on Russian roads (Highway Code, annex No. 1) includes two new signs to GOST R 51582-2000: No. 6.13 "Checkpoint, international motor vehicle transport" and No. 6.14 "Highway patrol post", the latter of which has replaced sign No. 6.12 "State Motor-Vehicle Inspectorate post", use of which is not permitted within the Russian Federation.

The rules applicable to road markings have been changed in accordance with GOST R 51256-99. Thus, a new type of road marking -- temporary road markings, which are orange in colour -- now appears in annex No. 2 to the Highway Code. In addition, it is now provided that "in cases where the lines of a temporary marking and the lines of a permanent marking contradict one another, drivers shall be guided by the lines of the temporary marking".

The edge of the carriageway on two-lane roads may now be marked not by a solid line, but by a broken line comprising dashes half as long as the spaces between them.

The introduction of a marking in the form of a chequered pattern of black and white squares to indicate a man-made bump ("sleeping policeman") will help to improve safety when driving over such protuberances, particularly in the dark. There are also now carriageway markings to duplicate warning and prohibitory road signs and the supplementary board "Disabled persons" (at parking places for such persons).

In accordance with the above-mentioned national standard, controlled pedestrians crossings must henceforward be indicated by "zebra"-type marking. Under the old standard, the edges of such crossings were indicated by broad broken lines running across the carriageway.

A new identification sign "Slow vehicle" has been included in the Basic Regulations (para. 8). It must be fixed to the rear of motor vehicles for which the manufacturer has set a maximum speed of not more than 30 kilometres per hour.

A further important change is that vehicles must be submitted to a State technical inspection within 30 days of being registered by the State Road Traffic Safety Inspectorate of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs or other body authorized for the purpose. This time-limit may be extended in the event of unforeseen circumstances, such as the owner's illness or absence on a business trip, etc. This rule has also been incorporated in the Regulations on the conduct of State technical inspections of motor vehicles and trailers therefore by the State Road Traffic Safety Inspectorate of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs as approved by Decision No. 880 of the Government of the Russian Federation on 31 July 1998. Those Regulations also contain a further important new rule to the effect that the amendment of the vehicle's registration papers to reflect changes in information about the owner (or owner's representative) or replacement of the State registration symbol and the issuance in that connection of a new technical inspection certificate may be made without checking the vehicle's technical condition.

Paragraph 7.7 of the Annex to the Basic Regulations prohibits the operation of motor vehicles (other than two-wheeled motorcycles) without an emergency stop sign. Until now, this sign could be either a triangle with a reflective surface or a red flashing lantern, the reliability of which was directly dependent on the level of charge of the power source, namely batteries. For this reason, it has been decided to accept as an emergency stop sign only triangles meeting the requirements of UN/ECE Rule No. 27 and Russian standard GOST 24333-99.

The changes made by the Russian Government's decision to the above-mentioned regulatory instruments are aimed at improving road safety in the Russian Federation.

Information from the Russian Federation concerning the law on the use of mobile telephones in motor vehicles

Decision No. 67 of the Government of the Russian Federation dated 24 January 2001 inserted the following new provision regarding the use of mobile telephones in the Russian Highway Code:

"2.7. Drivers may not:

...

Use while the vehicle is in motion a telephone not equipped for hands-free use".

This provision came into force on 1 April 2001.
