

The Greater London Low Emission Zone (LEZ)

How it affects operators of lorries, buses, coaches, minibuses and large vans



The London LEZ started on Monday 4 February, affecting all trucks over 12 tonnes running into the zone, which covers 610 square miles (1,580 sq km) of Greater London. For practical purposes it is virtually anywhere inside the M25. Transport for London says truckers operating in the area have 28 days from the date when they first enter the zone to meet its emissions standards or show that they have taken 'all reasonable steps to comply.' This move follows months of industry warnings that neither new trucks nor retrofit emissions kit for old ones are as readily available as TfL expected. During this 'warning period' operators won't be fined, but after 28 days they'll get penalty charge notices and they will need to show that they have 'made all reasonable progress' to get their trucks ready. "This strikes a fair balance between ensuring the benefits are delivered whilst giving those operators who are taking steps to meet the emissions standards a warning and the opportunity to comply," said Nick Fairholme, head of the London Low Emission Zone. From 7 July the LEZ will also hit buses and coaches, but TfL says the 28 days 'grace' period will last for the life of the scheme.

Vehicles that are recorded on the LEZ database as complying with Euro III or later emissions standards do not have to pay the daily charge. Some vehicles with Euro I and II engines may meet the current LEZ standard without modification but those that don't must either be modified or pay to travel in the zone. Transport for London publishes a list of qualifying older vehicles on its web site at tfl.gov.uk/lezlondon



The zone






The Low Emission Zone covers most of Greater London, following the Greater London Authority boundary. All roads, including certain motorways within the LEZ boundary are included. The M25 motorway is not included in the LEZ even where it passes within the boundary.

Signs at the side of the road warn drivers that they are approaching the zone. There are no barriers or tollbooths. The LEZ is enforced through fixed and mobile cameras that read registration numbers and compare them to a database of vehicles that meet the LEZ emissions standards, or are either exempt or registered for a 100% discount, or have paid the daily charge.

The zone is in force 24 hours a day, throughout the year.

Affected vehicles

The LEZ will affect different vehicles over time and apply increasingly tougher emissions standards. The table below details which vehicles the LEZ applies to and when they have to meet the relevant emissions standards:

Vehicle type and definitions		Date affected	Required emissions standards
Heavier lorries. Heavy diesel-engined vehicles exceeding 12 tonnes Gross Vehicle Weight, including goods vehicles, motor caravans, motorised horseboxes and other specialist vehicles.		February 2008 Euro III January 2012 Euro IV	<i>All Euro III vehicles meet the LEZ standard</i> <i>From 4 February 2008 the LEZ emissions standard is Euro III for PM.</i> <i>Vehicles first registered as new on or after 1 October 2001 are assumed to meet this standard.</i> <i>Vehicles not meeting the emissions standard could be made to do so by modifying them to meet the Euro III standard for PM.</i>
Lighter lorries. Heavy diesel-engined vehicles between 3.5 and 12 tonnes Gross Vehicle Weight, including goods vehicles, motor caravans, motorised horseboxes and other specialist vehicles.		July 2008 Euro III	<i>Vehicles which do not meet the LEZ emissions standard would be subject to a daily charge if used within the LEZ.</i> <i>From January 2012 the required emissions standard will be raised to Euro IV for PM.</i>
Buses and coaches. Diesel-engined passenger vehicles with more than eight seats plus the driver's seat exceeding 5 tonnes Gross Vehicle Weight.		January 2012 Euro IV	<i>Vehicles first registered as new on or after 1 October 2006 are assumed to meet this standard.</i> <i>Vehicles not meeting the emissions standard could be made to do so by modifying them to meet the Euro IV standard for PM.</i> <i>Vehicles which do not meet the LEZ emissions standard would be subject to a daily charge if used within the LEZ.</i>
Large vans. Diesel-engined vehicles between 1.205 tonnes unladen and 3.5 tonnes Gross Vehicle Weight and motor caravans and ambulances between 2.5 tonnes and 3.5 tonnes Gross Vehicles Weight.		October 2010 Euro III	<i>From 4 October 2010 the emissions standard for large vans and minibuses is Euro III.</i> <i>Vehicles registered as new on or after 1 January 2002 are assumed to meet this standard.</i> <i>Vehicles not meeting the emissions standard could be made to do so by modifying them to meet the Euro III standard for PM.</i>
Minibuses. Diesel-engined passenger vehicles with more than eight seats plus the driver's seat below 5 tonnes Gross Vehicle Weight.			<i>Vehicles which do not meet the LEZ emissions standard would be subject to a daily charge if used within the LEZ.</i>

The zone will also cover other specialist vehicles that are derived from lorries and vans, including motorised horse boxes, breakdown and recovery vehicles, refuse collection vehicles, gritters, sweepers, concrete mixers, tippers, removals lorries, fire appliances, motor caravans, ambulances and large hearses (over 2.5 tonnes).

If you are not sure whether your vehicle is affected, you can use TfL's online compliance check at lezlondon.tfl.gov.uk/lez/vehicles/



Discounts and exemptions

The only exemptions to the LEZ scheme apply to military vehicles; pre-1973 historic vehicles and vehicles designed for limited on-road use, such as farm machinery, mowing machines and mobile cranes. Owners of such vehicles do not need to register them with TfL. There is also a 100% discount for showman's vehicles.

Charges and penalties

From 4 February, operators of lorries over 12 tonnes that do not meet the LEZ emissions standards need to pay a daily charge of £200. Buses, coaches and other vehicles over 3.5 tonnes will also have to pay £200 from July 2008 if they do not meet the standard.

From October 2010, operators of minibuses and vans between 1.2 tonnes and 3.5 tonnes will have to pay £100 per day to drive in the zone unless they meet the emissions standard. Payment can be made online, by telephone or by post up to 64 days in advance of the day of travel, or up to midnight on the first working day after travelling in the zone.

If the operator fails to pay the LEZ daily charge, TfL send a penalty charge notice to the registered keeper of the vehicle. The penalty charge for heavy lorries, buses, coaches and other vehicles over 3.5 tonnes is £1,000. For minibuses and medium vans (*from 2010 onwards*), the penalty will be £500. These charges are reduced by 50% if paid within 14 days or increased by 50% if not paid within 28 days.

TfL's web site at tfl.gov.uk/lezlondon gives details of payments, refunds, cancellations, customer accounts and penalties.



GB-registered vehicles

Most operators of GB-registered vehicles that meet the LEZ emissions standard do not have to register their vehicles with TfL. This is because TfL has compiled a database of compliant vehicles using data from the DVLA and other bodies.

You can check the status of your vehicle at tfl.gov.uk/lezlondon or by calling 0845 607 0009.

Northern Ireland registered vehicles have a different status, however, and must be registered with TfL in order to avoid the LEZ daily charge.



Non GB-registered vehicles

All non GB-registered vehicles affected by the LEZ will have to be registered with TfL or face penalties for driving in the zone, even if they meet the emissions standards. Owners must provide TfL with documents to verify the vehicle's emissions standards.

For details and registration forms visit the LEZ web site or call 0845 607 0009 (*from overseas call +44 20 7310 8998*).

Options for older vehicles

Owners of pre Euro III-engined vehicles must pay the daily charge to travel in the zone unless they upgrade them to a higher standard. The options include fitting a particulate trap to the exhaust, or a less effective 'partial trap'; replacing the engine with a more recent version or converting to an approved alternative fuel such as CNG. Conversions and modifications must be independently certified in order to avoid the daily charge. TfL's web site gives details of approved equipment manufacturers, suppliers and testing/certification bodies.



Hired vehicles

Minibuses (*up to 5 tonnes gross weight*) and medium vans are not liable for LEZ charges until October 2010. After that date, anyone hiring one is advised to check with the rental company to ensure that the vehicle complies with the relevant LEZ emissions standard (in this case, Euro III). The LEZ regulations allow rental companies to pass liability for non-payment of charges and penalties to the hirer.

Useful addresses:

- Transport for London's Low Emission Zone (LEZ) website is at tfl.gov.uk/lezlondon
The telephone number is 0845 607 0009.
- The Energy Saving Trust, at est.co.uk, offers information about pollution abatement equipment for modifying vehicles to meet the LEZ standards.
- The Government Transport Office at transportoffice.gov.uk provides information on Reduced Pollution Certificates and Low Emissions Certificates.