

Written Ministerial Statement

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Department for Infrastructure

MOT TEMPORARY EXEMPTION CERTIFICATES

Published at 2.30 pm on Monday 27 January 2020.

Ms Mallon (The Minister for Infrastructure): There is a current difficulty regarding the operation of many of the lifts within the network of 15 MOT centres which is impacting on the DVA's ability to perform tests on some cars and light vehicles, resulting in unavoidable disruption for customers.

The DVA takes health and safety very seriously to ensure both staff and customers are protected. As part of a regular preventative maintenance programme, there are minor inspections every 8 weeks and major service inspections every 6 months of the DVA's equipment, including lifts, within its MOT centres. These inspections are carried out by the DVA's equipment supplier. Given the cracks recently identified in a number of lifts, as a precautionary measure, from 22 January, the lifts are not being used until the necessary inspection and repairs have been carried out to ensure staff and customer safety. There is a repair schedule in place for all lifts and each lift is being re-inspected following the remedial repair and will be brought into operation if it passes the inspection. The position in each test centre is fluid and will change as lifts are inspected and cleared for operational use. The health and safety of staff and customers is my priority and we are also liaising with the Health and Safety Executive.

The DVA Chief Executive has also instructed the contractor to increase the frequency of inspections to every 2 weeks to keep the lift safety under constant review. Further discussions are also ongoing with the supplier about how this situation arose so suddenly and how the lifts can continue to be kept safe.

I am very mindful of the impact this disruption is having on the public and their working and daily lives and this cannot be allowed to continue. On Friday 24 January, I instructed the DVA to begin issuing Temporary Exemption Certificates (TECs) as soon as practically possible. From Monday 27 January, TECs will be issued to those customers who have expired MOTs as a result of the DVA cancelling their tests due to ongoing repair work.

These exemptions will apply from 20 January and will continue until I am satisfied test centres are operating normally again, at which point I will notify the public. The exemptions will apply for four months, allowing DVA customers to continue to go about their daily lives without further disruption. Customers will be sent reminder notices for the new expiry date well in advance, so a new free test can be booked.

There are some vehicles unfortunately that cannot avail of a temporary exemption certificate. This includes, four year old cars because they do not have an MOT certificate to extend and also taxis because legislation does not permit the DVA to issues TECs for taxis. I have therefore instructed the DVA to prioritise test appointments for four year old vehicles, which do not have an MOT certificate to extend, and taxis as an essential service. I will continue to monitor the situation very closely and ensure every effort is made to maintain staff and customer safety, while minimising disruption.

I am aware that some customers are attending for tests and are being turned away and this is causing them further inconvenience. The DVA has been making every effort to contact customers, where they have details, ahead of their appointment to cancel the appointment. Statements have also been made to the press and Nidirect website. Given the fluid nature of the position unfortunately some customers have turned up at a centre and have not been able to have their MOT carried out. The DVA has apologised and I will continue to ensure that every available option is used to notify customers as soon as possible. All customers who have their test cancelled by the DVA will receive a free retest and a

refund of half of the cost of the test which is the maximum refund possible under the legislation.

I understand that this is a matter of public concern. That is why I have also instructed officials to prepare a full review into how this situation arose, the contingency planning in place and communication with the public. My priority is to put in place steps to prevent this ever happening again.

Customers who have not been contacted by the DVA to cancel their MOT test, are being asked to attend as planned. Tests are ongoing at all test centres and additional slots at weekends are being made available. Motorists are also being asked to continue to book an MOT appointment when they receive their reminder letter. This will ensure they can be issued with a TEC should the DVA need to cancel the appointment. DVA may call the vehicle for testing earlier than the new extended MOT date in order to manage demand.

It is the responsibility of the vehicle owner to ensure their vehicle is in a roadworthy condition to be used on a public road.

The DVA sincerely apologises for the impact on its customers, but health and safety of customers and staff must remain the priority. I am keeping the matter under continuous review and am liaising with the DVA Chief Executive and his team on an ongoing basis. Whilst health and safety is the absolute priority, I am also mindful of the impact on customers particularly those who require their car for work or other commitments and want to ensure that any implications for customers are minimised.