

MEKRA Lang Retrofit Solutions - European Parliament Passes New Directive



Figure 1

The Blind Spot - An Issue of Critical Importance

Time and again people suffer severe injuries or even lose their lives because they happen to be in the „blind spot“ of a commercial vehicle. And as latest news reports show, it is an issue which remains extremely critical. Pedestrians - especially children and the elderly who are most vulnerable - are frequently struck when commercial vehicles make right hand turns. The driver cannot see these individuals because the hazard zone is barely visible, particularly in front and to the sides of the vehicle.

Figure 1 outlines the area which is not directly in a driver's field of vision when seated.

The EU Retrofit Directive

The dangerous situation described above is now to be mitigated by a new EU Directive which was passed by the European Parliament on May 10, 2007. Its goal is to eliminate blind spots through the introduction of new mirrors with improved radii of curvature.

Who is affected by the new Directive?

The new Directive applies to all commercial vehicles above 3.5 t registered after January 1, 2000 (vehicle categories N2, N3, but only if the near proximity mirror can be fitted at a maximum height of 2 m) unless they already meet the provisions of the current field of vision Directive 2003/97/EEC (Figure 4) (i.e. they are registered under the old Directive 71/127/EEC (Figure 2) but have not been refitted yet)

What are the requirements?

- The retrofitting provisions apply to
 - class **IV mirrors (wide angle)**
 - class **V mirrors (close proximity)**on passenger's side only.
- Regarding the field of vision, compliance with the current Directive 2003/97/EEC is required. (Figure 3)

Exception:

- If the field of vision cannot be attained through glass or mirror head replacements, it is sufficient for wide angle mirrors to cover up to 95% and for close proximity mirrors to cover up to 85% of the field of vision requirement.

Timeframe

Refitting has to be completed by March 31, 2009. Compliance with this requirement is to be strictly monitored and its implementation verified by the relevant national regulatory agencies. To be on the safe side and to ensure maximum visibility and safety for all drivers MEKRA Lang recommends refitting vehicles as quickly as possible to comply with the new field of vision requirements.

What needs to be done?

Mirror with radii of curvature >400mm (under the old Directive) have to be replaced by glasses with radii of curvature >300mm (under the new Directive). In other words, the curvature of these glasses is greater.

- In most cases it will be feasible and sufficient to replace the glass unit.
- There may be cases in which it is necessary to replace the mirror head.

More detailed information will be available on MEKRA Lang's home page at www.mekra.de once the EU Retrofit Directive has been published (probably in the second half of 2007).

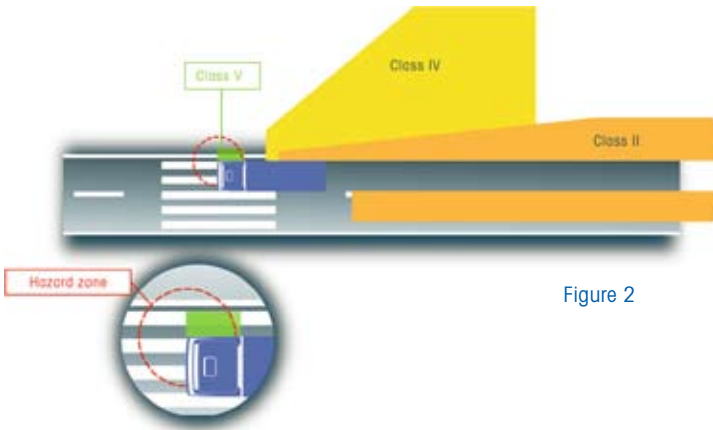


Figure 2

Field of vision requirements under Directive 71/127/EEC

For mirror systems which only comply with the provisions of the old Directive, a large area remains invisible on the passenger's side. This makes it particularly difficult to see bicyclists who are the main victims of accidents involving trucks.

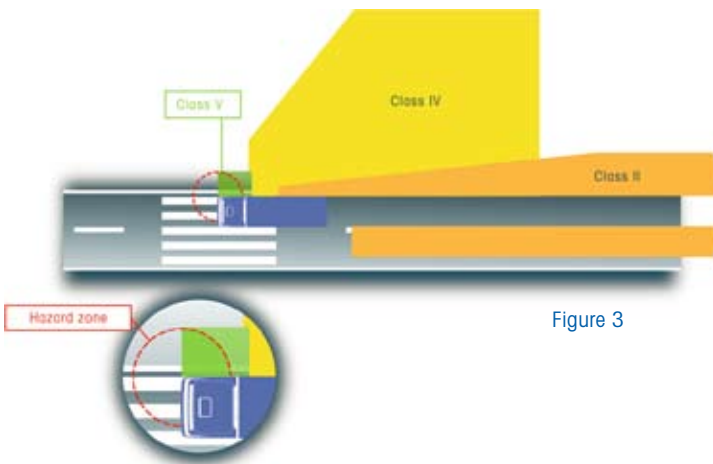


Figure 3

Field of vision requirements under the Retrofit Directive

By using new glasses with new radii of curvature the visibility gap on the passenger's side is addressed. The risk of overlooking a bicyclist is significantly reduced.

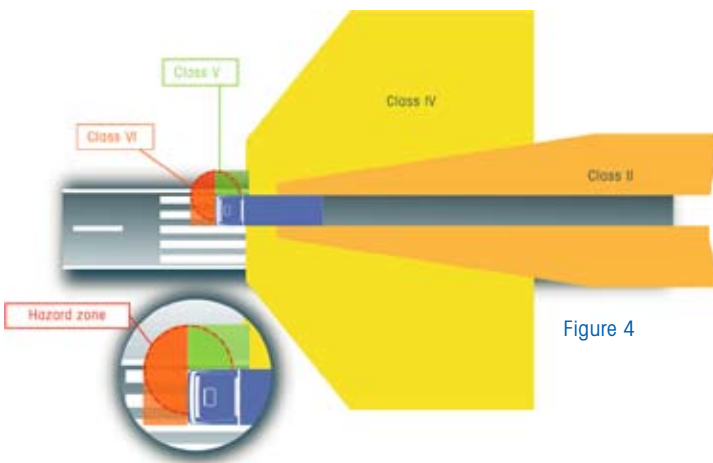


Figure 4

Field of vision requirements under Directive 2003/97/EEC

The field of vision required for new registrations not only improves visibility on the passenger's side but also on the driver's side through the use of a wide angle mirror. For the first time a front mirror is required which makes it possible to see the area directly in front of the vehicle. This enables the driver to notice pedestrians or bicyclists who are standing in front of the vehicle, e.g. at traffic lights or pedestrian crossings.

What does the future hold?

Currently the possibility of introducing a second step is under discussion which would also make front mirrors compulsory for vehicles already registered. MEKRA Lang offers retrofitting solutions for these tasks as well.