Under the motor registration system, all motor vehicles must be registered and licensed unless they fall into one of the exempt classifications.

What is registration?

Registration is when a vehicle is added to the Motor Vehicle Register and given registration plates.

What is vehicle licensing?

Vehicle licensing is paying a fee to use a motor vehicle on public roads.

When the fee is paid, you receive a label indicating the licence’s expiry date. This licence label must be displayed on the vehicle. Vehicle licensing is commonly (but incorrectly) called registration.

What does ‘exemption’ mean?

Vehicle exemption means:

- your vehicle may not have to be registered
- you may not have to pay registration and licensing fees (but your vehicle still has to be registered)
- you may not have to pay some levies.

Note: There is a temporary exemption from licensing, when a registered but unlicensed vehicle is used on the road solely for the purpose of obtaining a warrant of fitness (WoF) or certificate of fitness (CoF), in order to then obtain a vehicle licence.

Exemptions from registration

You don’t need to register vehicles used on a private road.

Note: Private road means a road, place or arcade laid out or formed on private land by the owner of that land and not intended for general public use.

With the exception of the above, using an unregistered vehicle on a road is an offence. However, if you are fined for using an unregistered vehicle you will have a defence against a ticket for using an unregistered vehicle if your vehicle is:

- an official vehicle of a visiting military force
- a vehicle being operated on a road that is closed to ordinary vehicular traffic under regulations
- a motor vehicle normally propelled by mechanical power that is being temporarily towed without use of its own power
- a trailer attached to a tractor, traction engine, forklift, a self propelled machine that’s designed for specialist industrial purposes
- a trailer designed exclusively for agricultural operations and used on a road only when proceeding to or from a farm or when being inspected, serviced or repaired
- a trailer attached to an exempted vehicle as defined in the Land Transport Management (Apportionment and Refund of Excise Duty and Excise–Equivalent Duty) regulations 2004
- an overseas visitors vehicle. An overseas visitor’s vehicle is a vehicle that’s registered overseas and will be in New Zealand for less than 18 months. For more information about overseas visitors’ vehicles, see Factsheet 35 Importing a vehicle temporarily.

Exemptions from fees and/or levies

Exempt Class A

Exempt Class A vehicles are not exempt from registration and licensing, but are exempt from registration fees and the vehicle licence portion of the licensing fee. You still have to pay for other fees and levies included in the total licensing fee. For example, you still have to pay for the appropriate ACC levy, registration plates and labels.

Exempt Class A vehicles are:

- a pedestrian-controlled goods service vehicle
- a motor vehicle propelled and supported solely by self-laying tracks
- an all-terrain vehicle
- any mobile machinery used on roads only in road construction zones in accordance with notices declaring such zones. Mobile machinery means:
  - a motor vehicle designed and used primarily for earthmoving or construction and maintenance of roads, bridges, ditches, or buildings; but
  - excludes any motor vehicle designed primarily for carrying passengers or goods to which machinery has been added.
- A logging truck or logging trailer that is unladen and is only used on a road while being taken directly to a place of, and for the purpose of, inspection, servicing, repair, or obtaining evidence of vehicle inspection.

Exempt Class B

Exempt Class B vehicles are exempt from the payment of some ACC levies, and fuel excise and excise equivalent duty.
Exempt Class B vehicles are:

**Farm vehicles**

- A motor vehicle (not a trailer) designed for agricultural operations and used on a road solely for agricultural operations, including mobile or movable huts, galleys and similar motor vehicles used on a road solely in connection with such operations. This does not include a vehicle designed for cartage or spreading of lime or fertiliser when used on the road for cartage or a weed sprayer on a truck chassis.
- A motor vehicle (not a trailer) owned by a farmer and only used on the road to go from one part of the farm to another part of the same farm or from one farm to another farm owned or managed by the same person, for agricultural operations.
- A tractor or traction engine used on the road solely for agricultural operations; or if used mainly for agricultural operations and otherwise only in connection with road construction and maintenance.
- A tractor owned by a farmer used on a road only for
  - the owner’s agricultural operations, and/or
  - the cartage of milk, cream or whey to or from a dairy factory, and/or
  - cartage of any farm produce, implements, stock or other farm requisites from one farm to another farm that is owned or managed by the same person or for a maximum round trip of 21 kilometres of public highway.
- A tractor that is designed and used partly for the purpose of loading lime or fertiliser into topdressing aircraft and partly for drawing a trailer that is designed and used exclusively for carrying aviation fuel in a permanently attached tank for use in topdressing aircraft, and for no other purpose and is not taken on any round trip of more than 21 kilometres of public highway.

**Mobile machinery**

Any vehicle (other than a tractor) with machinery permanently attached, designed to be used on the road for driving, carrying or propelling; airport runway sweepers; electrical substations; filters for transformer oil; stationary log haulers; or aero engine test benches.

**Miscellaneous**

- Self-propelled grass mowers used solely for the upkeep of grounds (cemeteries, recreation or education grounds) or cutting of grass verges on roads.
- Mobile huts, galleys or similar vehicles used solely for construction or maintenance of roads.
- Traction engines.
- Forklifts.
- Airport crash tenders when only used on the road in emergencies.
- Vehicles used solely for loading and unloading ships, including embarking and disembarking passengers, baggage, mail and other cargo, and used on a public highway only when unladen and going from one wharf to another wharf, or from its usual place of storage to a wharf.
- Tractors used by local authorities solely for the construction, maintenance and mowing of stopbanks and the banks of other watercourses, such as rivers, streams, drains and canals.
- Tractors used solely for shunting railway rolling stock.

**What are ‘agricultural operations’?**

The definition of ‘agricultural operations’ is in the Land Transport Management (Apportionment and Refund of Excise Duty and Excise-Equivalent Duty) Regulations 2004. It says:

Agricultural operation means any operation concerned directly with the management of a farm; and includes the transport on a road of the produce of a farm, farm implements, stock, or other requisites of any kind whatsoever for a farm, if they are transported:

- from a part of a farm to another part of the same farm or from a farm to another adjoining farm that is owned or managed by the same person, or
- from a farm to another farm owned or managed by the same person if the motor vehicle carrying the goods is not taken during any one trip along more than 21 kilometres of public highway in going from the owner’s farm or other place of garage and in returning to that farm or place.

**Warrant of fitness and certificate of fitness requirements**

From 1 June 2013 agricultural vehicles that are operated at speeds of 40km/h or less are not required to have a WoF or CoF but they must be up to WoF standards. An agricultural vehicle is a vehicle that is designed, constructed or wholly adapted for agricultural purposes and includes an agricultural tractor and an agricultural trailer.

An agricultural vehicle that is operated at speeds greater than 40km/h is still required to have a WoF.

If your Exempt Class A or B vehicle is not an agricultural motor vehicle, ie it does not meet the definition above, there is no change to the current inspection requirements.

For example, a non agricultural tractor must still have a WoF if it is operated at over 30km/h. If it isn’t operated at over 30km/h it isn’t required to have a warrant of fitness, but it must meet WoF standards.

For more information on WoF, CoF and safety requirements, call our contact centre on 0800 108 809.

**Use of unlicensed vehicles**

In some limited situations you may use an unlicensed vehicle on a road. In technical terms these circumstances are described as a defence against a ticket for driving an unlicensed vehicle. These are explained below.

**Using a vehicle on the road or inspection, servicing or repair**

If you are using your vehicle on a road solely for the purpose, and directly to the place, of inspection, servicing or repair, you will have a defence for using an unlicensed vehicle. This is similar to the law which allows people to drive a vehicle without a current Warrant of Fitness as long as they are taking the vehicle directly to a garage or testing station. This means that your vehicle must be licensed if you are using it for any other purpose but you may drive it unlicensed for these purposes. Please note however, that the vehicle must still be safe to be operated on the road even if it requires repairs in order to obtain an inspection.
Using a vehicle to cross the road

If you are using your vehicle on the road solely for the purpose of crossing that road you will have a defence for using an unlicensed vehicle. This means that your vehicle must be licensed if you are using it for any other purpose but you may drive it unlicensed if it is only for the purpose of crossing the road. Crossing the road does not mean you can drive down the road for any distance; you must be crossing in a direct line from one side of the road to the other.

**Warning!** Make sure your vehicle is correctly registered and licensed for the way it’s used. Law enforcement agencies will prosecute you if you’re apprehended with a vehicle that isn’t registered for the correct road use.