

To gain a licence or permit to drive in Tasmania you must complete all the usual procedures as well as the additional requirements set out below. Visit your nearest Service Tasmania Office for full details of the standard application procedures.

What information does the Tasmanian Licensing Authority require?

Everyone applying for a permit or licence must fill out an application form. One of the questions on the form asks if you have fits, blackouts or epilepsy. If your answer is 'yes' you will be asked to provide a medical report after you have passed your permit or licence test. This report should be from your treating doctor – general practitioner, consultant physician or neurologist – and must be no more than six months old. Your doctor will take into account your medical history, the type of seizures, the frequency and recency of seizures, and your attitude to your health care [such as taking your medication as prescribed]. It is up to your doctor to indicate if any specific restrictions are required and the expiry date of the medical certificate.

How is your medical report processed?

Your medical report will be sent to the Medical Review Area at the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources in Hobart for processing [by fax from any Service Tasmania Office in Tasmania]. It will be treated with the strictest confidence. It will be evaluated by non-medical staff according to set guidelines. A permit or licence may then be issued immediately. Equally a permit or licence may be denied at this stage.

A permit may not be issued due to insufficient information, some doubt about the evidence in the medical report or the fact that you have not been seizure-free for two years. You will then receive a letter asking you to provide a written report from a medical specialist [consultant physician or neurologist] recommended by your treating doctor [general practitioner].

Prior Approval

You can apply for a medical clearance before you take your permit or licence test by posting or faxing your medical report direct to any Service Tasmania Office or contact D.I.E.R on 62 335240. If you post your report, address it clearly to: Medical Operations Officer, Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources, G.P.O. Box 1002 Hobart 7001.

Driving commercial vehicles

The guidelines for commercial truck, taxi and bus licences are stricter than those for private licences. In most cases, a person who has had any form of epileptic seizure, apart from some childhood seizures will not be permitted to drive commercial vehicles.

What to do if you have a seizure

If you hold a current permit or licence and you have a seizure, you should have a thorough neurological examination. Austroad's Fitness to Drive sets out clear guidelines recommending seizure-free periods before resumption of driving. These guidelines are available online at www.austroads.com.au (See following page, 18.)

Losing or surrendering your licence

If the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources refuses to renew your licence or permit on medical grounds, or suspends or cancels it, or if you voluntarily surrender it, you will not regain it until you provide a satisfactory medical report that meets the guidelines.

Retesting

If you have not held a licence [or permit] for five [5] or more years, you will have to sit a written and driving test to regain it.

Refunds

You will receive a partial refund of your licence fee if your licence is cancelled or if you decide to surrender it provided you make an application in writing and your licence has over 12 months before expiry.

Legal obligations

You are legally obliged to answer questions on the learner's permit or driver's licence application form truthfully. If you fail to do so, you could be prosecuted and have your licence or permit withdrawn. Neither you nor your doctor are legally obliged to notify the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources if you hold a current driver's licence and you have a seizure. However if you continue to drive after you have had a seizure and you have an accident, you could be sued under common law and you could be charged with driving offences including careless and dangerous driving.

Grievance procedures

If you disagree with any decisions made by the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources in relation to your learner's permit or driver's licence, you have the right to appeal against their decisions. You should address any correspondence to The Secretary, D.I.E.R. 10 Murray St, Hobart 7000

For further information on Driving and Epilepsy

The Epilepsy Association of Tasmania 1300 852 853

Department of Infrastructure Energy & Resources,

Operations Officer, G.P.O Box 1002, HOBART. 7001.

NATIONAL DRIVING GUIDELINES

Medical Standards for Epilepsy (recommended seizure-free periods)

| Condition | Drivers of cars and light trucks, motorcycle riders |
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| Chronic epilepsy (<i>history of previously uncontrolled seizures</i>) | Generally 2 years. A shorter period only on recommendation of an experienced consultant where there is clear evidence of seizure control (eg. following adjustment and stabilisation of anti-epileptic drug treatment). |
| Isolated seizure | 3 – 6 months. Consultant opinion recommended. |
| Recently diagnosed epilepsy | 3 – 6 months from start of therapy. Consultant opinion recommended. |
| Recurrent seizure in a person previously seizure-free due to identifiable provocation | 3 months from last seizure, if fulfilling all other criteria as set out in these guidelines. Provocation may include illness, drug interaction, sleep deprivation. |
| Recurrent seizure on withdrawal of medication on medical advice | 1 month after resuming previously effective medication or 2 years if refusing to resume medication. |
| Seizure causing accident | Minimum of 1 year. Consultant opinion essential. |
| Seizures only in sleep | 12 months from the last seizure whilst awake. |
| Surgery for epilepsy | 12 months. |
| Withdrawal of anti-epileptic drug therapy where there is significant risk of recurrent seizure | The full period of withdrawal and at least 3 months thereafter. Consultant opinion is recommended to determine if there is a significant level of risk otherwise. |