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epilepsy and driving

For many people, particularly those who earn their living by driving, one of the most serious social complications of a diagnosis of epilepsy is the withdrawal of the driving licence. The rules regarding driving are quite specific.

The legislation at the time of writing is as follows:

For an ordinary entitlement the person who has epilepsy may qualify for a driving licence if he or she has been free from any epileptic attack for one year. (An epileptic attack is interpreted as any seizure involving episodes such as limbs jerking, auras or absences and need not necessarily involve loss of consciousness.)

A person who cannot meet these conditions may qualify for an ordinary driving licence provided that he or she has established over a period of at least three years (beginning on the date of an asleep attack), a history or pattern of attacks which occur only when asleep.

In either case, the applicant or licence holder suffering from epilepsy must not be regarded as a likely source of danger to the public as a driver.

If while holding a driving licence a driver suffers from an epileptic attack, driving must cease immediately (unless the sleep regulations can be met) and Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) be notified.

For a Vocational Entitlement demanding either a Large Goods Vehicle (LGV) licence or a Passenger Carrying Vehicle (PCV) licence, drivers must satisfy all the following conditions:

- Hold a full ordinary driving licence.
- Have been free of an epileptic attack for at least the last ten years.
- Have not taken anti-epileptic medication during this ten year period.
- Do not have a continuing liability to epileptic seizure.

For those who do qualify to hold a driving licence, getting insurance cover can be difficult. However, it is not impossible but there will almost certainly be a weighting on the premium paid to obtain cover.