

AMERICAN STRETCHED LIMOUSINES

There can hardly be a Local Authority in the country which has not received at least one approach from an applicant to permit the use of an American Stretched Limousine for hire or reward. Either that or a Licensing Officer will have become aware of someone who has acquired a vehicle and is conducting hire business, apparently without challenge from any enforcement authority.

It is clear that, in addition to Licensing and Enforcement Officers, the situation is not fully understood by the Vehicle Inspectorate or the Police who may have an incorrect view of the law and the body with whom the responsibility for enforcement rests.

The purpose of this section of the website is to assist those members of NATPHLEO who may wish to have more information on these vehicles and, consequently, consider how applications will be dealt with in their own Authority.

FACTS

- Most converted vehicles are converted from Lincoln Town Cars (90%).
- The original Lincoln saloon car cannot be safely stretched without the original fittings being removed and replaced with heavy duty items. These are not normally available to any converter except through a manufacturer's approved programme (QVM/CMC see later)
- The City of New York has, since 24th June 2002, banned all vehicles which have been converted outside an approved conversion programme from picking up or dropping off in the city. No such vehicles may be licensed for use in New York. Similar bans exist in other cities and states.
- All stretched vehicles brought into this country are limited to a maximum of eight passengers if used for hire and reward. If the seating capacity exceeds this figure, the vehicle is a Public Services Vehicle and it will not pass the strenuous criteria and tests involved in licensing.
- In approved stretch conversions, the maximum weight is about 7100 pounds (over 3 tons), the maximum extra length is ten feet and the maximum number of passenger seats is 8. This weight limitation is imposed on approved converters
- American Stretched Limousines are generally built to last five years. As they tend to provide reliability problems after this time, in part due to the substantial extra weight which has been added, insurance is hard to come by and many vehicles are exported once they are five years old.
- The correct tyres are not widely available in the UK, they have to be specially imported. As a consequence, it is likely that the majority of vehicles in use in this country have been fitted with the correct size tyres but with the wrong weight loading so making the vehicle dangerous.
- It is possible to import a stretched vehicle and obtain a registration number from DVLA without any inspection of the vehicle, the standards of workmanship involved in the conversion or the suitability of the parts used.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Should I accept a Stretched Limousine for licensing?

That's up to you and your Council. If you have reservations on the acceptance of these vehicles (and there are reasons set out elsewhere in this section as to why you should be selective) it will be necessary to make sure your Vehicle Criteria is properly worded to ensure that any application is properly dealt with. Some Councils have adopted provisions whereby left hand drive vehicles or those with darkened windows are not acceptable. Any application outside these terms where the applicant insists on having the matter considered can be submitted to an appropriate Committee for determination. It is at that point that you can provide the additional information necessary to comply with the law.

What is the law?

Section 48 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 says:-

*..a District Council **shall not** grant such a Licence unless they are **satisfied***

that the vehicle is:-

suitable in type, size and design for use as a Private Hire Vehicle;

not of such design and appearance as to lead any person to believe that the vehicle is a Hackney Carriage;

*in a **suitable mechanical condition**;*

***safe**; and*

comfortable.

It also requires that:-

(b) that there is in force in relation to the use of the vehicle, a Policy of Insurance

Broadly, this means that neither a Licensing Officer or the Council can approve a vehicle for licensing unless they are satisfied that it has been properly built and nothing has been done to the vehicle to invalidate any insurance cover which may have been arranged.

How can I be sure that any vehicle I have presented for licensing is safe, in a good mechanical condition and properly insured?

You can't without further information. Treat any Stretched Limousine as though it was built by a couple of amateurs in a garden shed with no supervision because, in some cases, this is exactly how it has been produced. In addition, most insurance companies will have no idea how many such vehicles they have on their books as, simply, they do not ask the right questions on the proposal form.

Surely all vehicles cannot be unsuitable. There must be a supervision scheme?

Yes and no. In view of the problems which have arisen in ensuring integrity and consistency of quality, the manufacturers of the original vehicles, generally Lincoln (Ford) and Cadillac, have taken it upon themselves to introduce assessment and control systems on approved converters. Ford operates the Qualified Vehicle Modifier (QVM) programme whilst Cadillac has the Cadillac Master Coachbuilder (CMC) qualification. These programmes not only impose high standards on approved converters, which are regularly inspected, but also allow the provision of specialist parts to ensure that the designed weights and limits are adhered to. There are, however, only about 20 qualified QVM and CMC converters in the US (shown later) and the range of vehicles which will be authorised for conversion is very small. These are the Lincoln Town Car, the Ford Excursion and the Cadillac Fleetwood (up to 1998) and DeVille. The Ford Excursion is one of a range of Sports Utility Vehicles which is becoming popular and is a departure from the normal saloon stretches. No conversion is authorised where the resultant vehicle is more than 120 inches (10 feet) longer than the original vehicle (130" for the Excursion). Even this is considered to be nudging the envelope as the weight increases substantially with appropriate extra strain on the brakes, tyres and steering components - the maximum weight of the resultant vehicle must not exceed 7100 pounds. In view of the design limitations, Ford and Cadillac will supply the necessary chassis on which the vehicle can be built but only to those converters within their programme who are required to carry out crash testing to a sample vehicle. Ford no longer honours warranties on vehicles that have been stretched beyond the authorised limits and has threatened lawsuits against coach-builders to get them to remove the Ford logo from vehicles the company considers to have been altered beyond recognition. Further details of the QVM programme are available at:-

www.fleet.ford.com/products/specialty_vehicles/Qualified_Vehicle_Mod_Limo.asp

Details of the steps necessary to become a QVM converter can be found by following the links on that page.

The work involved in producing vehicles outside these programmes cannot be certified and the converter is allowed to self-certify that the vehicle meets current Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards without the need for crash testing, inspection or compliance with the design limits of the vehicle. There are some websites produced by the more legitimate and professional Limousine Hire Companies in the States which seek to bring the dangers of unauthorised conversions to the attention of potential customers. A good example is:-

www.afclimo.com/safetynotice.html

How can I tell an authorised conversion?

In a number of ways.

Firstly, there should be a certificated sticker, usually on the door pillar, which shows who did the conversion and this shows the QVM or CMC logo shown below.



Unfortunately, this may have been removed (it is not unheard of for these stickers to be taken off and placed on non-approved vehicles).

The approved converters currently registered are:-

Accubuilt
Lima, OH 45804

AHA Automotive Design
Toronto, ON M3J 2B7
Canada

American Custom Coachworks
Beverly Hills, CA 90213

Binz GmbH & Co.
Lorch D, 73547
Germany

Cadillac Professional Vehicle
Clinton Township, MI 48036

Classic Limousine
Fountain Valley, CA 92708

DaBryan Coach Builders Inc.
Springfield, MO 65803

Destiny Inc. Ltd.
Vassar, MI 48768

Eagle Coach
Amelia, OH 45102

Empire Coach
Brooklyn, NY 11235

Executive Coach Builders
Seymour, MO 65746

Federal Coach
Ft. Smith, AR 72906

Ford Motor Co. N.A.F.O-Lincoln
Dearborn, MI 48126

Krystal Enterprises Inc.
Brea, CA 92821

LCW Automotive Corp.
San Antonio, TX 78201

Picasso Coach Builders Corp.
Rego Park, NY 11374

Royale Limousine Manufacturers
Haverhill, MA 01832

Springfield Coach Builders
Springfield, MO 65803

Tiffany Coachworks
Corona, CA 92879

United States Coachworks
Bohemia, NY 11716

Viking Coachworks of Orlando Inc.
Sanford, FL 32773

Further information on how to recognise authorised conversions is given in a later answer.

***If these vehicles were not suitable for use in the UK, how can they be imported?
Are there no checks?***

Logic dictates that, with all the checks new vehicles have to go through, there would be a myriad of checks for all imported vehicles to go through before they can be used on our roads. Unfortunately, this is not the case. There is an assumption that vehicles on our roads have been assessed as being safe and, in many cases, this is correct. Unfortunately, there is no comprehensive testing regime to ensure that all safety matters have been considered and inspected before the vehicle can be registered and used. There are certainly some requirements in place for testing before the vehicle can usually be registered and issued with a Registration Number in this country. Which test will depend on who is bringing the vehicle in and how big it is. Of the 150 odd stretched cars coming in to the country in each year, very few are personal imports. These are where the vehicle has been bought abroad by an individual whilst they were living outside the UK and they now wish to bring it in for his or her own purposes. A slightly different procedure operates here and it is unlikely that these circumstances will apply to anything except in the fewest of cases so it will be assumed that the requirements of Commercial Importation will apply. Broadly, the importer will bring vehicles into this country and, obviously, try to sell them on at a profit. To do so, the regulations usually require an inspection to be made under the appropriate arrangements for the vehicle type to ensure that British standards are in place, eg. indicators, lighting arrangements, etc. Here the situation becomes a little cloudy, though very interesting. Given that many of these vehicles will actually be *capable* of carrying more than eight passengers, in addition to the driver, they should be inspected as Public Services Vehicles. It is, however, highly unlikely that any of them would pass on this basis due to the door arrangements and the need for all the passengers to escape in an emergency. In a nutshell, there are not enough doors and the ones there are there will not be wide enough. So the importer is expected to produce it for inspection under the Single Vehicle Approval (SVA) arrangements. This system, designed for 'kit cars', is for vehicles with up to 8 passenger seats and a number of loopholes arise.

It all seems too logical. I expect that there are ways around the system?

The vehicle, when it is presented for SVA Approval Testing, is produced with a Declaration by which the applicant can *declare* that, although the car could *possibly*

carry more than 8 passengers, it will *never* do so. Not only does the importer declare that he accepts that it is a condition of use of the vehicle that it will not be used to carry more than 8 passengers but he will inform any other person who may use it of this restriction. He must pass this information to all subsequent purchasers. Also, all prospective hirers must be told of this limitation and this should, obviously, be set out in all newspaper advertising, Yellow Pages boxes, etc. To recap, a vehicle can be cut up in the US, welded back together with extra bodywork, declared to be converted in accordance with FMV Safety Standards (assuming its going to be used on US roads and then only if asked for it), placed on a ship and unloaded in Southampton. There, the importer completes a form that and promises that the vehicle will never be a Public Services Vehicle and carry more than 8 people. Without making light of the testing arrangements, it is clear that the SVA is not a test to destruction regime. To quote from the Department of the Environment Booklet SVA4, the test is *an engineering assessment* by the examiner *limited to parts of the vehicle which can be readily seen without dismantling* *the tests are not destructive or damaging in any way* . These regulations have been in force only for vehicles which have been imported since 1997. So those which came in before then may never have been looked at at all. If all vehicles followed this procedure, the situation may, if fact, be rather better than it is, but there are a number of other ways in which an unsuitable and uninspected car may come onto the British market and, consequently, British roads. If a vehicle is imported via another EC country, the testing regime for that country's equivalent is recognised here. For example, a car SVA tested in Belgium will not have to have expensive amendments made to its direction indicators as they will comply with requirements there. The test is also cheaper there. Rather more worrying is the situation whereby a vehicle can be registered at DVLA without any testing whatsoever. I have been advised by a vehicle importer that any person who turns up at a DVLA local office with an imported vehicle with, say, ten seats and declares that it will be used privately and not for hire or reward can obtain a Registration Number without having to provide any type of Testing Certificate. Ring your local DVLA office and ask them. They will tell you that, provided the vehicle could seat more than 8 and weighed no more than 3500 kilograms, (7716 pounds) it could be registered without any test. Simply, there is no test to carry out for such a vehicle to be used privately and they would take the declaration of the intended use at face value.

Why do people buy these cars from importers. Surely they are told about the need for licensing?

Once a car is registered in this country, there is nothing then to stop any importer from selling the vehicle on to any person wishing to start a limousine hire business. I have not been able to find a website yet which even mentions the need even for any type of licensing. By looking at www.startinbusiness.co.uk entering Stretched Limo into the Search Box and following the link about "Starting your own business", it can be seen that information is given on everything such as the problems of driving a left hand drive car and promotional material but nothing about how to make the exercise legal. Unsurprisingly, there is a telephone number and website link at the bottom of the page for a firm selling imported vehicles

Why do I need to worry about vehicles with more than 8 passenger seats? Surely these are not within the jurisdiction of Local Authorities?

Correct, but as was stated earlier, vehicles which are used for hire and reward which are *capable* of carrying more than 8 passengers are being used unlawfully. This

means that they can be stopped by the Police and issued with a PG9 Suspension Notice. This is an order impounding the vehicle. The Vehicle Inspector or the Police Officer who produces the PG9 can make all the passengers leave the vehicle to stand by the roadside. The vehicle is then taken to an impound yard only to reappear when the operator takes out enough seats to bring the *possible* capacity down to 8 or below. It is likely that the driver will never have heard of the 8 people maximum declaration, filed at the Vehicle Certification Agency by which the importer has undertaken, on behalf of all subsequent users, that the vehicle will never carry more than 8. He or she will also probably be unaware that the vehicle is only to be used for Private/Lights Goods use. Needless to say, if the vehicle is imported and registered as an 8 seater and the operator manages to carry 9, there is not only the risk of prosecution but also of problems with continued validity of the insurance cover. As for the punishments, the driver can face a maximum penalty of £2500 and possibly receive points on his licence too. Clearly, the owner does not want any more difficulties with the law or obstacles to running his business and is now left with a vehicle which can carry no more than 8 passengers. He will therefore be seeking to legitimise his business by looking for his licences from the Local Authority

There is a local operator who tell me that, so long as he takes people at separate fares, he doesn't need licensing. Is that right?

No, any use for hire or reward must be licensed. It has already been established that a vehicle cannot be capable of carrying more than 8 passengers as this is a PSV and the car would fail the test. Licensing therefore will usually be by way of the Local Authority. However, the operator may conduct hire business in a car with less than nine passenger seats under an Operators Licence with the Department for Transport as a small bus. However, this can only happen if:-

- Journeys at separate fares are conducted where passengers can get on and off within a 15 mile journey. If this is the case, the journey route and the timetable must be submitted to the DfT at least 56 days before the hiring takes place.
- Journeys of over 15 miles can be conducted without a local route being set down.

So, unless all journeys are over 15 miles or being undertaken on set, local routes, it is the Council Licensing Officer who gets to deal with any application to license the vehicle for hire or reward.

What makes a vehicle unsuitable or unsafe?

Even if a vehicle has been produced to all the correct specifications and emanates from the approved conversion programmes referred to earlier, there are a number of other matters which, by the time the vehicle is used in the UK, may arise to make the vehicle unsuitable for use and, in most cases, dangerous.

Most are as a result of ignorance, corner cutting or, to be frank, "scamming". The easiest way to render a vehicle unsuitable and unsafe for road use is to fail to maintain it properly or fit replacement parts which are not suitable based on the manufacturers original specifications. It is most unlikely that an Owners Manual is available to an end user, particularly if they are later than the second owner. As these vehicles are unique and fill a specialist niche in the market, each one is individually designed and moving parts from the standard versions are unlikely to be suitable for the stresses and strains imposed by a car weighing over three tons, a further reason why the approved

schemes offer an advantage. It is often the case that the correct parts are not readily available in this country, in view of the specialist nature of the product. By far the most popular import is the Lincoln Town Car 120" and the following are examples of the problems which are likely to arise.

Tyres

The only tyre suitable for a 1998-2002 120" stretched Town Car is listed as:-

Town Car Limo Tyre 225/70R-16 107T (Reinforced)

Versions up to 1998 must have:-

Town Car Limo Tyre 235/75R-15 108S (BF Goodrich Extra Load)

The details of the tyre can be found stamped or moulded into the tyre wall (see Figure 1 below). Each letter and number conveys important information, such as whether a particular tyre will be compatible with the vehicle. Some size designations are preceded by a letter indicating what type of vehicle the tyre is intended for. "P," which stands for "passenger" is the most common. "LT" which stands for "light truck," is also common. The first number (225 in this example) is a three-digit number which refers to the overall width of the tyre, in millimetres. The second number (70) refers to the aspect ratio, which is the relationship between the tyre's height and its width. In this example, the sidewall's height is about 70% of the tyre's width. The letter following the aspect ratio is usually an "R" standing for "radial," although other tyres may be designated as Cross-Ply or Bias Belted. The next number indicates the diameter of the wheel rim on which the tyre will fit (16 inches, in this example). The final number and letter represent the service description, or load index, and speed rating. The load index is an assigned number ranging from 0 to 279 that corresponds with the load carrying capacity of the tyre; that is, how much weight it is certified to carry at maximum inflation pressure. The rating can be matched against a load index chart to determine corresponding maximum weights. A load index rating of 107 indicates a maximum load of 2149lbs provided the tyre is inflated to its maximum pressure which is also shown (see Figure 2 below). The speed rating is a letter which indicates the range of speeds at which a tyre is certified to carry a load to determine the tyre's maximum speed. Each tyre is assigned a rating from A (lowest) to Z (highest) (see Figure 3 below). There is one notable exception: the "H" rating falls out of sequence between "U" and "V," and is used for tyres certified for speeds up to 130 mph. The "Q" rating is the lowest commonly used for passenger cars. Therefore the "T" in the required tyre signifies a maximum speed of 118 miles per hour (190 Kph). It is important to note that markings do not always appear exactly as they do in this example, as tyres can be certified under a variety of designations.



Figure 1 Tyre Sidewall Information

Reading the Sidewall

1. Width of the tyre in millimetres (205).
2. Aspect ratio (this sidewall s height is roughly 55% of the tyre s width).
3. R is for radial construction.
4. The diameter of the wheel on which the tyres fits (16 inches)
5. Numerical code associated with the maximum load a tyre can carry (88 see Figure 2 below)
6. The Speed Rating (V) this tyre could sustain speeds up to 149 mph see Figure 3 below)
7. The manufacturers name for tread design and manufacture (XGT V). Each manufacturer has its own codes.

NOTE: Some size designations may be preceded by a P signifying Passenger

Load Index	Load (lbs.)*	Load Index	Load (lbs.)*	Load Index	Load (lbs.)*
74	827	100	1764	126	3748
75	853	101	1819	127	3858
76	882	102	1874	128	3968
77	908	103	1929	129	4079
78	937	104	1984	130	4189
79	963	105	2039	131	4299
80	992	106	2094	132	4409
81	1019	107	2149	133	4541
82	1047	108	2205	134	4674
83	1074	109	2271	135	4806
84	1102	110	2337	136	4938
85	1135	111	2403	137	5071
86	1168	112	2469	138	5203
87	1201	113	2535	139	5357
88	1235	114	2601	140	5512
89	1279	115	2679	141	5677
90	1323	116	2756	142	5842
91	1356	117	2833	143	6008
92	1389	118	2910	144	6173
93	1433	119	2998	145	6393
94	1477	120	3086	146	6614
95	1521	121	3197	147	6779
96	1565	122	3307	148	6944
97	1609	123	3417	149	7165
98	1653	124	3527	150	7385
99	1709	125	3638		

* One pound is equal to .4536 kg.

Figure 2 Weight Load Ratings

Speed Symbol	Speed (km/h)	Speed (mph)
A1	5	3
A2	10	6
A3	15	9
A4	20	12
A5	25	16
A6	30	19
A7	35	22
A8	40	25
B	50	31
C	60	37
D	65	40
E	70	43
F	80	50
G	90	56
J	100	62
K	110	68
L	120	75
M	130	81
N	140	87
P	150	94
Q	160	100
R	170	106
S	180	112
T	190	118
U	200	124
H	210	130
V*	Above 210	Above 130
V	240	149
W	270	168
Y	300	186
Z	Above 300	Above 186

- For Unlimited V tyres without the Service Description, the speed category is over 210 km/h (131 mph).

Figure 3 Speed Index Chart

Therefore the correct tyre for all 1998-2002 Lincolns has an overall width of 225 millimetres, an aspect ratio of 70% and is of radial construction. The wheel diameter is 16 inches, the maximum weight loading is 2149 pounds and the maximum speed is 118 miles per hour. Enquiries have revealed that the tyre fitted in the US is on special order and unlikely to be available in the UK. It is likely that tyre fitters and garages will fit the correctly sized tyre but the weight loadings will not be correct. Avon has

only one tyre of the size required, The Ranger TSE. It is described as "*combining the ruggedness of a light truck tire tread pattern with the touring aspect of a passenger tyre and the tread pattern results in the right product for action on SUV's, vans, and pickups*". Its rating is, however, 101S rather than 107T and it is not reinforced. Michelin has various similar 4x4 tyres including the Cross Terrain SUV, also graded as 101S. Good Year has Wrangler HP, which is designed for "*excellent on and off road traction in any weather.*" with the same rating as the other two. These tyres all have a maximum weight load rating of 1819 lbs. Clearly, if these tyres, designed for much lighter sports off-road vehicles, are fitted, the design limits will be seriously exceeded. If the tyres have a maximum loading of 1819 lbs at maximum pressure, four tyres would total a maximum load of 7276 lbs. With the weight of a standard 120" stretch at 7100 lbs, there is a margin of error enough to, perhaps, fill the tank but not carry passengers as this would make it too heavy. The weight load specification of the original tyre (107) gives a total maximum load of 8596 lbs, (2149 x 4) sufficient for car, petrol and a number of passengers, roughly 8 twelve stone people. In the words of Jeff Metz, Program Co-ordinator, QVM Engineering: Limousine Vehicles at Lincoln, *It s 107T, period. No exceptions* . This is one reason why the QVM approval on Town Car will only go up to 120" stretch as the weight involved + petrol + passengers will not exceed the design limits of the converted vehicle. Unapproved conversions will not necessarily have been through these calculations so the correct limits cannot be determined. The Vehicle Inspectorate Manual, states that a vehicle which is clearly overloaded compared to the weight grading of the tyres must receive an immediate suspension notice. If the weight of the vehicle cannot be ascertained because the appropriate stickers and plates, normally on the door pillar, have been removed, it is necessary to have the vehicle assessed at a weighbridge which has had its calibration certified and can, therefore, issue certificates on the axle weights of the car.

Equipment and Fittings

Clearly, the design of the vehicle carried out both at the original manufacturers and by the QVM or CMC converters will have ensured that all the changes would not compromise the integrity and safety of the vehicle. There are a number of heavy duty suspension, steering and brake parts which have been fitted to take account of the additional weight of the vehicle. This will mean that, in normal use, the stresses and strains of driving will be accounted for and, in addition, the parts will not require replacement as often.

Insurance

Proprietors of Stretched Limousine businesses will have made a huge outlay in order the start up in business. It is natural that some will want to cut costs once up and running. It is not unheard of for them to obtain Wedding Car Insurance rather than Private Hire/Hire and Reward Cover. Wedding Car Insurance is calculated on the basis that a vehicle being used in connection with a wedding does not require to be licensed with the Local Authority as it will not be available for ordinary Private Hire work. The premium is therefore calculated on the basis that the vehicle will be used during daylight hours on one or two days per week. By obtaining this much cheaper cover, the certificate can be produced to the Police when requested and to obtain a Vehicle Excise Licence. Those inspecting the certificate will have no knowledge as to the actual use of the vehicle at the time and, of course, this is likely to be normal Private Hire use for which they will not be covered. The savings are clear the Wedding Policy costs from £350 - £450, Private Hire and Reward is between £2000

and £3500.

What should the average Licensing Officer look for when deciding whether to license a vehicle or operator?

MOT s

If presented with an MOT Certificate, check to see whether it is from a local garage. This is often a big giveaway. A lot of MOT Testing Stations do not have the capacity to fit a 24-26 foot long vehicle onto a ramp. It is likely that you will be able to check local garages so certificates are obtained from sources, some legal, some not, outside of the area to deflect suspicion.

Yellow Pages

If in doubt as to whether a capacity limitation is being imposed by the operator, check the Yellow Pages. It is not unusual to be told that the vehicle is being used for up to 8 people, as the import and inspection regime may require, but the advertising may say that larger parties can be catered for.

Legality

Again, a check of the advertising from a particular firm will indicate how near the edge the operator is prepared to be. In some areas, in order to improve the trading position, the operator may offer the provision of a bar supplying alcohol and even lap dancers . Although a Licensing Officer may not be greatly interested in these matters when considering acceptability, it suggests that the business is being run in a way where appropriate permissions or supervision of the limitations necessary is being overlooked or ignored.

Vehicles

There are many ways to check whether a vehicle has been constructed or converted within an authorised programme. Here is a brief guide.

All Vehicles

There may be various stickers under the bootlid, under the bonnet or on the inside of the door pillar. These will show details of the converter, various numbers and /or the weight of the vehicle. If none are in evidence, it may be because the importer or owner is seeking to conceal the history of the vehicle. It should be noted that some amendments may have had to have been carried out to the vehicle to pass the SVA test for the UK. These include:-

- Changes to indicators (removal or moving to acceptable positions)
- Removal of Side Opera Lights
- Removal of Boomerang Aerial from Boot Lid.
- Fitting of Fog Light

Town Car Limousines

The original Town Car saloon is not suitable for stretching. These vehicles have a Chassis Number starting with 1LN . The authorised QVM converter is provided with a special vehicle which has been made suitable and the Chasis Number begins with 1L1 . For full details of the chassis number on any Ford Vehicle, check

www.fleet.ford.com/maintenance/vin_tools/

In addition, Ford provide a special chassis for the extended car to be built on. This is called a 418 chassis and this designation should appear on the vehicle plate or a sticker or plate attached by the converter. If it is not there, there is a double check, ie. the 418 has a twin exhaust system and rear drum brakes. Both must be checked because there is a Cartier edition of the base vehicle which has twin exhausts but rear disc brakes. This model will not, however, have any of the heavy duty components necessary to make it suitable. The only authorised conversion takes the vehicle to 120 inches more than the original vehicle.

Cadillac

Not a lot of these vehicles in use in the UK at present. The codes which denote whether it is an authorised conversion or not are hidden in a number of places. If it is the Fleetwood model (1993 to 1996), the code was V4U shown on a sticker about 5 by 3 marked service Parts Identification under the bootlid. If this has been removed, the only way to check is to remove the rear wheel and hub and measure the width of the brake shoe. This will be almost 2.5 inches wide, substantially wider than the conventional one. This does not make a lot of difference to the stopping distance of the car but the V4U parts are designed to last longer.

From 1997 to 1999, the base car changed to the DeVille which was front wheel drive. It is not likely that many of these will be imported as they were not popular. From 2000, a completely new DeVille was made, the codes being V4U and WC5. These cars have disc brakes all round. A simple way to check whether it is an authorised CMC conversion is to take the wheel nut cover off and check it has an eight stud wheel. If it has, it is a Limousine Package car. The standard car has five studs.

Mileages

It is by no means unusual to find limousines in the States which have done 150,000 to 200,000 miles in the first two years of their lives. Strangely, a lot of imported vehicles are offered with low mileage. There may be some clocking taking place *en route* which means that the vehicle may be rather more worn out than indicated.

Seats and Seatbelts

Check for seatbelts in the rear. In view of the privacy screen fitted just behind the driver, there is no requirement to fit belts in the vehicles during manufacture. As seats may be arranged so that the passengers are seated sideways to the direction of travel on the provided J seat or various types of benches, these arrangements may be difficult to assess. Seatbelts may have been placed in the vehicle at any stage after manufacture and the anchorage points may not be structurally sound as they may not have been designed into the vehicle, and therefore dangerous.