

VEHICLE HEADLIGHTS – A CHANGE IN BFG POLICY FROM 1 MARCH 2008

Introduction

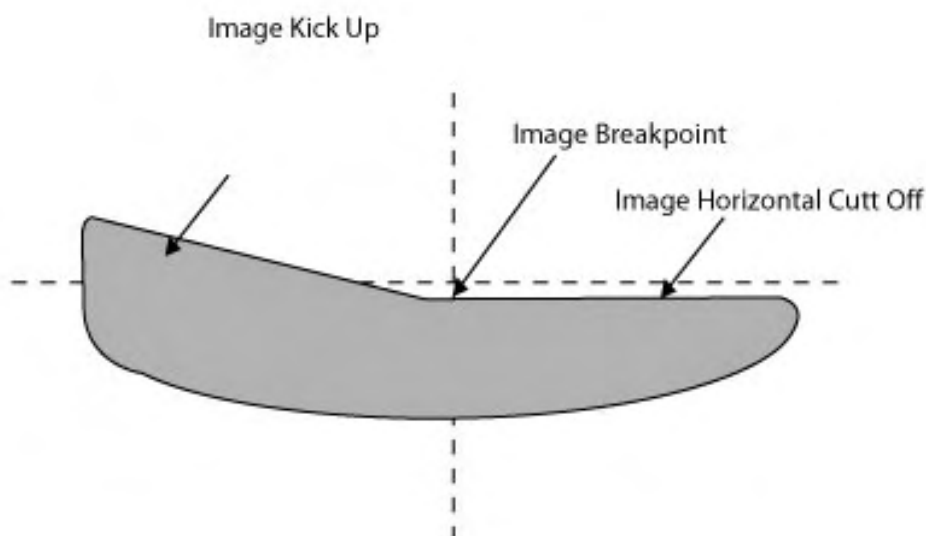
BFG car drivers who drive Right Hand Drive (RHD) vehicles in Germany are mandated under Standing Orders for British Army (Germany) (SO BA(G)'s) to have a vehicle light check at a local BFG testing centre within 30 days of the initial vehicle BFG registration, this also applies to Left Hand Drive Vehicles that have previously been registered in the UK . The light check is to confirm that the vehicle headlights conform to European standards and are suitable for driving on the right side of the road. A recent change in policy will come into affect from 01 March 2008 that will affect the type of headlight you must have on your vehicle in order for it to pass a vehicle light check.

What Are Vehicle Light Checks?

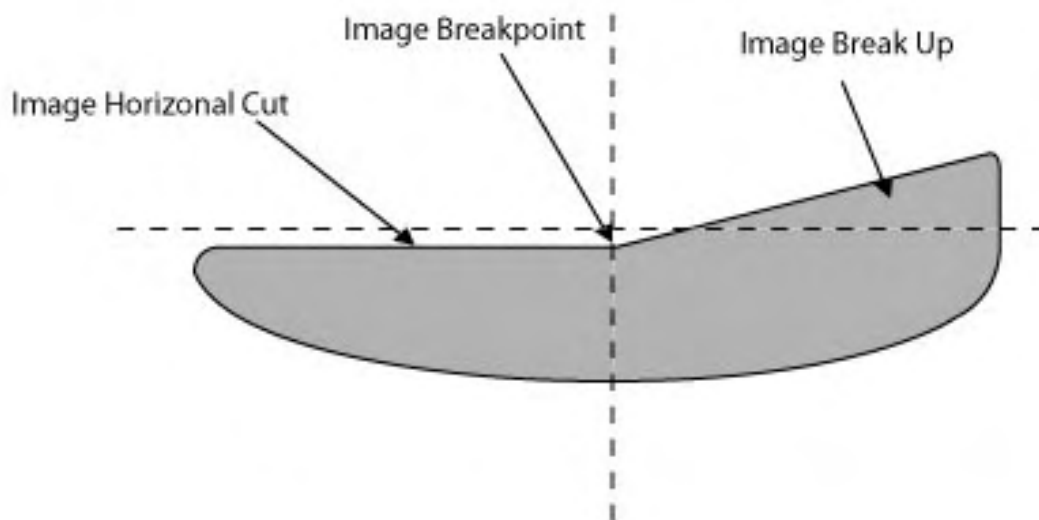
When a vehicle is presented for a light check at a BFG test centre the headlights, indicators, brake lights, fog lights and reverse lights are checked for serviceability. In addition the fog lights are checked to ensure that if only one fog light exists that it is illuminated on the left side of the vehicle and not the right as with UK lights. Double fog lights (I.E one on either side of the rear of the vehicle) are acceptable for both UK and the Europe. When the headlights are checked the examiner places a device called a headlight analyser in front of each headlight to determine the angle of the light. The device easily identifies if the headlight is designed for the UK or for Europe by identifying the direction of the beam.

What Are The Differences Between UK And European Headlights?

UK headlights light up more on the left side and European headlight light up more on the right side. Each light therefore provides extra light for footpaths and road signs for the country they were intended to be used in. A UK headlight when placed against the examiners measuring device will show the extra light 'kick up' to the left and look like this:

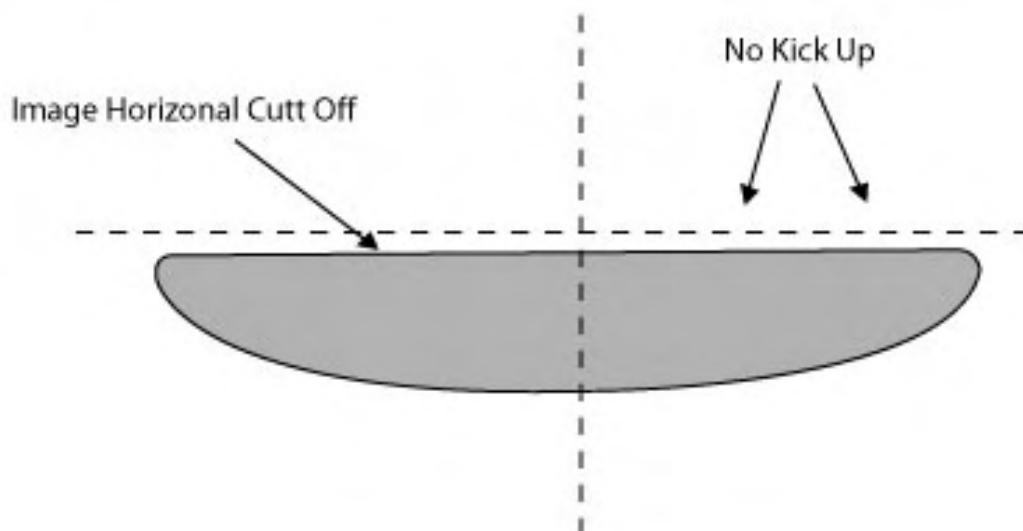


A European Headlight when placed against the headlight analyser will show the extra light 'kick up' to the right and look like this:



What Is the German Law Regarding the Use of UK Headlights?

Visitors such as tourists driving from the UK in Germany (and Europe) are classed as temporary drivers and therefore are allowed under German legislation to temporarily mask their vehicle headlights with headlight stickers to prevent the left kick up of light from blinding oncoming traffic. These stickers effectively change the headlight output to look like a horizontal beam. Additionally certain makes and models of vehicles come equipped with beam converters that change the light to a horizontal beam by the use of a mechanical switch. A horizontal or flat beam headlight when placed against the examiners measuring device would look like this:



Although masking stickers are deemed acceptable for temporary use whilst driving in Europe it is not acceptable for more permanent use. BFG drivers who live and work in Germany are not classed as temporary visitors and therefore must have headlights on their vehicles that conform to continental standards. At present a beam converter switch that provides a flat beam has been acceptable for the vehicle to pass a BFG light check.

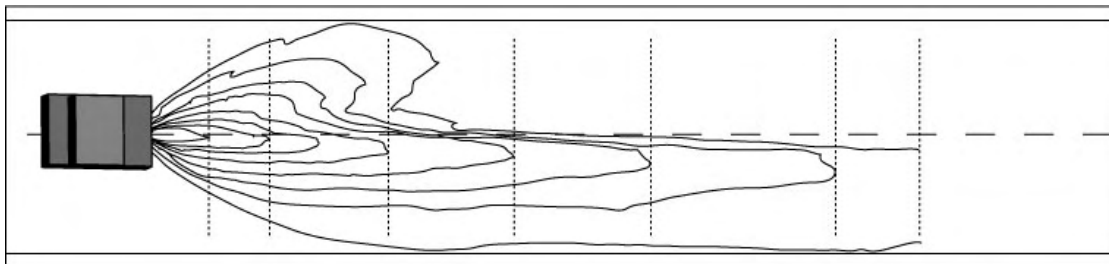
Are There Headlights That Can Be Used On Both UK And European Roads?

Yes, some vehicle manufacturers provide headlights that can be fully converted for use for both left hand and right hand types of traffic systems and will fully conform to both types of legislation.

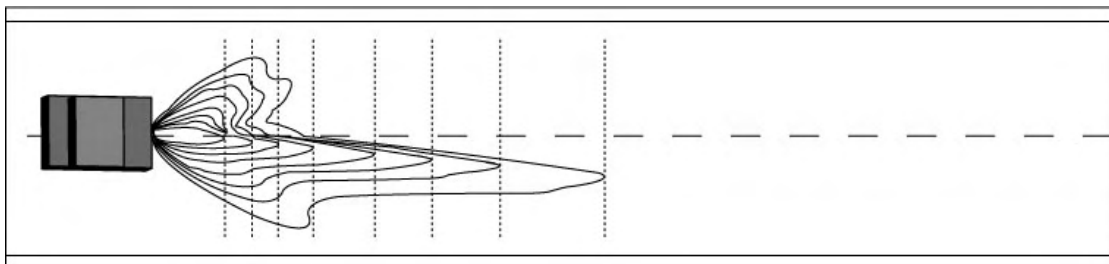
What is the Change in Policy That Will Come into Effect from 01 March 2008?

All headlights must conform to the European standard and have the right 'flick up' that is standard with European headlights in order to conform fully with European legislation. The ability to convert a UK headlight beam by use of a mechanical masking device or other device from a left flick up to a flat beam will no longer be acceptable from 01 March 2008 and will fail a BFG light check. Headlights that have the ability to change from left to right flick (full converters) will remain acceptable for the light check. The following pictures show how each headlight type illuminates the road ahead of a vehicle:

Vehicle with European Headlights.



A vehicle with Flat Beam headlights (Converted)



It is clear to see from the pictures above that the vehicle with the flat beam (converted) headlights illuminate far less of the road ahead than the vehicle with European Headlights.

How Will This Affect Me?

This will only affect BFG drivers who intend on registering a RHD vehicle (or a LHD vehicle that has been previously registered in the UK) if that vehicle is fitted with UK headlights. Unless the vehicle headlights have the ability to fully convert from left to right light beams, the vehicle will not pass a vehicle light check and will not be able to be used in BFG. Vehicle drivers will be required to purchase and fit European headlights in order to pass the mandated light check.

Where Can I Find More Technical Information On How I Can Identify What Headlights I Have On My Vehicle?

You will usually find on each headlamp a marking indicating which traffic system the headlamp is suitable for. This is generally found on the headlight cover glass or the housing. Arrows on the headlight are used to show which side of the road the headlight is designed for. Examples of such a marking are as follows:



The arrow above the E4 number shows that this headlight can be used for both traffic system (left and right).



The arrow above the E4 number shows that this headlight can be used for the left traffic system for UK driving.

Full policy details are available through your local BFG Test Centre (or Equipment Support Services (Germany) on 0521 9254 3698).

What Considerations Should I Make When Purchasing A Vehicle For Use In BFG?

You should consider the financial cost of purchasing additional European headlights if the vehicle does not have full convertible headlights fitted (I.E for use in both left and right traffic systems). Also take into account the cost of having the lights fitted to your vehicle.

What If I Have A BFG Registered Car Already And Intend On Keeping It Past 01 March 2008 When The New Policy Comes Into Affect?

If your vehicle is currently BFG registered and fitted with UK headlights with a mechanical beam converter (for example most Xenon headlights) that only creates a flat beam, then you will be required to change your lights to European lights before the next required light test or the vehicle will fail the test.