

**A driver's guide to  
looking after your van**

Tomorrow. Together

# Contents



# The most important thing to do each day

A quick daily check helps keep you safe, reduces downtime, and helps prevent small issues escalating into a costly repair. Remember, if something doesn't look or feel right, report it through your company's usual process and only use the vehicle if it is safe to do so.



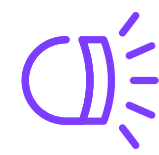
## Walk around the vehicle

- Any visible damage or loose parts
- Tyres in good condition (no obvious cuts, bulges or low tread)
- Number plate clean and readable
- Tow bar, trailer or other equipment secure and fully working
- No excessive smoke or unusual noises



## Fluids and fuel

- Enough fuel (and AdBlue, if required) for the journey
- No warning lights relating to oil, coolant or other fluids
- No obvious leaks (oil, fuel or other fluids)



## Lights and visibility

- Headlights, brake lights and indicators working
- Mirrors clean, secure and correctly positioned
- Windscreen clean with no chips or cracks
- Wipers clean and in good condition



## Load area

- Load secure and evenly distributed
- No loose items
- Racking and fittings secure
- Doors open, close and latch properly



## In the cab

- No warning lights showing on startup
- Seatbelt working properly
- Steering and brakes feel normal
- Footwell clear (no obstruction around pedals)
- Horn fully working and audible

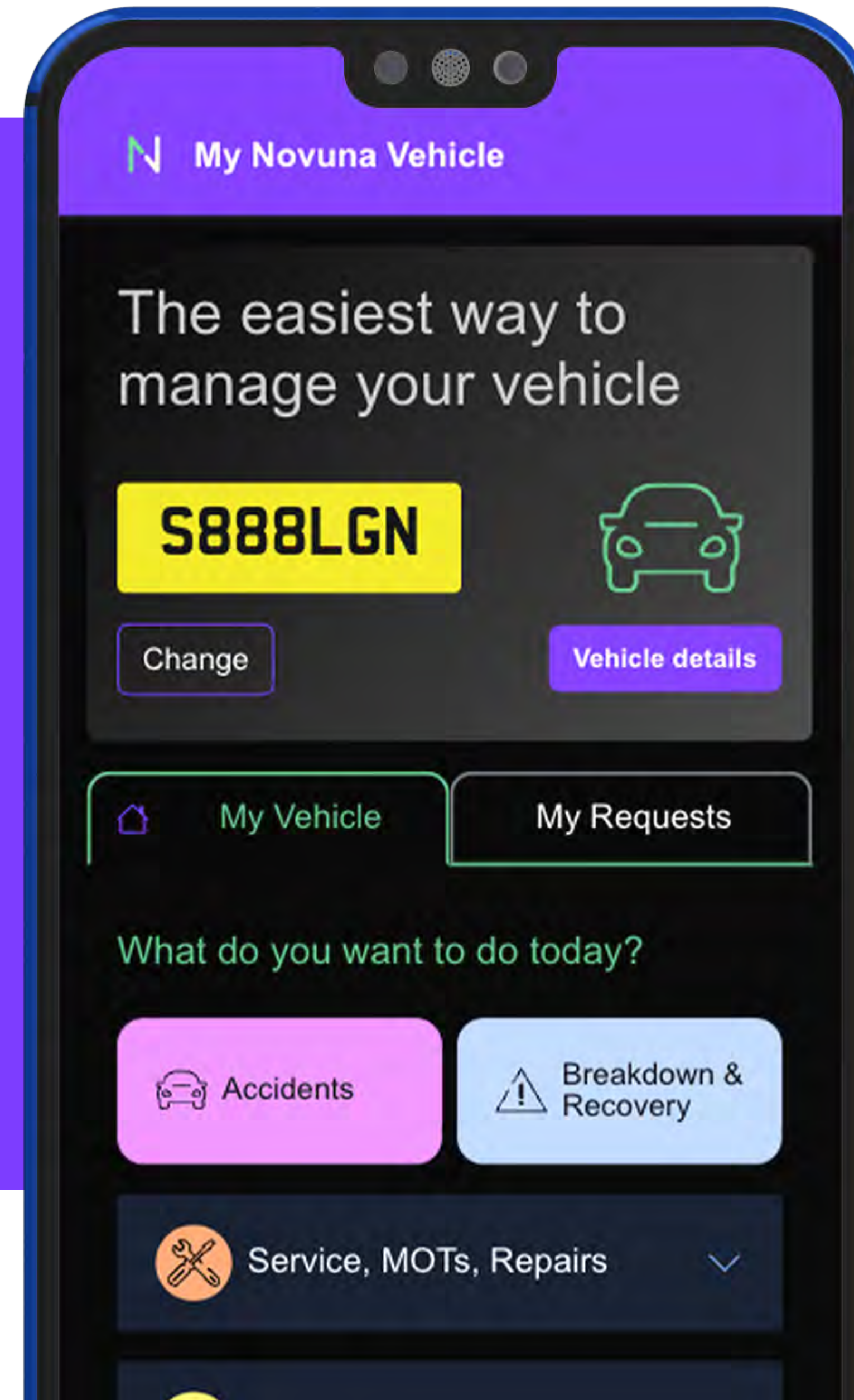
# The easiest way to service your van

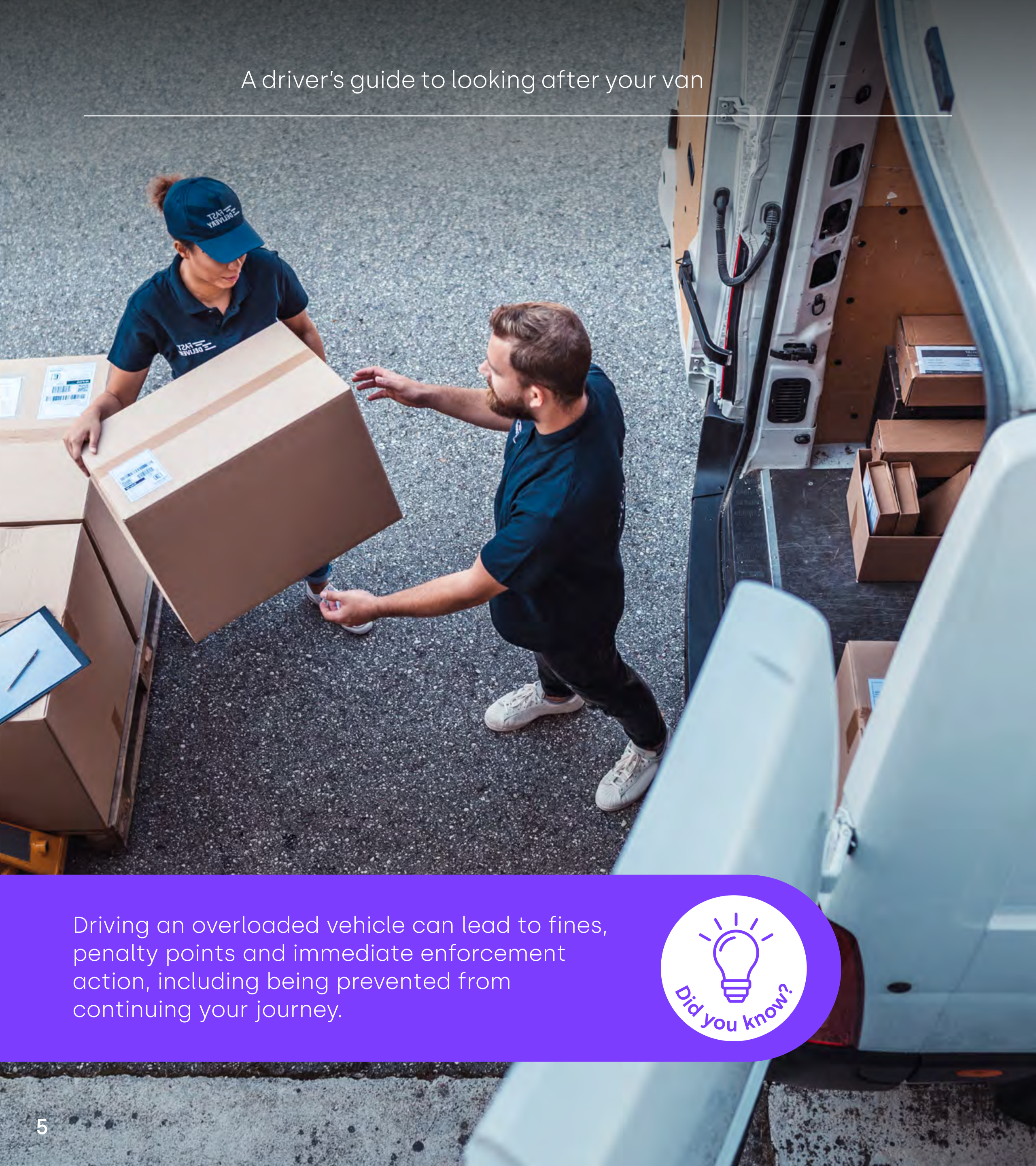
Looking after your van in line with the vehicle manufacturer's recommendations helps to keep you safe, reduces downtime and avoids any unnecessary costs.

Regular servicing and simple day-to-day checks can help keep your vehicle on the road and your business moving.

Your choice of repairer matters too. Using approved service centres ensures your van is maintained to the correct standard by trained technicians using manufacturer-approved parts.

The quickest and easiest way to book your van into a quality-approved garage is via **My Novuna Vehicle**. And it's not just for servicing or repairs; you can also book an MOT, arrange tyre and glass replacement or repair and get fast, efficient support in the event of an accident or breakdown.





# Load safety and weight limits

It's easy to assume a load is within the legal limits for your van, but it's important to keep a close eye on your total payload, including passengers, racking and any equipment installed.

## Always make sure that loads are:

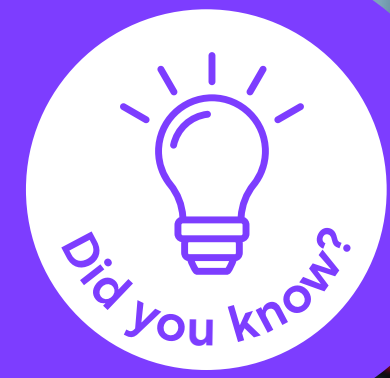
- Within the vehicle's payload limit
- Evenly distributed across the load space
- Properly secured to prevent movement during transit

## If the total weight exceeds the allowable GVW it can:

- Increase the risk of an accident or breakdown
- Affect braking, handling and tyre wear
- Lead to fines, penalty points or enforcement action
- Invalidate insurance in the event of an incident
- Damage your company's reputation

Remember, the vehicle's weight limits can usually be found in the handbook or on the VIN plate (typically located on the driver's side door sill, under the bonnet, or on the passenger door pillar).

Driving an overloaded vehicle can lead to fines, penalty points and immediate enforcement action, including being prevented from continuing your journey.



# Ply lining and racking

Ply lining and racking can do a lot to protect your van from knocks, scrapes and day-to-day wear in the load area, but they need to be fitted securely and used as intended.

It's important to avoid making changes to the vehicle yourself or adding anything that has not been approved, especially where this involves drilling into panels or fixing equipment directly to the vehicle.

Poorly fitted equipment can cause damage, create safety issues and lead to unnecessary repairs.

It's also worth remembering that ply lining and racking do not remove your personal responsibility for the condition of the vehicle. Damage behind, around or underneath fitted equipment may still incur a cost when the vehicle is returned.



# Protecting both driver and van

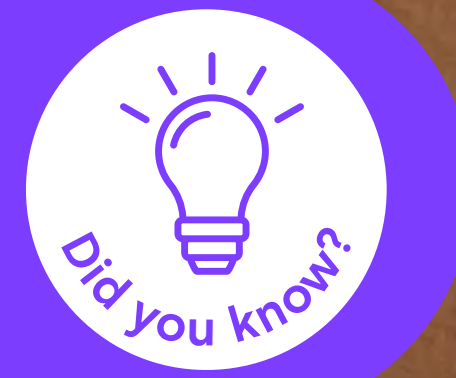
Day-to-day van driving often includes repeated loading, unloading, reversing and manoeuvring in and out of busy yards, depots, customer sites and restricted urban locations.

## Damage can easily be caused by:

- Reversing in tight spaces with limited visibility
- Restricted height areas in loading bays and car parks
- Loading and unloading
- Loose tools, cargo or equipment

Even relatively minor damage can lead to avoidable repair costs, time off the road and unnecessary disruption to work schedules. And remember, it's not just about protecting your van. Taking good care when loading or unloading helps to avoid personal injury and unwanted time off work.

More than a quarter of van drivers sustain a loading-related injury each year, resulting in an average 5.8 days off per year per incident.



# Tyres

Regular inspections are not just vital for safety and legal compliance; they can make a big difference to fuel efficiency and longevity of tyres.

## Check the tread

By law, each tyre needs to have at least 1.6mm of tread across the central three quarters of the tyre's width and around the entire outer circumference. That said, many safety experts recommend replacing tyres when the tread depth reaches 3mm.

If you already have a tyre depth gauge then it makes sense to use it, but it's just as easy to use a 20p coin. Simply insert the coin into the tread pattern at various positions across and around the tyre. If you can see the outer band at any point, then the tread is too low and the tyre must be replaced.

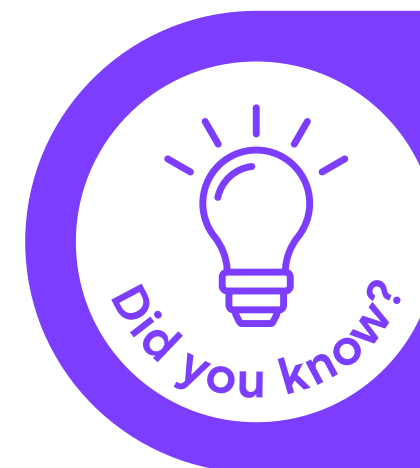
## Check the condition

Not all problems are easy to spot with the naked eye. Running your hand around the tyre can help identify lumps, bulges, or cuts that could easily cause a blowout.

To protect yourself, your passengers and other road users, any damage found must be fixed, or the tyre replaced, without delay. Any uneven wear could be an indication that the wheels are misaligned, which could therefore shorten the life of the tyre.

## Check the pressure

Underinflated tyres can reduce fuel economy by up to 10%. On the other hand, overinflation increases the risk of blowouts and can also lead to faster deterioration, reduced traction, and a bumpier ride.



Driving with tyres below the legal tread depth can result in a **fine of up to £2,500** and three penalty points per tyre.

## Windscreen and glass

Never ignore a cracked or chipped windscreen. Even a small crack can quickly worsen, obscuring vision and thus making the vehicle illegal to drive.

In the case of a collision, a strong windscreen distributes the impact force away from passengers and ensures that airbags, which are designed to push off the windscreen when deployed, work properly.

## Wiper blades

To check your blades, simply lift the wiper arm and wipe the blades clean with a damp cloth. Next, run your fingers along the window-facing edge and if you feel any rough, hard, or damaged edges, it is time to replace the blades.

Another good indication that it's time for a change is if you notice that your wipers are juddering, squeaking, or smearing the windscreen.

# Oils, fluids and lubricants

While it can be tempting to rely on dashboard warning lights, it is still a good idea to check the oil, fluid, and lubricant levels on a regular basis.



## Oil

Wait until the engine is cool (15 minutes or so is usually enough) and make sure that the vehicle is level. Remove the dipstick from the engine, wipe it clean with a cloth, reinsert it and remove it again. The oil mark should be between the low and full mark. The oil should be a brown, slightly sticky consistency. If it is any other colour or texture, then it may need changing.



## Coolant

The engine must be completely cold before you can safely take an accurate reading, so you may need to wait a few hours, or even overnight.

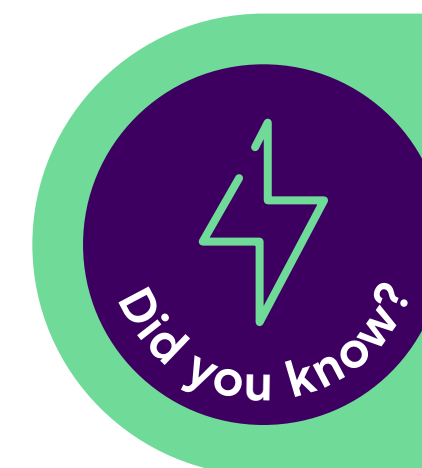
Most coolant expansion tanks have a minimum and maximum mark. The level should be well above the minimum level to prevent overheating, but don't overfill it as the coolant needs room to expand. Before topping up, always check the vehicle handbook to ensure you use the correct coolant and mix.



## Screenwash

Most of us use a lot more screenwash during the winter, but it's still important to check the reservoir and top it up accordingly throughout the year.

It's a good idea to keep some spare screenwash in the boot of your van, just in case you run out at the worst possible time.



EVs don't have any engine oil to worry about, but you still need to **keep an eye on brake fluid, coolant, and screen wash.**



## Power steering fluid

Power steering systems use hydraulic fluid, an electric motor/pump, or a combination of the two. When hydraulic fluid is used, regular checks will prevent component damage or a sudden loss of manoeuvrability.

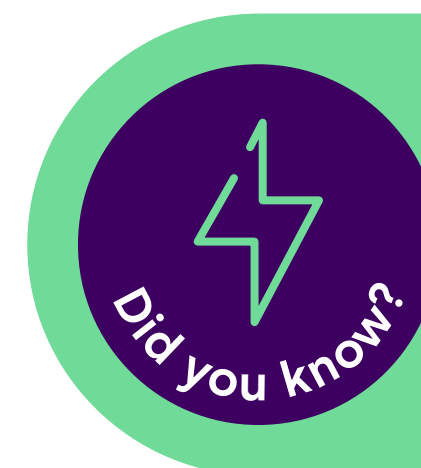
To check the fluid, ensure the vehicle is level and the engine is cold. The reservoir can be found under the bonnet and will either have minimum and maximum markers or a dipstick. It is important not to overfill the reservoir because power steering fluid needs room to expand once heated.



## Brake fluid

In most cases, you will find the brake fluid reservoir under the bonnet with an appropriate label and a minimum level marker.

Your vehicle handbook will provide important information about the fluid to use but please be careful as brake fluid is corrosive, so it's best to cover any nearby paintwork and wear protective gloves.



Although EVs generally prioritise regenerative braking, most manufacturers recommend **changing the brake fluid in an electric van every 2–3 years**, depending on the specific model and driving conditions.

# Batteries, bulbs and indicators

Checking your bulbs and indicators is a lot easier with someone to help you. Simply turn the engine on (or to the first ignition position) and check each light in turn. Here's a quick checklist:

- ✓ Side lights
- ✓ Dipped beams
- ✓ Main beam
- ✓ Indicators
- ✓ Brake lights
- ✓ Reversing lights
- ✓ Fog lights
- ✓ Hazard lights

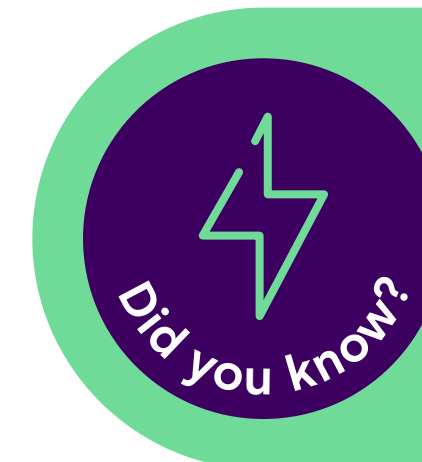
If you notice something isn't working or seems to be operating at less than full power, it's important to get any repairs or replacements carried out at your earliest opportunity.

Battery life varies greatly depending on use, alternator or connection faults, and even weather conditions. Some batteries have a visual indicator on the top. If this is green, then the battery has at least 75% charge. Below this it will be black, and red means dead.

Alternatively, you can use a multimeter to check the voltage. To do this, simply turn

off the engine and wait for 15-30 minutes before connecting the multimeter to the battery terminals. A healthy battery typically has a voltage of 12.6–12.9 volts. Anything less than 12.4 and the battery may need changing. You should also change the battery if it bulges or emits an unpleasant smell.

To prolong battery life, it is best to use your van at least once per week (6 miles or 30 minutes), especially in winter. If you are not going to use your van for a month or more, you may want to use a trickle charger to avoid excessive battery drain.



Despite being built around a battery driven electric motor, **EVs have an additional 12V battery** to power lights, locks, infotainment, and safety systems.



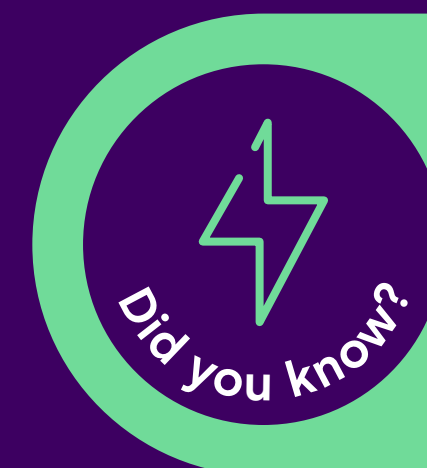
# Brakes

If your brake fluid is low or discoloured (see oils, fluids, and lubricants) then it's time to change or top up the fluid. Remember, brake fluid is corrosive and so you will need to wear personal protective equipment (PPE).

In most cases, brake fluid shouldn't need attention between services. If you notice the level falling then you may want to have a mechanic check for a leak, worn brake pads, or an issue with the brake lines.

Most vans have a warning light to tell you that your brakes need checking but there are some other signs to look out for too, including:

- ✓ Taking longer to stop
- ✓ Vibration when braking
- ✓ Vehicle pulls to one side
- ✓ Any unusual noises
- ✓ Spongy brake pedal



Thanks to regenerative braking, **EV brake pads can last up to 100,000 miles**. That's twice, or even three times, as long as an ICE vehicle.

# Suspension

Among the biggest threats to vehicle suspension are the UK's ubiquitous potholes, which can easily cause misalignment and damage to the shock absorbers.

Although there isn't much you can do to fix suspension issues at home, there are some clear signs of suspension problems that will require professional attention:

- ✓ **A bumpy ride**
- ✓ **Pulling to one side**
- ✓ **Uneven tyre wear**
- ✓ **Leaning when parked**
- ✓ **Bouncing or instability**
- ✓ **Oily shock absorbers**
- ✓ **Unusual noises**  
(especially when going over a bump)

An easy way to check your suspension at home is to push down on the vehicle and check how it responds. The vehicle should return to normal in a single bounce. If it bounces multiple times, this could indicate an issue with the shock absorbers.





## Keep it clean

Regularly washing your van doesn't just keep it looking its best; it also prevents grit and dirt causing unnecessary wear, corrosion to the chassis, or damage to moving parts.

Bird mess can severely damage the paintwork, especially if it is left to bake on, and while salt spread by gritter lorries helps to keep the roads safer to use in icy conditions, it can also cause damage to your vehicle and should be washed off as soon as possible.

Handwashing is often better than automated van washes with stiff brushes that can leave lots of fine scratches on the paintwork. An annual polish will also help stop rust spreading across the vehicle.

# Looking after an electric van

Looking after an electric van still involves many of the same routine checks as any other vehicle. Tyres, wipers, lights and fluid levels all still matter and play an important role in keeping the vehicle safe, reliable and ready for work.

There are, however, some important differences to be aware of. Paying attention to battery care, charging routines, and the way the braking system operates can help improve efficiency, reduce wear and avoid unnecessary downtime.

## Brakes and fluids

EV drivers don't need to worry about engine oil, but you still need to keep an eye on brake fluid, coolant, and screen wash.

Most EVs use regenerative braking. Keeping this feature switched on reduces any unnecessary strain on the vehicle's hydraulic brakes. As a result, brake pads can last up to 100,000 miles and discs are more likely to be replaced due to warping than wear. That said, brake fluid can still be contaminated by moisture from the air which, over time, has an impact on performance.

Most manufacturers recommend changing the brake fluid in an electric van every 2–3 years.





## EV battery care

Battery technology is improving all the time and electric vans can typically travel around 200 miles on a single charge. There have also been significant improvements to battery life and you can now expect the health and efficiency of a new battery to degrade at just 1.8% per year. To put this into perspective, that's a loss of just under 20 miles of range in three years.

Top tips to keep your EV battery at optimum health:

- ✓ **Frequent harsh or rapid acceleration puts additional strain on the battery and could shorten its life**
- ✓ **Frequent use of rapid charging has the potential to accelerate battery degradation, but it's rarely enough to worry about**
- ✓ **Avoid extreme temperatures — park in the shade during summer and in sunlight during winter (if you can)**
- ✓ **EV batteries perform best when kept between 20% and 80% charged**

# Things to check before booking your MOT

Your first MOT is due three years after the vehicle was first registered.

You can find the official registration date on the V5C logbook or by visiting [vehicleenquiry.service.gov.uk](https://vehicleenquiry.service.gov.uk).

Please be aware that, even for brand new vans, your vehicle's registration date is not necessarily the same as the delivery date.

Remember, there is no grace period for MOTs, and it is illegal to drive a van without an MOT unless you are driving to the test centre for an inspection that has already been booked.

Between 25% and 35% of vehicles (depending on size) initially fail their MOT, most of which are for 'non-dangerous' faults. A few simple checks and, if necessary, remedial action can avoid unwanted inconvenience and higher than necessary costs.



## A list of key things to check before booking your MOT

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- ✓ Windscreen wipers are undamaged, working properly, and there is no smearing after use
- ✓ All lights and indicators are working at full power, with no damage or fogging on the glass
- ✓ Tyres have a minimum of 1.6mm of tread all around and across the tyre
- ✓ Uneven wear on the tyre that could be a result of misaligned wheels or incorrect tyre pressure
- ✓ Tyre pressure is within the range specified in the manufacturer handbook
- ✓ Check and top up all fluids, including screenwash, brake fluid, and oil
- ✓ The horn works properly and is loud enough for pedestrians and other drivers to hear
- ✓ No chips, cracks, or other damage to the front and rear windscreen
- ✓ Mirrors are undamaged and firmly fixed in place
- ✓ Seatbelts easily click in place and return to the holder once unclicked
- ✓ No excessive play (more than 3 or 4 clicks) on the handbrake
- ✓ Examiners can easily access all the areas they need to check
- ✓ Seats and headrests are secure
- ✓ The van sits level and bounces back in a single movement after being pushed down
- ✓ The numberplate is readable (i.e. clean and complete)
- ✓ No strange noises from the exhaust
- ✓ With the engine idling, the exhaust fumes should move a cloth that's loosely placed in front of the tail pipe (always remember to use heat-resistant protective gloves and a face mask, and only hold the cloth in place for 1-2 seconds)



When you've finished the checks and you are ready to book your van in for an MOT, visit [mynovunavehicle.co.uk](https://mynovunavehicle.co.uk) or scan the QR code

# Any questions?

For more information about looking after your vehicle, please call **0344 463 2900**

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