LIGHT BARS & THE LAW

Would you really get fined if you travel in Namibia with an LED light bar mounted on your 4x4? And what are the local regulations regarding LED driving lights? Charles Thompson sheds some light on the issue.

Namibian daily Die Republikein reported last year that vehicle owners in this country could be fined for having an LED light bar mounted on their vehicle. When you follow discussions on 4x4 online forums and Facebook pages, however, it’s clear there’s lots of confusion about these regulations and how strictly they’re enforced, if at all. The application of LED lights on motor vehicles has increased in recent years, says Adam Eiseb, chief traffic officer in Windhoek. Road regulations are still being adapted to new types of use, he says, but LED light bars mounted on the front of your vehicle remain illegal at this stage. Namibian road law specifies that only light bulbs (halogen, xenon, LED) are legal on public roads. And since an LED bar is classified as a diode, not a light bulb, it’s illegal. Factory-fitted LED headlights, on the other hand, are permissible. The issue, says Adam, is the definition of a light bar. Officers aren’t sure whether to see it as a single light or a box containing a number of small, individual lights. And since the law doesn’t permit more than six headlights on the front of a vehicle, a light bar becomes problematic. The traffic chief does add,
however, that the use of LED light bars is not illegal off-road or on farms. But, he says, if you get caught with a light bar on your vehicle on a public road you can get fined, even if it is switched off and concealed behind a cover. It is, however, up to the officer whether to fine you or not, he says. “If you can provide a plausible reason for having the light bar on your vehicle, he or she might just let you go.” Adam says the officer could also cut you some slack if the light bar is covered and obviously only intended for off-road use. But the best way to make sure you don’t get into trouble, he says, is by not having a light bar on your vehicle at all on public roads.

And in South Africa?

LED light bars aren’t legal on vehicles in South Africa either, says Alta Swanepoel, a Pretoria lawyer who specialises in road traffic and transport legislation. The reason in South Africa, she says, is the regulations around the fitting of lights on a vehicle. Alta says all the lights on your vehicle have to be fitted at equal distances from an imaginary central line. To understand where this line sits, picture your vehicle from the front and draw a vertical line through the manufacturer’s badge on the grill. This line, running from the ground vertically through the roof of your vehicle, is the central line. All your lights have to be fitted at equal distances from this line. Light bars are often rejected at testing stations, Alta says, because they run through the central line. Normal LED lights at equal distances from the central line are not a problem, and if your vehicle was fitted with LED headlights in the factory they would already comply with SABS requirements. Be careful of an aftermarket light bar, however. If it’s not standard equipment on your vehicle, there’s a possibility it hasn’t been approved by the authorities. A light bar mounted on the front of your vehicle is a no-no, says Darren Magerman, Western Cape regional manager for Dekra Automotive, a company that does inspection and testing for roadworthiness. Even if you use it only in off-road situations and cover it while driving on public roads, it can get you into trouble. “The simple fact of having it mounted on your vehicle makes it unroadworthy.”

What about spotlights?

More light means less hassle in the bush at night, and many 4x4 owners like a few extra lights on the front of their vehicles. According to Alta, the law interprets them as extra headlights. Make sure you don’t have more than six “headlights” on the front of your vehicle (including the factory-fitted ones) and don’t fit them higher than 1.4 m off the ground. So even if it looks great, a set of Supernova HID lights mounted on the front of your roof rack could get you in trouble. It’s important to remember that all the lights on your vehicle have to work, says Alta. It’s not good enough to simply disconnect the lights you think might be illegal when you drive on public roads. Even if you’re not planning to use them on public roads, you have to be able to switch them on if the officer asks you to do so. Lastly, she says your lights may only emit the colours allowed by the law: red towards the back and white to the front (modern lights that have a slight blue tint are also accepted). Unfortunately, it looks like that light you fitted to the back of your Landy to light up camp when you’re in the bush is unpopular with the authorities. Also remember that no lights except the indicators are allowed to flash, so rather forget about that LED strobe light on your wish list for turning Twee Rivieren into a disco on New Year’s Eve. It’s best to stick to South African road regulations
when you head to Namibia as well. Adam Eiseb says his country’s road regulations around extra lights on your vehicle are exactly the same as those in South Africa.

**My point of view:** If light bars are illegal why does the authorities not clampdown on importers of such light bars. Surely these importers are acting illegal in regards to the importation and fitment of light bars.

**Shouldn’t legislation also be updated to accommodate new technology? The whole world is moving forward why do Africa not move forward together with the rest of the world.**

**One of the arguments are that one LED count as a light bulb and a light bar is a cluster of LED’s. What makes vehicles such as Audi and others with LED’s as part of their light clusters different from light bars**

**Klub Gelde en Lede Gelde**

Vanaf die nuwe finansiele jaar wat **1 Julie 2015** begin, tree daar n prys verhooging in t.o.v. lede geld sowel as toegangs fooie by die klub. Geen prys verhoogings het plaas gevind vir die afgelope 5 jaar nie en noodgedwonge is dit nou tyd om n aanpassing te moet maak.

Lede geld per jaar is verhoog van R450.00 na **R500.00** per jaar.

Hek gelde is verhoog vir **non-lede** van R150.00 per voertuig na **R200.00** per voertuig.

Hek gelde is verhoog vir **op-betaalde lede** R70.00 per voertuig na **R100.00** per voertuig.

Vergelykend met ander klubs en roetes in Gauteng, Mpumalanga, Limpopo, Vrystaat en ander provinsies in Suid Afrika is dit nog steeds baie mededingend en nie buitensporig nie.

In September 2015 word die nuwe twee dag roete bekend gestel en sal dan aangebied word teen R400.00 per voertuig vir Non-Lede en R200.00 per voertuig vir McCarthy 4x4 Club Lede – iets om na uit te sien!

**McCarthy 4x4 Klub Dag – 26 July 2015**

Our next club day will be hosted by McCarthy Toyota Bruma and will take place on Sunday the 26th July 2015.

Time: 08h30 for 09h00

I would like to remind all club members that they are more than welcome to attend any club day, there seems to be some reluctance with some because the day is not hosted by a dealership that the member has done business with. Particularly new members are invited to attend a club day to meet and greet.

**Entry Fee:**

Club Members: R100.00 per vehicle

Non-Club Members: R200.00

Please report at the registration table on arrival to complete indemnity form
Basic 4x4 Driver Training – 25th July 2015

Clients or new members that have bought their 4x4 vehicle from any McCarthy Toyota Dealer or Automark Dealer in Gauteng have received a free membership to the McCarthy 4x4 Club. Included in this membership is a **FREE** Basic 4x4 Training Course for one person to the value of **R650.00**.

One extra member of the family may also do the course at **R300.00**.

Other family members or **Non-members** of the club who want to do the course – **R650.00**

- Our next training date is Saturday the **25th July 2015**.
- The training will take place at our Rhino Park Venue and the course will start at 09h00.
- There will be theory session of ± 3 hours after which the practical will be done on the academic track.
- All you need to bring is your 4x4 vehicle, yourself, some sunblock, a hat and some water or other refreshments to make sure you do not dehydrate. Remember no alcohol but you may have something stronger after the course to settle the nerves 😊
- A certificate of attendance will be issued afterwards.
- There is a restaurant on the premises for something to bite or you may bring along your own lunch sandwiches.
- Directions to the club is on our website [Rhino Park Directions](#).
- Bookings can be made by e-mailing the Driver Training Booking form to [Basic 4x4 Training](#).

**McCarthy 4x4 Club: Break –a-Way Week-ends**

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<th>Route</th>
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<td>8 to 10 August</td>
<td>Leegalametsi – Ivory Route near Tsaneen</td>
<td>After some consideration a decision was made to change the venue. This is a very nice and scenic route and worth visiting with a few surprises.</td>
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<td>24 to 27 September</td>
<td>3 Provinces Trails: Ref Number: TPT2015</td>
<td>Bookings can now be done for Ivory Route and 3 Provinces Trails</td>
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**Roetes en Toere**

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<td>29th June to 17th July</td>
<td>Namibia – Caprivi Tour</td>
<td>As you are reading this newsletter we have already departed for Namibia and we will give you report back in the next newsletter</td>
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