

Dark car windows under scrutiny

NSW car owners have been warned that cars with illegal window film on their windows run the risk of being given an on-the-spot defect notice.

NSW Highway Patrol officers now have access to electronic meters that provide an instant rating of the darkness of glass. When armed with these devices, an officer can quickly, easily and accurately check a car's window film is within legal limits.

On Friday, 17 July, one licensed AUVIS¹ inspection station in Sydney was visited by four cars that had their window film removed or replaced after receiving defect notices from Highway Patrol officers using electronic meters.

Rob Hamilton, President of the Window Film Association of Australia and New Zealand (WFAANZ), comments "When used correctly window film provides great protection, but unfortunately some uninformed tinters apply film that is too dark and deemed unsafe. Drivers need to receive correct advice when considering window film for their vehicle."

A visible light transmittance (VLT) rating measures the amount of light that passes through tinted glass. The lower the VLT percentage, the darker the film. Since August 1994 NSW laws require tinted side and rear windows to have a VLT of at least 35%, meaning 35% of light must still pass through the window after film has been applied.

Federal law, however, allows lower VLT glass (sometimes called privacy glass) on new vehicles for any window behind the driver's position. So if a new vehicle has rear windows with say a 20% VLT, the owner cannot legally have the front side windows tinted to match.

Rob Hamilton said "These automotive film rules are not widely known, which is why the instance of illegally darkened windows is so high. Drivers need to abide by the State regulations because if a car is deemed unroadworthy due to dark film, it may receive a defect notice."

Drivers wanting to boost safety, security, comfort and reduce glare and UV exposure often turn to window film. When applied correctly, it protects a car's interior and its passengers from the sun's harmful rays.

The question then is how to ensure the window film on your vehicle is compliant.

Rob Hamilton said, "The solution is simple. Just ensure your tinter is aware of the regulations governing your state. Contact your local WFAANZ member as they know the regulations and will do the job properly the first time. They have access to the latest updates and training and abide by an industry code of practice."

Window film applicators may face fines or criminal action if installing automotive film illegally. There have also been reported cases of car owners having their insurance claim refused following an accident, as the car was deemed un-roadworthy because of illegal film.

NSW auto film regulations can be found at www.wfaanz.org.au/AutoAU.htm, and a list of installers at <http://www.wfaanz.org.au/AUMemberSearch.htm>.

¹ Authorised Unregistered Vehicle Inspection Station

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One regulation consistent across Australia is that film cannot be applied to the front windscreen².

Rob said, “Do not believe any tinter who claims to have an approved film for your windscreen, inside or out. The windscreen viewing area is the most critical in any vehicle as this is the viewing area where all high speed driving decisions are made by the driver. Application of film anywhere in front of the driver is extremely unsafe. If your local tinter suggests this type of film, you know they’re uninformed and unprofessional, and you should find another applicator immediately.”

Rob adds, “Through lobbying, WFAANZ aims to address the flaws in the current system, which seem to favour vehicle manufacturers while crippling local tinters and confusing Australian vehicle owners.”

About WFAANZ

A non-profit organisation, WFAANZ is dedicated to improving the standard of product and installation of window film in Australia and New Zealand, while promoting the performance, values and cost effectiveness of window film. The association sets out performance guidelines for its members, comprising over 200 window film applicators and manufacturers. Visit www.wfaanz.org.au for more information and a list of members.

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For further media information, images or an interview please contact:

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² A tinted or opaque band across the top of the windscreen is permitted providing it is no lower than 10% of the height of the windscreen and is above the portion of the windscreen swept by the wipers. Tinted film must not be reflective as it can dazzle other drivers.