



# PRESS RELEASE - 4D NUMBER PLATES ARE LEGAL



**FACTS VS. SPECULATION**



## BACKGROUND:

4D laser cut digits first appeared in the UK in 2015. The first set of 4d number plates produced was tested on UK roads for durability throughout the seasons, and for ANPR compliance checking. Since they were produced for use on UK roads, rigorous analysis of BS AU 145d confirmed that 4d plates did not break any of the mandatory requirements within the BS AU 145d standard. Their exceptional performance allowed them to be offered to the public with full confidence that the digits are permanent, and accepted as road legal since they are compliant with the British Standards.

The concept of digits on top of number plates is not new, and has been around for decades as shown in the image below of Bestplate's digits from a 1978 vehicle, compliant to BS AU 145a:



## WHY IS THERE NOW A DEBATE?

The new BS AU 145e standard which has been in the Public Domain since March 2018 will come in to effect on the 1st of September 2021. The DVLA sent out a news letter to Registered Number Plate Suppliers in December 2020. In it, they confirmed that all characters must be solid BLACK when the new standard becomes mandatory.



The DVLA also stated:

The agency has not seen any evidence to show that number plates displaying raised plastic, acrylic or Perspex lettering (3D/4D plates) are able to meet the requirements of either the current or new the British Standard.

This is not a definitive statement to say that 3d/4d plates ARE road legal or NOT. This statement also indicates that as far as the DVLA are concerned, they cannot confirm whether 3d/4d plates even meet BS AU 145d either. If it was clear that they were not legal, there would have been outcry from the DVLA about 3d/4d plates over the past 15 years (3d gel plates first appeared on UK roads circa 2005). The reason that there was no outcry is because within the standards, there is room for innovation, and quite rightly so. Some companies print on a reflective, whilst others print on an acetate sheet. Both are accepted as legal, however the standards do not say that either method must be employed. Nor do the standards refer to whether metal pressed plates are compliant, even though it is known that they are, as long as they meet the rest of the criteria of BS AU 145d / BS AU 145e. If it was clear in the standards that 3d/4d plates do not conform, the DVLA would have confirmed this in their newsletter in the way that they made it clear that BLACK will be the only colour allowed in the new standard.

## WHY AM I BEING FINED FOR MY 3D/4D PLATES NOW?

If you have 3d/4d plates which meet all of the requirements of BS AU 145d, you should not have been fined. If you have, you should contest the fine using the facts presented in this document. Black and shades of grey do conform to BS AU 145d, and if they did not, the DVLA would not have made a point of making it clear that BLACK is the only colour allowed in the new standard. To confirm whether your plates are legal or not, please check your plates against the following check list:

- Charles Wright typeface** - 79mm height x 50mm width
- Black text or shades of grey** - 3d look, carbon fibre effect, hi-line font for BS AU 145d (Black text only for BS AU 145e)
- Correct Spacing** - 11mm between characters & 33mm between groups
- Format Type** - Permanently fixed characters & not removable (2d Printed, 3d/4d Raised, Metal Pressed)
- Correct size of plate** - 11mm from text to edge minimum
- Correct Material** - Tested to BS AU 145d / BS AU 145e standards
- British Standards Markings** - Materials supplier & BSAU 145d/ BS AU 145e displayed



# WILL MY PLATES STILL BE ROAD LEGAL WHEN THE BS AU 145E BECOMES MADATORY? YES

If you've had your plates made to BS AU 145d before the 1st of September 2021, then authorities cannot ask you to replace your number plates because they do not conform to BS AU 145e. The DVLA has confirmed that you would only need to change your plates once they are deteriorated and do not pass the MOT test anymore. MOT testers should pass or fail your number plates based on the standards to which they were made. Hence if you have a pre-2001 vehicle with number plates conforming to BS AU 145a (1972-2001), you would not need to replace your number plates to meet the newer standards.

Since the UK has now left the EU, it is not permitted for number plate suppliers to supply the Euro Flag any longer. This does not mean that all vehicles which currently have the Euro Flag are required to replace their number plates with immediate effect.

## DO 4D PLATES MEET THE NEW STANDARD, BS AU 145E? YES

Our members have owned copies of the standard since it was published in 2018, and have studied it well. The new standard makes it clear that characters **MUST** be BLACK. There are two areas which have caused debate about the conformity of 4d plates:

### 4.2 Design

The complete retroreflecting background area of the number plate shall be a continuous and substantially flat surface, except that an integral raised or depressed border, of width and height not exceeding 5 mm and 2 mm, respectively, is permitted around the number plate periphery.

The above point refers to the REFLECTIVE background, and does not refer to the surface of the number plate as some have interpreted it. This point goes on to mention raised or depressed borders, which is a feature of METAL PRESSED PLATES, which have raised digits. This point does not contradict the permissibility of 4d number plates.



## 5.2 Characters

5.2.1 The registration characters shall not be removable.

4d characters are NOT removable. The adhesive which permanently bonds the characters to the number plate is STRONGER than the adhesive which sticks the acrylic to the reflective, and can withstand a load greater than the mandatory rule for sticky pads which affix number plates to cars (90 degree peel adhesion must be greater than 30N/cm). As one of our members said, "The only way the characters will fall off is if the whole number plate itself falls off!"

# CONCLUSION: 4D NUMBER PLATES ARE ROAD LEGAL

At the time of writing, and with the resources available (referenced below), it is concluded that 4d number plates are legal and compliant with BS AU 145d and BS AU 145e (when all other BS AU 145d / BS AU 145e requirements are met, such as font, spacing, materials etc).

The BNRA have spoken to the DVLA, Trading Standards, Legal Professionals and the Police Force to help with the drafting of this document. If any authority can bring about facts which contradict this conclusion, please contact our compliance department at the following e-mail address:

[compliance@bnra.org.uk](mailto:compliance@bnra.org.uk)

## REFERENCES

\*Correct at time of print

- GOV.UK website
- (BSI) BS AU 145a, BS AU 145d & BS AU 145e
- The Road Vehicles (Display of Registration Marks) Regulations 2001
- VOSA MOT Special notice 3-2010, Section 6.3
- Statutory Instruments 2001, NO.561 Road Traffic the Road Services
- Display of Registration Marks for Motor Vehicles V796
- The Vehicle Excise & Registration Act 1994 Section 59(1)
- The Vehicle Excise & Registration Act 1994 Section 27 (Number Plates)
- INF 104 Vehicle Registration Numbers & Number Plates

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