

A-Frames – White Paper Summary on UK Market

16th March 2012

Prepared for the Rt. Hon. Nick Herbert MP, MP for Arundel & South Downs and Minister of State for Policing and Criminal Justice.

There are currently in excess of 7 main suppliers of A-Frame towing equipment for towing small cars behind Motorhomes in the UK. These fall into two distinct genre of A-Frame towing systems available in the UK Market:-

1. **Standard trailer over-run** hitch fixed to an a-frame with a Bowden cable that is drilled through the engine firewall that pulls on the brake pedal when the hitch pushes up on the towing vehicle under deceleration.



Advantages

- Cheap & Easy to install. Typically less than £1,000.00

Disadvantages

- Low braking efficiency – does not energise the power brakes, operates on a dead pedal.
- Applies the brakes when reversing – tends not to comply with C&U Regs 1986.
- Affected by UNECE Regulation 13 (2014)
- Bowden cable tends to become clogged with grit, salt and road grime leading to sticking or ineffectual brakes.
- Very Heavy (Circa 40kg) – difficult to man handle and store.
- Tends to use heavy engineering as mounting plates that can leave pedestrian unfriendly modification to the towed vehicle.



2. Recent innovation has seen the introduction of more modern **SensorActivated** braked product where the heavy braking components are permanently installed into the towed vehicle and not mounted onto the a-frame itself. Some of these systems use vacuum applied braking to provide 100% braking efficiency as mentioned by the Department for Transport in their Note .



Advantages

- Dual sensing systems sense when rig is reversing and does not apply the brakes.
- Complies with C&U 1986 and not affected by UNECE Regulation 13-5.2.2.2
- Does not apply the brakes under engine braking, such as down a long mountain pass – brakes therefore DO NOT overheat.
- 100% braking efficiency where a vacuum pump is used to energise the power brakes.
- Very light weight, easily stores in the boot of the towed vehicle.
- Tends to attach to the manufacturers towing points leaving the NCAP crash integrity as homologated by the manufacturer – pedestrian friendly.



Disadvantages

- Cost. Typically £1,500.00 to £1,900.00 depending on braking efficiency.

Note:

Products such as Brake Buddy still push on a **dead pedal**, need mounting/dismounting at every use and obstruct the driver from accessing the vehicle quickly in an emergency.



In the UK a towing dolly can only be used to recover a broken down vehicle to a place of safety. Transporting a car from A to B is, therefore, illegal.



Conclusion

Our best understanding of the current situation regarding visiting other EU States is that a UK registered combination of Motorhome and A-Framed trailer* may be temporarily imported into other EU Member States by a UK resident as Vehicles in International Traffic within the meaning of the Vienna Convention.

Contracting Parties shall be bound to admit to their territories in international traffic motor vehicles and trailers which fulfil the conditions laid down.

Further information

If you require any further information regarding the content of this information sheet, please contact HMB Leisure Ltd at the address below:

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* When an "A" frame is attached to a vehicle (e.g. a motor car) and towed by a motor vehicle (e.g. motorhome) the Department for Transport believe the "A" frame and car become a single unit and as such are classified in legislation as a **trailer**. The Department for Transport, VCA & VOSA are the registering authorities for vehicle classification in the UK,

NOTE: The information in this document is a summary of HMB Leisure Ltd understanding of what the law requires. However, ultimately the interpretation of the law is a matter for the courts based on individual facts of any particular case. You are therefore advised to consult the relevant legislation and, if necessary, seek independent advice.