

Proposal for Supplement 6 to the 01 series of amendments to Regulation No. 55 (Mechanical couplings)

(Based on GRRF-80-29)

I. Proposal

Annex 2, add point 23. to read:

“23. Remarks:

Annex 7, paragraph 1.1.4., amend to read:

“1.1.4. When the trailer is not coupled to the towing vehicle, the mounted towing bracket and coupling ball shall not ~~obscure the mounting space provided for the rear registration plate or affect the visibility of the rear registration/licence plate of the towing vehicle. If the coupling ball or other items do obscure the rear registration plate they shall be removable or repositionable without the use of tools except, for example, an easily operated (i.e. an effort not exceeding 20 Nm) release key which is carried in the vehicle (partly) obscure,~~ **within the planes of geometrical visibility, any lighting component (e.g. rear fog lamp) or the space for mounting and the fixing of the rear registration plate of the towing vehicle, unless the installed mechanical coupling device can be removed or repositioned without the use of any tools** ~~or~~ **except,** ~~for example,~~ an easily operated (i.e. an effort not exceeding 20 Nm) release key which is carried in the vehicle.

If the installed mechanical coupling device is capable of (partly) obscuring any lighting component and/or space for mounting and the fixing of the rear registration plate of the towing vehicle, this shall be duly noted in the test report and clearly stated under ‘Remarks’ on the vehicle type approval communication form.

If an alternative location for the space for mounting and the fixing of the rear registration plate of the towing vehicle and/or any lighting device is specified by the vehicle manufacturer in the context of a mechanical coupling device (partly) obscuring either one or both, this shall be duly noted in the test report and clearly stated under ‘Remarks’ on the vehicle type approval communication form.”

II. Justification

1. Due to a mismatch between pertinent legislation existing for rear registration plate mounting space, the installation of lighting devices and the installation of mechanical coupling devices, in practise it is often visible that coupling balls are installed right in front of registration plates and even rear fog lamps. This is due to the fact that the R55 approval is 'optional' and any installation of lighting approval or rear registration plate space did not used to be conditional on R55 compliance.
2. Since the introduction of a footnote in item Regulation Number 55 of Annex IV in General Safety Regulation (EC) No 661/2009, vehicle approvals are not in compliance with the General Safety Regulation if non-removable or -repositionable are installed when (partly) obscuring lighting components or the rear registration plate space (reference: Commission Regulation (EU) No 523/2012 of 20 June 2012).
3. Removable coupling balls should indeed only be permitted if they cannot be locked with a key, otherwise the end-user would not be motivated to remove the obstacle as soon as the mechanical coupling device is not in use.
4. Manufacturers are still free to provide the common type of coupling balls equipped with a lock, but in that case it shall never (partly) obstruct a lighting device or rear registration plate and manufacturers are thus encouraged to ensure this by design.


