Fleetmaxx Solutions

Overloading a van: What could it cost?

Check the weight limit, understand the penalty bands and know what must happen before the journey continues.

1. Check gross and axle weight limits

Compare the measured weight with the relevant permitted limit. Check the vehicle plate and manufacturer information. The gross limit covers the complete loaded vehicle, including fuel, driver, passengers, tools, equipment and goods. Each axle also has its own limit: a van can be within its gross limit and still have an overloaded axle.

2. Calculate the percentage overload

Overload percentage = ((measured weight - permitted weight) / permitted weight) x 100.
Example: a van with a 3,500 kg gross limit weighs 3,920 kg. The 420 kg excess is a 12% gross overload. Calculate axle overloads against the relevant axle limit.

3. Understand the fixed-penalty bands

Excess over the relevant limit	Fixed penalty
Less than 10%	£100
10% to below 15%	£200
15% and above	£300

These amounts apply where a fixed penalty is appropriate. They are not maximum court fines. Enforcement tolerance, prosecution policy and road safety risks affect the response.

The 5% tolerance is not extra capacity

DVSA guidance normally allows a 5% leeway before issuing an excess-weight fixed penalty or prohibition, unless the relevant limit has been exceeded by 1 tonne or more. This is enforcement tolerance, not permission to overload.

4. Serious cases may go to court

DVSA guidance normally treats an overload of 30% or more, or an excess of 5 tonnes or more, as too serious for a fixed penalty. These thresholds do not guarantee a fixed penalty below them. Serious instability, loss of control or other safety concerns can lead to prosecution for additional offences.

In England and Wales, the relevant overloading offence carries an unlimited maximum court fine. The actual sentence depends on the circumstances and the offender's financial means. Court procedures and penalties differ elsewhere in the UK.

5. Deal with the load before continuing

DVSA can prohibit the vehicle from continuing. Paying a penalty does not give permission to drive on while overloaded or in breach of a prohibition.

Gross overload

Remove enough weight to bring the vehicle within its gross limit. Moving goods around inside the van does not reduce its total weight.

Axle overload

Redistribution or removal may resolve the excess. Check every applicable limit after changing the load. Follow the examiner's instructions, retain weighing records and notices, and continue only when the vehicle complies and any prohibition permits it.

Before the next journey

• Check the plated gross and individual axle limits.

• Allow for people, fuel, tools, fitted equipment and goods.

• Check what the quoted kerb weight or mass in running order already includes, so fuel or a driver allowance is not counted twice.

• Distribute and secure the load appropriately.

• Use suitable weighing facilities when necessary to confirm gross and axle weights.

Official guidance

DVSA roadside checks: Fines and financial deposits

DVSA enforcement information applies to England, Scotland and Wales. General information; follow the instructions on any official notice.

Contact Fleetmaxx Solutions to discuss fleet compliance support.