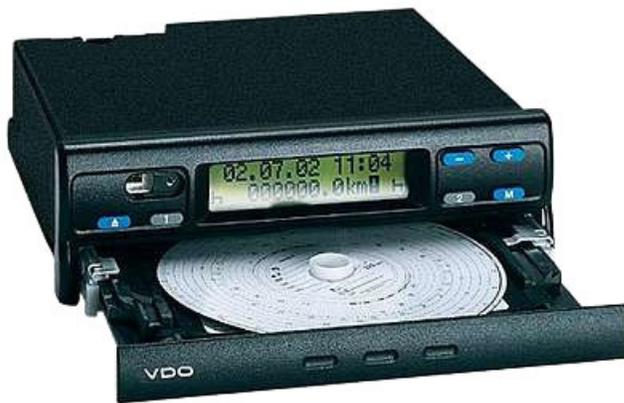


# Tachograph

A **tachograph** is a device that combines the functions of a clock and a speedometer. Fitted to a motor vehicle, a tachograph records the vehicle's speed and the length of time that it is moving or stationary. The mechanical tachograph writes on a round piece of paper which constantly turns throughout the work day. The marker moves nearer to or further from the center according to the driving speed. An entire rotation encompasses 24 hours.

Analogue tachographs record the driver's periods of duty on a waxed paper disc. However, these are vulnerable to tampering, and so are being replaced by digital tachographs which record data on smart cards.

Tachographs are also used to improve road safety and ensure fair competition. They are also used in the maritime world. Rules for this are made by the Central Commission for Navigation on the Rhine.



## Regulations

For reasons of public safety, many jurisdictions have limits on the working hours of drivers of certain vehicles, such as buses and trucks. A tachograph can be used to monitor this and ensure that appropriate breaks are taken.

## In South Africa

Tachographs are mandatory for vehicles allowed to carry a total weight of over 3.5 tons and vehicles built to carry at least 9 passengers, if the vehicle is used for commercial purposes. They are used to review the driving and rest time of drivers during reviews by traffic standards organizations or accident investigation. A driver must carry the

tachograph records with him for all days of the current week and the last day of the previous week that he drove. Companies must keep the records for 1 year. In Germany, § 16 of the work time regulations lengthens this time to 2 years if the records will be used as proof of work time.

### **Accident investigation**

Apart from enforcing regulations, tachographs are often used to investigate and punish speeding. This practice was approved by the German high regional court in the 1990s. Also, after an accident, the discs are often examined with a microscope to discover the events that took place at a collision site.

### **The case for tachographs**

Today operators see tachographs as levellers -- devices which prevent unfair competition from companies who force their drivers to work excessive hours. Trade unions and drivers also now favour tachographs for this reason and records are often used in tribunals as proof when claiming for unpaid work.

Tachographs are also useful after an accident to help establish the cause and corroborate eye witness accounts. Trade unions take a dim view of anyone who exceeds speed limits or permitted hours.

Fears that it is easy to falsify readings by tampering with tachographs have been allayed, since it is relatively easy to spot such attempts.