

SAFETY CODE FOR TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE DRIVERS

It is extremely important that all taxi drivers, especially those who are new to the business, understand the dangers involved and learn how not to become a victim of crime. There are many reasons why you are at a greater risk of assault or robbery whilst at work. These reasons are:

- You work alone.
- You work all types of shifts including nights.
- You work in isolated places.
- You always have ready cash.
- You are always dealing with strangers.
- The very nature of your business/service, requires you to deal with everyone.

Basic Safety Rules

Radio and the controller

- The most important piece of equipment in your vehicle is your radio because it links you with your dispatcher. The controller is your 'lifeline'
- They are the ones who will get you help if you are in trouble.
- They are the ones who will give you accurate information if you need it.
- They are the ones who will 'sense' when you are in trouble and assist you.
- They are the ones who will keep you informed about what is happening.
- Have a prearranged code word in place which could be given over the radio to warn the controller of a potential problem, without raising the suspicions of the passenger.

Be alert and aware

- You must keep yourself aware of what is going on around you at all times, whether you are parked or driving.
- Be aware of who is around you when parked in the street. If you don't you may be giving someone the chance to sneak up on you and catch you by surprise.
- It is essential that you make eye contact with each and everyone of your passengers as they are entering the vehicle. This sends a subtle message to them - "I see you. You see me. I can identify you if I need to".

- All passengers potentially pose some level of risk to you. Read them, assess them, then act accordingly. You must remember this point: never underestimate anybody!

Do not display money

- Do not wear any type of expensive watch, neck chains or bracelets. If you do, you may be providing the motivation for a person to rob you. If you wear a neck chain, make sure that it is very thin so that it will break before it harms you.
- Ensure that you keep a minimum amount of money on you.
- If your passenger offers you a large denomination bill, advise him you will take him to get it changed at a nearby garage. DO NOT show him that you have money to change it.

Always keep your windows up and doors locked

- Windows should only be open enough to speak to people without them being able to reach through and cause injury or take property such as the ignition key.
- This is extremely important if you are sitting at a rank or in the street. This also gives you the opportunity to take control so that the customer sits in the rear if you wish. The idea is not to be taken by surprise.

Working at night

- The most dangerous times for you to operate are during the evenings and at night. At this time there are few people around as witnesses and many people will have been drinking alcohol.
- Even though these can be the most tiring hours you cannot afford to be careless and unaware. You must maintain a high state of alertness during these times.

Be aware of 'vague' instructions

- It is important that the customer gives you a fixed destination that they are going to before you drive away.
- If they are unsure and hesitate, read this as a sign that you should be alert to what they are up to. If they say "just start driving, we will tell you the way, this is a classic danger signal to you. Do not move, just politely advise them that the company policy requires you to get an exact address.
- When they do give you an address, use your radio and advise the controller of the destination address. This will serve three purposes, firstly, it will warn the controller you may have a problem, secondly, it will appear that you are telling the truth about your company policy and, thirdly, it will give the passenger the understanding that the controller and others know where you are going. By doing this, you assume control of the passenger and the situation.
- Should the customer suddenly redirect you on route you should immediately alert your controller to the new address.

Be careful of passengers seated behind you

- Never let passengers sit directly behind you, if at all possible. Ask the person to move over to the left side of the seat, use any excuse e.g., to balance the car, company policy, or whatever you need to politely get them to move. Fit a convex rear view mirror that replaces or fits over the existing one. This will allow you 100% back seat visibility. It also sends a message to the customer that you can see them.

Never tell customers that you had a good shift

- Never tell an enquiring customer that you have had a good day and made lots of trips and money. Most people just want to make conversation but on the other hand may be feeling you out to see if you are worth robbing. Gently try to change the subject.

Carry a spare key

- It is a good idea to have a spare key to the vehicle in your pocket. Any offender may throw your keys away before making off, thinking they are depriving you of mobility. This way, should they leave the vehicle or dump it a short distance away, you can get it going after they have left and get assistance.

Do not resist

- Offer no resistance - if you do, the situation may escalate drastically. Remember - the offender wants your money, maybe the car. Give it to him, do not resist.

Memorise the suspects' description

- When any offence is finished, immediately write down everything you can remember about the suspect so you can provide a good statement to the police. Try to remember these details: sex, race, age, height, weight, hair colour/style, eye colour, scars/tattoos, facial hair, voice. The clothing worn, any weapon used and exactly what the offender said.

Using the right vehicle

- Where possible consideration should be given to using a vehicle built for the purpose. These will have safety features such as dividing partition screens between driver and passengers.
- Consideration should be given to the fitting of other safety devices such as in-car CCTV systems or panic alarms.