Taxi Driver and Chauffeur Safety Meeting Kit

WHAT'S AT STAKE

As a taxi driver or chauffeur, you face driving and personal safety hazards while you perform your job from a mobile workplace. Because you work mostly alone, interface with the public, handle money, and work at all hours, you are at an increased risk for assault and homicide. Your vehicle is a mobile workplace, and your worksites (freeways, highways, and surface streets) are among the most dangerous. Prepare for these hazards and use safe work methods to ensure your safety.

WHAT'S THE DANGER

DANGEROUS TAXI DRIVER WORK ENVIRONMENT

Taxi drivers are in the unique situation of dealing with the general public in a setting that is not public. Within the confines of a taxi cab, there are generally no potential witnesses to a crime. A would-be thief would be likely to find a taxi driver to be a more appealing victim for a robbery than a person operating a store where there could be many potential witnesses.

Theft and assault are always a looming threat to taxi drivers.

COMMON RISKS TAXI DRIVERS ENCOUNTER

Accidents: Even if you are an extremely safe driver, you can't control how others behave on the road. If you work at night, this can increase your risk of getting into an accident as impaired drivers are more common.

Dangerous passengers: As a taxi driver, you're constantly picking up strangers. You may fall victim to a carjacking or have someone refuse to pay their fare.

Health: The amount of time spent driving can impact your physical health. If you are driving for a significant amount of time every day, you can’t move around. This can impact your legs, back, and general health. Your eyesight may also suffer due to eye strain and constant focus on the road.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

BEST SAFETY TAXI DRIVER PROTOCOL

Safe Driving Techniques

When you get into your vehicle, buckle your seatbelt, it is your most important safety device. Practice safe driving techniques by maintaining a safe speed for the roadway and the conditions at the time. Allow a safe following distance so you have enough room to brake or perform emergency maneuvers. Allow a three-second cushion between you and the car in front of you. Add one additional second for each weather condition and hazard on the road.

Security Measures

Take security measures with your vehicle when you are on the job. Keep your doors locked and your windows up when parked or on the roadway. Stay aware of your surroundings and keep track of your location. Use maps or satellite devices to pinpoint addresses. Stay in street and parking areas that have adequate lighting. If you are unfamiliar with the surroundings or the clients, keep your vehicle running during a pickup. When possible, stay in the vehicle and use the remote trunk release to give them access for luggage and materials. Don’t enter dead end streets that make it difficult to maneuver; back your vehicle in to maintain your state of readiness.

Passenger Interaction

When you are greeting a passenger, be confident and make eye contact. Read the signals that the customer gives you and trust your instincts. Beware if the passenger gives you vague directions or refuses to give you a destination. You have the right to refuse

passage to anyone who does not give you proper directions or an address, exhibits dangerous behavior, or directs you to an area that is too dark or dangerous.

Cash Control

Control your cash when you are on the road. Make it a policy to limit the amount of money that you carry. Make frequent drops, deposits, or limit your cash transactions by using cashless fare systems. Cover your trip log and do not flash your fare or tip money. Consider advertising that you do not carry money.

Safety Devices

Use safety devices for your vehicle such as partitions or shields that separate the driver's area from the passenger area. Security cameras, emergency signs, and panic buttons are also useful technology that can keep you safe. Make sure that you have a communication device such as a radio or cell phone available in the vehicle.

HOW TO PREVENT/REDUCE THE RISK OF VIOLENCE

Visibility. Greater visibility into your taxi can help reduce risk of violence. Keep the taxi in well-lit, highly visible areas when not movie. Do not tint windows enough so people cannot see it. Keep windows clean and free from unneeded signs or postings.

Dealing with Cash. The less cash you have in your taxi, the less likely you are to be robbed. Minimize cash on hand by making deposits as often as possible. Where feasible, use cashless systems to limit the amount of cash on hand. Post decals stating drivers have limited cash on hand on the passenger doors or windows.

Operating the Taxi. Install and maintain security cameras and post decals showing the taxi has cameras on the passenger windows or doors. Install and use a silent alarm or bullet-resistant barriers. Use personal and vehicle tracking devices, such as global positioning systems (GPS), so you can be located if you need help. Check in regularly with a dispatcher or another driver,

and practice emergency communication systems with dispatchers or other drivers.

Dealing with Customers. Some customers might be aggressive or use provocative language, it’s best to not engage if possible**. Simple tips to follow:**

- Do not chase after fare evaders.
- Do not resist a robbery. Let robbers take your money.
- Do not accept passengers who cannot provide a destination.

Notify a dispatcher or another driver immediately 1) when picking up a passenger; 2) if passengers change destinations once they’re in the taxi; or 3) if driving to certain areas feels potentially unsafe.

FINAL WORD

Working as a taxi driver carries some considerable measure of risk. Drivers work in an enclosed space, yet their working environment is constantly changing with every mile and every turn. Also, drivers work in extremely close proximity to the general public. Ultimately, being a taxi driver has unique on-the-job advantages and vulnerabilities.