

Personal Safety advice for Taxi and Private Hire Drivers

We are very fortunate in the Tendring District area that crime, particularly violent crime against a person is low and fortunately instances of crime and violence against our taxi and private hire drivers is also uncommon, but of course as a taxi and private hire driver your work may well take you out of the District into other areas.

It's important that everyone keeps safe and to try and help you do so, the information shown below which is also available on the Workplace Safety Advice web site is included as a reminder for everyone to look after themselves. Particularly when working late at night.

Clink on the following link shown below for full access to the Workplace Safety Advice web site:

<http://www.workplacesafetyadvice.co.uk/search.html>

What Are the Predominant Risks for a Taxi Driver?

Working late at night and into the early hours of the morning, especially at weekends, is obviously going to present taxi drivers with far more instances of encountering drunk, aggressive and abusive passengers or criminals who might have their eye on robbing a taxi driver of his takings or committing some other act of violence or crime. Most taxi drivers will also be aware of the notorious trouble spots and geographical areas on their patch which often present more problems than others.

Another risk is in leaving the cab. For example, a passenger may get out of the cab without paying and it would seem quite natural for the driver to follow them out of the cab to try to obtain the payment which is rightfully theirs. However, this action can be fraught with danger as it can be part of an elaborate set up so that when the taxi driver leaves the cab, an 'accomplice' of the passenger is lying in wait to simply get in the cab and drive off.

Measures to Safeguard You as a Taxi Driver

There are many useful things you can do to stay safe if you're working as a taxi driver. Firstly, the way you conduct yourself with passengers is crucial. You should always be polite. Good customer service is essential. It's also important not to be too judgemental. As a taxi driver, it's inevitable that you're going to encounter passengers from time to time who have had a bit too much to drink.

The fact of the matter is as the driver, you retain the control. Therefore, as you're pulling up to pick up a fare, you are entitled to refuse to pick up any passenger if you feel their behaviour or demeanour is likely to cause you problems. Of course, you'll not always be able to tell that in advance so it is very much a judgement call on a taxi driver's behalf.

Do Not Fight Back if Threatened

A taxicab may well represent your livelihood but you should not put yourself in any risk if you are threatened with violence. Criminals have been known to use knives, CS spray, syringes and even guns when carrying out armed robberies of taxi drivers so it's not worth the risk to fight back. Simply hand over any takings and leave it to the police to do the detective work.

Always Stay With the Taxi

Even if a passenger runs off without paying, you should always stay with your taxi. Leaving the taxi puts both you and the taxi in a more vulnerable position and by staying with the cab; you can at least call for assistance should an incident occur as well as it offering you a place of safety away from potential violence.

Other Useful Tips and Equipment

There are many other things you can do as a taxi driver to ensure your personal safety and prevent abuse. Door handles can be modified so that they can only be opened from the inside and deadlocks can be fitted which can be activated in areas known for violence.

You can have CCTV fitted in your cab and use plastic partitioned glass to separate you from the passenger area with lockable sliding screens through which fares and change can be exchanged although if you adopt this practice, make sure the screen is not directly located behind the driver's head.

There are also all kinds of sophisticated radio and communications devices which can alert those at base of any problems you're experiencing as well as base being able to keep you informed about potential trouble in a particular area, for example.

Ultimately, it will be for you as a taxi driver to decide what times of the day or night you wish to work and what geographical locations you're prepared to work in.

Further good advice on not just safety, but also about medical health problems encountered by taxi and private hire drivers can be found on the internet and in particular the following website which is the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work and can be viewed using the following link shown below:

<https://osha.europa.eu/en/about/Road-transport/taxidriverson-safety-and-health.pdf>

Licensing Team

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