



Workplace Health and Safety Queensland

Work health and safety for taxi drivers and operators

Translation and interpretation

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Introduction

Taxis play a vital role in Queensland's public transport system and carry millions of passengers each year.

This brochure details the work health and safety duties and responsibilities of taxi drivers and operators. It also identifies the most common risks and injuries that occur in the taxi industry and how to reduce or eliminate these risks to ensure you are safe at work.

What the law says

The work health and safety law aims to ensure the health and safety of workers and others where work is carried out at a workplace. A workplace is anywhere work is done, including in or about a taxi.

Health and safety duties

Taxi operators, owners, booking companies and bailee drivers¹ are all persons conducting a business or undertaking (PCBUs) under the Queensland *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (the Act).

PCBUs have a duty of care to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of workers at work in the business or undertaking. The PCBU must also ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the health and safety of other people is not put at risk from work carried out as part of the business or undertaking.

1 Taxi drivers who bail/lease a taxi from the operator to conduct business operations

All PCBUs involved in the operation of a taxi must consult, cooperate and coordinate activities with each other to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the operation of the taxi is carried out without risk to health and safety.

Taxi operators and owners

Taxi operators and owners must:

- ensure taxis are in roadworthy condition and are well maintained
- ensure safety equipment (including security cameras) is fitted and maintained
- ensure drivers understand how to operate the vehicle and its fittings
- ensure drivers are aware of safety equipment including security devices, cameras and distress buttons, and are trained in operating the equipment
- communicate and ensure safe operational procedures are understood by drivers, including procedures in case of an incident.

Additionally, taxi operators should provide, or make available to drivers at cost, personal accident insurance to cover loss of earnings due to work related injury or illness.

A taxi owner is a PCBU that supplies plant (i.e. a taxi) and must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the taxi is without risks to the health and safety of other people.



Taxi drivers

Taxi drivers who are operators, owners or bailee drivers are all persons conducting a business or undertaking (PCBUs). All other taxi drivers are workers (i.e. employees, contractors and subcontractors).

Taxi drivers who are PCBUs must:

- comply with work health and safety systems agreed with the taxi operator, owner or taxi booking company
- ensure the health and safety of themselves, passengers, and any other person who may be affected by their driving activities
- ensure the taxi is safe to drive before commencing shifts by completing a check of the vehicle and contacting the operator or owner if a fault is found which needs repair, before driving the vehicle
- check to ensure all safety equipment (e.g. cameras, alarms and radios) is working correctly.

Taxi drivers who are workers must:

- take reasonable care for their own health and safety
- take reasonable care that their acts or omissions do not adversely affect the health and safety of others
- comply with any reasonable instruction given by the PCBU in order to comply with the Act
- cooperate with any reasonable policy or procedure relating to health or safety at the workplace.

For further information on work health and safety duties visit the Workplace Health and Safety Queensland website - www.worksafe.qld.gov.au.

Minimising violence and aggression

Taxi drivers may be at risk from passenger violence and aggression particularly because:

- drivers work alone
- drivers work shifts in busy nightlife areas
- drivers work in high demand periods (e.g. sporting events and holiday periods)
- passengers may be under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs
- no-one is readily available to provide assistance
- visibility can be poor or lighting inadequate, providing cover for potential assailants
- there may be communication barriers.

What can be done?

There are a number of ways taxi drivers and operators can improve driver safety and security including:

- developing procedures for working alone or in poorly lit or serviced areas such as keeping doors locked when alone in the vehicle and avoiding picking up hailing passengers in known high risk areas
- installing surveillance and security equipment in taxis such as alarms or emergency communication systems and checking their operation at the beginning of each shift
- developing and training drivers on emergency plans which detail how to respond to criminal activity
- avoiding isolated areas during driver changeover
- discouraging solo passengers from sitting directly behind you.



Dealing with difficult or aggressive passengers

Passengers may become aggressive or violent, particularly when under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Spotting the warning signs and acting on them can help avoid an assault.

What can be done?

Drivers can minimise the risks by:

- when hailed, stopping the taxi a short distance from potential passengers to assess the situation. If the person/s are behaving erratically, or you feel unsafe, choose not to provide a service
- keeping all doors and windows locked until you want to let passengers into your taxi
- being alert and aware of your surroundings
- interacting with passengers and discreetly monitoring their behaviour through the rear view mirror
- remaining calm, speaking clearly in short sentences and not threatening aggressive passengers
- pointing out security cameras to difficult or misbehaving passengers, and informing them that they are being recorded.

Avoiding robbery

Taxi drivers may have large amounts of cash in their vehicle, particularly towards the end of a shift, making them a target for robbery. If threatened, remain calm and cooperate with the assailant's demands. No amount of money or property is worth risking your life.

What can be done?

Drivers can help avoid robbery by:

- always locking the taxi when alone in the vehicle or away from the taxi
- minimising the amount of cash held in the taxi – leave it at home, or during breaks deposit it at a bank or well-lit automatic teller machine
- never displaying money to passengers (when passengers are paying the fare only expose the float, keep the rest of the takings out of sight)
- never telling passengers they have had ‘a good night’ in relation to fares or takings
- promoting non-cash payments (credit cards or taxi vouchers)
- not wearing expensive looking jewellery
- not displaying expensive electronic items such as smart phones and electronic tablets
- using distress alarms or other designated emergency communication devices if threatened.

Avoiding sprain and strain injuries

Taxi drivers are at risk of suffering sprain and strain injuries, particularly as they remain in the same position for long hours, load and unload luggage and may need to assist people who have disabilities or mobility issues.

What can operators do?

Taxi operators should develop and train drivers on safe work procedures including:

- obtaining information about customer requirements for assistance at the time of booking
- following a process if difficulties are encountered (e.g. if a vehicle is not suitable for the passenger, contact the taxi booking company to arrange another vehicle)
- using safe work practices relating to their role (e.g. loading and unloading the vehicle, adjusting the seat/controls and transporting people with disabilities or mobility issues).

What can drivers do?

Driving

- Adjust your seat (including the height and back rest) so you are in a comfortable position and can easily reach vehicle controls.
- Adjust mirrors to eliminate body twisting.
- Use breaks to get out of the taxi and walk around to stretch your muscles.

Handling luggage

- Keep the luggage as close to your body as possible when handling it.
- Avoid lifting luggage with your back fully bent or twisted.
- If required, get assistance for heavy or awkward loads from the passenger.
- Always test the weight of the load before lifting—sometimes luggage may be very heavy and you cannot tell just by looking at it. Do not lift the luggage if you believe it is too heavy or awkward.
- Seek health advice from qualified professionals if you experience sprain or strain injuries.

Assisting people with disabilities or mobility issues

- Discuss and clarify your passengers' requirements.
- Do not attempt to physically lift passengers into a vehicle.



Managing fatigue - shift work

Fatigue is the increasing difficulty a person experiences in performing mental and physical activities when they are in need of decent sleep.

The risk of illness and injury is increased when people work more than 60 hours per week, or 12 hours per day. Taxi drivers are likely to be at risk of fatigue due to:

- shift work (working outside of Monday to Friday 6 am - 6 pm)
- extended work hours (working more than eight hours per day or six days per week)
- long periods awake
- inadequate amount of sleep (less than seven hours per day) or poor quality sleep
- irregular working hours.



Driving while tired is a contributing factor to the number of deaths and injuries on Queensland's roads. The effects of fatigue include:

- slowed reaction time
- decreased alertness
- poor hand-eye coordination
- poor communication
- reduced decision-making ability
- difficulty responding to emergencies
- loss of awareness in critical situations.

Self-assessment of fatigue is unreliable, as the more fatigued a person is, the less likely they are to assess fatigue levels accurately. Driving between the hours of 6 pm - 6 am is especially dangerous, and night shift drivers should take action to manage the increased risk of illness and injury related to working during these times.

What can operators do?

Taxi operators should develop safe work procedures for their drivers such as:

- realistic driver rosters including adequate rest breaks
- not rostering drivers for more than 12 hours per shift
- not rostering drivers more than six days per week
- not rostering drivers for more than three 12 hour shifts in a row
- having policies for drivers to report other demands on their time (e.g. other jobs, study, family responsibilities or the use of medication) which may affect fatigue levels.

What can drivers do?

Drivers should be aware of the warning signs of fatigue including:

- blurred vision
- drowsy relaxed feeling
- poor concentration
- irritability
- difficulty keeping eyes open
- not feeling refreshed after sleep (waking tired)
- microsleeps (e.g. falling asleep for a few seconds).



The following precautions can help drivers manage fatigue:

- do not drive more than 12 hours in any 24 hour period
- have at least one full 24 hour period without driving every week
- take regular and adequate rest breaks
- limit total hours worked to 55 hours per week (excluding breaks)
- never drive when taking medication which can adversely affect your concentration and alertness levels
- inform the operator if you have other responsibilities and commitments so shifts can be appropriately rostered
- stop driving if you are tired and take a break (e.g. have a power nap for 10–45 minutes, chat to other drivers or get out of your cab and walk around)
- avoid using the heater as it can make you feel drowsy. In cool conditions direct warmth to your feet, and open the window a little to allow fresh air on your face.



Enjoying good health and wellbeing

Working long hours and shift work means that extra planning is required to ensure you eat well and get enough exercise to maintain your health and wellbeing.

Some tips to remember include:

Eat well

- Eat high fibre, slow release foods which give you energy and keep you feeling fuller for longer.
- Reduce your intake of fatty, salty and sugary foods.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Limit caffeine intake as caffeine will only keep you awake for short periods of time, but not if you are lacking sleep.



Get active

- Use your break or any spare moments to get out of the taxi, stretch and move around.
- On days off and between shifts exercise to keep yourself fit, as driving a taxi can be relatively inactive work.

Sun safety

Getting in and out of your vehicle during the day and UV radiation from the sun that reaches you through the windscreen and windows of your vehicle can result in sunburn and skin damage. Protect your skin from the sun by:

- wearing protective clothing, particularly on your arms and your hands
- apply and reapply sunscreen during the day to the parts of your body exposed to the sun.

For more information about healthy eating and staying active visit the Queensland Health website - www.health.qld.gov.au or call 13 HEALTH, 24 hours a day, seven days a week if you have any health concerns.



More information

For more work health and safety information visit www.worksafe.qld.gov.au or call the Workplace Health and Safety Infoline on 1300 369 915.

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland acknowledges the Department of Transport and Main Roads for the use of taxi related images.



