

Safety First

Why should taxicab drivers focus on safety? It is a risky profession for various reasons. Taxicab drivers work alone and often work during late hours when crimes are more likely to happen. Drivers are sometimes dispatched to remote areas where there are no other people around. Because they work in a primarily cash-run business, they are more likely to have cash on hand, making them a target for would-be robbers. Drivers are also constantly picking up strangers, some of whom may have criminal intentions. The Miami-Dade Consumer Services Department cautions drivers to take the following steps to avoid problems.

Be cautious of customers who give you vague instructions. Tell your customers that it is company policy to obtain an exact address.

Stay alert and be informed. When arriving at a new location, look around and familiarize yourself with your surroundings. Try to spot any suspicious characters.

Stay in your car when picking up or discharging passengers. Never drive into back alleys or lanes. Tell your customer that it is company policy to arrange pick-ups and drop-offs in more public areas due to safety reasons.

Observe passengers using your rearview mirror. Take a mental picture of what they are wearing and what they look like so you can give a good description to police if that person tries to assault you.

Notify your dispatcher at the start of every trip. The most important piece of equipment in your cab is your radio. It connects you to your dispatcher who is your lifeline and can help get you out of trouble. Dispatchers are able to give you accurate information when you need it.

Maintain accurate trip sheets. Should you become the victim of a crime, trip sheets will help police investigate and find your assailant.

Limit the amount of money you carry and keep it concealed. Do not wear lots of jewelry. Do not display large amounts of money when giving change (as a rule, change less than \$30). If your passenger offers you a large denomination bill, advise the individual that you will take him/her to get it changed at a nearby store.

Do not resist a robbery. Comply with the assailant's demand. Stay calm. Do not try to intimidate the assailant.

Trust your instincts. If you feel uncomfortable in a situation, trust your instincts and try to get away as quickly and courteously as possible.

Have a plan of emergency. Every taxicab company has in place a set of emergency procedures for different circumstances. These rules vary from company to company, and you must make every effort to learn them. They are not there for the company but are for you and your personal safety.

Keep your windows rolled up and your doors locked. This makes it difficult for someone to try to attack you. You may lower your window just enough to communicate and still remain far from reach.

Doing business is important, but your safety comes first. If you have any questions about safety or other taxicab-related concerns, contact the Miami-Dade Consumer Services Department at (305) 375-3677.