

Safety Tips for the Taxi Cab Driver

Perhaps the one profession that puts an employee at a greater risk to his own safety than law enforcement is the taxi profession. Everyday in the news, there is a taxi driver who is beaten, robbed, or worse, murdered.

The motive for these crimes is always money. If you or someone you know drives a taxi for a living, the following rules of safety will help minimize your chances of becoming the next victim of a violent taxi crime.

Use your radio to call for help. Law enforcement officers know this too well. Your radio is your lifeline to your dispatcher. Use it to call for help if you are in trouble, to get accurate information, or to communicate bad weather conditions.

Be alert and aware. Be alert and aware of your surroundings at all times even when you are parked. Get adequate rest between shifts, and eat well.

Do not flash your money or display expensive jewelry. This is so obvious. If your passenger offers a large denomination bill, ask him to get change at a nearby store. Do NOT show him that you have the money to change it.

Size up your customer and assess risk. Many customers will pose a risk to your safety. Read his body language, assess them, then act appropriately. Never underestimate anybody.

Greet and maintain eye contact with the customer when you pick him up. By employing this technique, you tell the customer that you know what he looks like and acknowledge his presence. Psychologically, it makes it harder for him to bring harm to you. Your life may depend on it.

Know the city. Disputes and arguments can arise between you and your customer if you do not know your way around the city. He may think you are trying to "run him up" on the meter. Such disagreements can lead to physical assaults or worse. Study your map during your down time.

Trust your instincts. If you feel uneasy about picking up a customer, then there *is* something wrong. Request your dispatcher that you do NOT want to pick him up because of the area or because of him.

Know your emergency procedures. Every cab company has a written set of rules in the event of an emergency. Be sure you know what these rules are since they can vary from company to company.

Always keep your windows rolled up. Have the window open just wide enough to communicate with the customer. Do not open it all the way such that he can grab any part of you and pull you out of your car.

Keep your doors locked at all times. This is very important if you are sitting at a taxi stand or parked on the side of the street. If you are studying your map, you do not want to be taken by surprise if somebody walks up to your taxi and climbs in all of a sudden without getting a good look at him.

Take extra precautions at night. Between 6:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. are the most dangerous times for a taxi driver. Most assaults, robberies, and muggings occur around the hours of 12:00 a.m. and 4:00 a.m. There are few witnesses if a crime happens to you.

Beware of customers who give you "vague" instructions. Vague instructions just do not cut it. Ask that the customer give you a solid destination before you start driving or allow him to board your taxi.

Be careful of customers who sit behind you. Never allow a customer sit directly behind you. Eight percent of all assaults and murders occur when the culprit is sitting behind you. Ask him to sit at the outset of the cab to "balance the car." Say it is company policy.

Keep a watchful eye on suspicious customers. Remember that you have a stranger in your cab. Be alert to his speech and body language. These may raise red flags on your part.

Never tell customers when you started your shift or had a good shift. By doing so, you convey to the potential mugger that you are loaded with cash. If he asks you this, be tactful yet evasive. Say, "I just started my shift half an hour ago."

Carry a spare key. This is a very good idea. In case a robber rips out your microphone and throws away your key so that you can not drive away to call for help, at least you have a spare key to start your cab. If they DO carjack your cab and dump the cab at a remote location, you can still retrieve it after they leave in order to get assistance.

Do not drive into dark alleys or back lanes. Tell your customer that it is company policy that you can not drive into alleys or back lanes. Driving a customer into a dark alley only invites him to rob you when nobody is looking.

Always know your location. Know where you are in case you find trouble.

Check all emergency equipment before you begin your shift. If you rent your cab, do a walk-around to view any damages. Check for proper tire pressure. Check the inside for cleanliness. Check for any weapons that may have been dumped there.

Never carry more than four passengers. This tip is more of a road safety tip. In general, you should not carry more passengers than the number of available seat belts. If you do so, you could risk getting pulled over and receiving a ticket.

Do not be argumentative. Being a hothead only asks for more trouble. Keep a cool head at all times. If you lose your composure, your judgment is affected greatly.

Do not offer resistance to a robbery. If you are being robbed, give the robber what he wants, usually your money and/or taxi. Your life is not worth it. You may feel violated, but at least you are alive to work another day.

Tell your dispatcher. After the robbery, call your dispatcher right away and give him your location so that he can call police.

Do not threaten the customers. Always keep a cool head if they refuse to pay, can not pay, or are being disruptive. By threatening them, you might

escalate the situation to a physical assault. You get into big trouble, if you lose your composure.

Look for an opportunity for escape. If you have your seat belt on and he does not, look for a parked car or telephone pole to ram. Do this in a well-lit area with lots of witnesses.

Get a good description of the perpetrator. After the assault or robbery, write down everything you know about the suspect. Get his height, weight, sex, race, color clothing, pickup point, drop off point, etc. so that you can report it to local authorities. If you get a good enough description, you will aid police in apprehending the suspect.

By incorporating these safety tips on your shift every day, you can help put a stop to potential crime and minimize becoming a victim to an assault, robbery, or mugging. Most veteran cab drivers have already developed a "sixth sense" in the taxi business. It would be to your best interest to do the same if you are a rookie.

About the Author

Fabiola Castillo is an online marketer for the website NinjaCOPS.com. This virtual store specializes in personal defense products where you can [buy pepper spray](#), kubaton keychains, [wireless hidden cameras](#), cheap stun guns, nunchaku technique videos, expandable steel batons, and many other home security products.

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