

MONTEREY COUNTY REGIONAL TAXI AUTHORITY (RTA)

**EQUIPMENT, SAFETY, SECURITY AND OPERATIONAL POLICY**

1. **Purpose.** The EQUIPMENT, SAFETY, SECURITY AND OPERATIONAL POLICY addresses many aspects of taxicab operations. The Policy gives the RTA the authority to ensure that taxicabs, taxicab owners, and taxicab operators provide safe, clean, and reliable transportation to the community. Violations of the policy may result in the suspension or termination of a vehicle, or driver permit to operate taxi cab service in within the jurisdictions of the RTA.

2. **Safety Requirements.** Any Vehicle which fails to meet the requirements of the California Vehicle Code or this policy after inspections shall be immediately ordered out-of-service by an RTA inspector or Peace Officer if it is unsafe for service. Ordering a vehicle out-of-service does not constitute a suspension or revocation of the permit. A vehicle is deemed unsafe for service when any of the following conditions exists, including but not limited to:

- a. Tires fail to meet the requirements of the California Vehicle Code;
- b. Headlights, taillights or signal lights are inoperable during hours of darkness, or when otherwise required to operate by the California Vehicle Code;
- c. Windshield wipers are inoperable;
- d. Meter is not working or the seal is broken;
- e. Brakes, brake lights or brake systems are inoperable or otherwise fail to meet the requirements of the California Vehicle Code;
- f. Excessive play in steering wheel exceeding three (3) inches;
- g. Windshield glass contains cracks or chips that interfere with driver's vision;
- h. Any door latch is inoperable from either the interior or exterior of the vehicle;
- i. Any seat is not securely fastened to the floor;
- j. Seatbelts, fail to meet requirements of the California Vehicle Code;
- k. Vehicle does not have either operable left side and rear view mirrors or both left and right side mirrors.
- l. Any other condition which reasonably and rationally pertains to the operating safety of the vehicle or passenger or pedestrian safety.

3. **Maintenance Standards.** The interior and exterior of the for-hire vehicles shall be maintained in a safe and efficient operating condition, and meet California Vehicle Code requirements. The following minimum standards must be maintained:

- a. Body Condition. There shall be no tears or rust holes in the vehicle body and no loose pieces hanging from the vehicle body. Fenders, bumpers, and light trim shall be securely fixed to the vehicle. No extensive unrepaired body damage shall be allowed. The vehicle shall be equipped with front and rear bumpers. The exterior of the

- vehicle shall be maintained in a reasonably clean condition so as not to obscure the vehicle markings.
- b. Color Scheme. The color scheme of for-hire vehicles for new taxicab companies permitted by the RTA is subject to the approval of the RTA and companies must use a color scheme for their taxi livery that is not already in use by an existing RTA permitted taxicab company.
  - c. The name of new taxicab companies and 'Doing Business As' names must be sufficiently distinctive from existing RTA permitted taxicab companies.
  - d. Paint. Paint and markings may not be faded or deteriorated in such a manner as to preclude immediate recognition of the vehicle.
  - e. Lights. Headlights shall be operable on both high and low beam. Taillights, flashing hazard lights, parking lights, signal lights, and interior lights shall all be operable.
  - f. Wipers. Each vehicle shall be equipped with adequate windshield wipers maintained in good operating condition.
  - g. Brakes. Both the parking and hydraulic or other brake systems must be operable.
  - h. Steering. Excessive play in the steering mechanism shall not exceed three (3) inches free play in turning the steering wheel from side to side.
  - i. Engine. The engine compartment shall be reasonably clean and free of uncontained combustible materials.
  - j. Mufflers. Mufflers shall be in good operating condition.
  - k. Windows. The windshield shall be without cracks or chips that could interfere with the driver's vision. All other windows shall be intact and able to be opened and closed as intended by the manufacturer. The windows and windshield shall be maintained in a reasonably clean condition so as not to obstruct visibility.
  - l. Door latches. All door latches shall be operable from both the interior and exterior of the vehicle.
  - m. Suspension. The vehicle's suspension system shall be maintained so that there are no sags because of weak or broken springs or excessive motion when the vehicle is in operation because of weak or defective shock absorbers.
  - n. Seats. All seats shall be securely fastened. Seat belts, when required by the California Vehicle Code, shall be installed. The upholstery shall be in relatively good repair.
  - o. Interior. The interior of each vehicle and the trunk or luggage area shall be maintained in a reasonably clean condition, free of foreign matter, offensive odors and litter. The seats shall be kept reasonably clean and without large wear spots. The door handles and doors shall be intact and clean. To allow maximum space for passenger luggage and belongings, the trunk or luggage area shall be kept empty except for spare tire and a personal container for the driver not exceeding two (2) cubic feet in volume and emergency equipment.
  - p. Window Tinting. No taxicab may be operated with window tinting shades or markings that could interfere with a clear view of the cab interior from outside as defined by the California Vehicle Code.

4. **Posted Information Standards.** The following information shall be posted clearly in view of the customer:

- a. Each vehicle licensed to operate within the RTA jurisdiction shall have located in the driver's compartment, in full view of the passengers, an RTA issued taxi vehicle permit and a taxi driver permit card provided by the RTA that bears the number of the taxi permit of the driver; the name and company address of the driver; the name of the owner of the vehicle; and a photograph of the driver.
- b. The rates of fare charged for for-hire vehicles shall be clearly displayed in the passenger compartment in compliance with Monterey County Weights and Measures regulations.

5. **Operating Procedures.** The following rules shall be followed by all drivers permitted by the RTA in provision of for-hire vehicle services and their customers:

- a. Upon request by the passenger, the driver shall offer a receipt upon payment of the fare. The receipt shall accurately show the date, the amount of the fare, the trade name, and name and signature of the driver.
- b. All immediate disputes to fare shall be determined by a peace officer; anyone reporting a fare dispute after the fact shall be referred to an RTA staff member. It shall be unlawful for any person to fail or refuse to comply with such determination by the peace officer or RTA staff member.
- c. It is unlawful for any person to refuse to pay the lawful fare of a for-hire vehicle after employing or hiring the same.
- d. Taxicab company owners, the driver of any taxi vehicle and taxi owner/operators shall promptly obey all lawful orders or instructions of any peace officer, fire fighter, or RTA staff member.
- e. No driver of any for-hire vehicle shall transport any greater number of persons, including the driver, than the manufacturer's rated seating capacity for the vehicle.
- f. While driving or operating a for-hire vehicle, drivers shall maintain a state of personal hygiene, body cleanliness and absence of offensive body odor normally associated with not bathing or showering on a regular basis. Recognizing that they have no control over lingering scents from passengers, drivers should refrain from wearing overpowering fragrances that could impair passengers with chemical sensitivity to ingredients in perfumes and colognes.
- g. For-hire vehicles shall be operated in a manner that complies with the California Vehicle Code.
- h. Any driver employed to transport passengers shall take a direct route that will carry the passenger to their destination safely and expeditiously, unless otherwise directed by a passenger.
- i. Between the hours of midnight and 3:00 a.m. only, taxicab drivers shall have the right to refuse passenger requests to make intermediate stops (including, but not limited to,

- fast-food restaurants/pick-up windows, convenience stores, supermarkets, etc.) between the point of origin of the trip and the passenger's final destination.
- j. It shall be unlawful for the driver or operator of any taxicab to refuse a prospective or actual fare or to take any action to actively discourage a prospective or actual fare on the basis race, age, gender, national origin, sexual orientation, disability or other legally protected characteristic. Rude or abusive language or behavior including gestures, ethnic slurs, jokes, or other forms of harassment directed towards a customer or any physical action that a reasonable person would construe as threatening or intimidating shall be considered a violation of this portion of the policy.
  - k. It is a violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for owners and operators of taxis to discriminate against or refuse a passenger because that passenger has a service animal assisting them. A service animal includes guide dogs, signal dogs, or other animals providing assistance to disabled individuals. However, where a taxicab operator has a physical or mental impairment regarding service animals (including, but not limited to, allergies) that substantially limits one or more major life activities, that driver may not be forced to provide transportation to a person using a service animal. In this situation, taxi company owners must provide a reasonable accommodation to this class of drivers by sending another taxicab operated by a driver without a physical or mental impairment regarding service animals.
  - l. A driver is not obligated to transport any person who is verbally or otherwise abusive to the driver, or whose behavior may be considered by a reasonable person to be a threat or hazard to the driver. A driver is not obligated to transport any persons who emit foul odors including but are not limited to scents related to unlaundered clothing, lack of bathing, or animal related odors and overpowering cologne/perfume, and which are considered to be seriously disruptive to the driver.
  - m. Taxicab drivers may not refuse or discourage a prospective or actual fare based upon shortness of trip within the jurisdictions of the RTA.
  - n. A taxicab dispatching company owner or its staff shall not deny service when requested to a specific location of public accommodations within the RTA jurisdictions without prior approval by the RTA Board of Directors, the MST General Manager/CEO or his designated representative, or the local law enforcement department having jurisdiction over the location of the public accommodation to be denied taxicab service.
  - o. Taxicab drivers may not, having parked and left a taxicab; solicit patronage among pedestrians on the sidewalk, or at other locations of public gathering.
  - p. Only paying passengers, taxicab company trainers/trainees, and persons specifically authorized by the RTA may occupy a taxicab that is already occupied by a paying passenger. No driver, once a paying passenger has occupied their taxicab shall permit any other nonpaying passenger to occupy or ride in the taxicab.