

Important Information for Taxi Drivers in HRM

About Passengers with Disabilities

From the HRM Accessibility Advisory Committee

PASSENGERS WITH WHEELCHAIRS

- When you have a passenger who uses a wheelchair you may not charge extra to transport the chair in your vehicle (trunk or cabin).
- On arrival you should offer assistance and follow all directions given by the passenger as best you can. They may need assistance and extra time to get seated in the wheelchair.
- If a wheelchair is loaded into the trunk of a taxi when it is raining or snowing, drivers should be sure that the trunk can be closed and/or tied closed. This keeps the seat of the wheelchair from getting wet.
- Be careful not to damage the chair as you handle it during loading.
- People who use wheelchairs may need help with parcels. Assistance carrying parcels is always appreciated.

ACCESSIBLE TAXIS

- Accessible taxi owners must ensure that all drivers of an accessible taxi to which the license relates are capable of providing and do provide all necessary assistance to passengers to facilitate the use of the accessible taxi. The taxi owner/driver is also responsible to ensure all wheelchair securement straps and passenger restraint straps are properly applied.

PASSENGERS WHO ARE BLIND OR PARTIALLY SIGHTED

- Passengers who are blind or partially sighted have different levels of ability and different needs. They may be using a mobility cane (long white cane), a white support cane, a white identification cane, a walker, or they may be with a guide dog. They may not see you arrive, or know if you are the taxi they have called, or just another car.

- Say the name of your taxi company and roof light number and passenger's last name, if you have it, when you arrive. Get out of your vehicle to offer assistance if required. Advise them which door you are opening and where they are being seated in the vehicle. (They may not be able to see which door it is).
- When you arrive at the passenger's destination, offer assistance again, or provide specific direction ("the door is five meters away and slightly to the left").
- Saying "over there" and pointing is not helpful to a person who cannot see. They may want you to assist them to the door at their destination. Offer your arm to them, but never grab a blind or partially sighted person by the arm.
- Tell the person with vision loss if there is ice, water, snow or mud in their footpath before they get out of your taxi.

PASSENGERS WITH A GUIDE DOG OR OTHER TYPE OF SERVICE ANIMAL

- It is **the Law** that drivers are required to transport a person with a registered guide dog or any other type of registered service animal (hearing dog, seizure dog etc). The only exception is if a driver has physical limitations or disabilities for which the driver has provided a medical report on file with the Licensing Authority that supports his or her claim.
- Drivers must be aware that faith tradition **IS NOT A JUSTIFIABLE REASON TO REFUSE A SERVICE ANIMAL**. A refusal based on that reason is a violation of the law. This has been affirmed following a recent British Columbia human rights case.
- It is the passenger's responsibility to control their dog. The dog may sit on the floor between the owner's legs in most cases, but drivers should be prepared by having a blanket or disposable seat cover just in case.
- Drivers are not to pet or otherwise touch the dog without permission from the handler. Never offer food.

- Drivers are **not permitted** to charge an additional fee for transporting a service animal. To do so is a violation of the regulations.

PASSENGERS WHO ARE DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING

- Passengers who are deaf or hard of hearing also have different levels of disability and different needs. They may have a hearing aid.
- Speak clearly and look directly at the deaf person as you are speaking to them (so they can see your mouth and face). If it is dark, turn the cabin light on to speak to them.
- A passenger who is deaf or hard of hearing might choose to provide you with a paper with the destination written on it for you to read. You should read it, acknowledge that you understand by nodding to the passenger, and then drive to that location.
- When you arrive at the destination, allow the passenger to see the fare on the meter if they cannot hear you ask for the fare.

PASSENGERS WITH WALKERS OR OTHER AIDS

- Be equally careful with walkers and canes when loading them into the vehicle or trunk. Drivers are not permitted to charge an additional fee for these items.
- Offer assistance if the passenger needs help with packages or bags.
- Be patient and allow the passenger extra time to gather their belongings and to get in or out of your vehicle.
- If a driver has physical limitations or disabilities and they are unable to lift parcels, luggage, bags etc, the driver must provide a medical report on file with the Licensing Authority that supports his or her claim.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Some individuals suffer from asthma, other lung conditions or chemical sensitivity. Try to keep your vehicle scent-free and avoid wearing scented personal care products (cologne, body sprays).
- Children or adults with learning disabilities may have some difficulty expressing themselves. Be patient and speak clearly to ensure that you know where they want to go.
- Someone who is affected by depression, anxiety or other mental illness may also have difficulty when speaking with you. Be patient, calm and respectful. (Note: one in five Nova Scotians will be affected by mental illness in their lifetime)