



PROTECTING YOUR TRAVELERS

Duty of Care for Ground Transportation

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Introduction

Nearly 1.25 million people are killed each year as a result of traffic accidents, and between 20 million and 50 million more sustain non-fatal injuries^[i], according to the World Health Organization. These statistics show just how dangerous ground transportation can be. All it takes is one distracted taxi driver or unscreened rideshare motorist to put corporate travelers at risk.

Duty of care as it relates to car service providers is an increasingly important issue in the corporate travel industry, especially because ground transportation is the fifth highest expense category for business travelers^[ii]. For this reason, as a travel manager, you should always take security and safety into account when choosing ground transportation vendors for your company's road warriors. Not only will this help to keep your travelers safe, but it will also minimize liability risks for your business.

Keeping Corporate Travelers Safe

As a travel manager you are likely aware that the safety of road warriors is essential to the well-being of your organization. Courts have long ruled that companies are responsible for keeping their employees safe, whether they're in the office, on a business trip or somewhere in between.

In 1978, the *IBM Corp. v. Workers' Compensation Appeals Board* case established the precedent that employers are responsible for the safety of their travelers, even if the individuals are not directly engaging in business activities. These accepted "commercial traveler" rules dictate that if your worker is in a taxi accident en route to dinner after a meeting, the company will likely have to pay the worker's compensation claim. These types of payouts can be detrimental to your company financially and it can also hurt the organization's reputation as a desirable place to work.

It is crucial that as a travel manager you pay close attention to what ground transportation options your travelers are using. The safety measures these vendors take is as important as the security of air



carriers. After all, the Insurance Information Institute estimated that an individual's one-year odds of being killed in an airplane accident are 1 in more than 655,000, while the probability rises drastically to 1 in 38,000 when it comes to car accidents^[iii]. These numbers show that riding in a car is 17 times more dangerous than boarding an airplane.

With these these statistics in mind, make sure you review your traveler's expenses and plan your corporation's duty of care policies accordingly. It is better for workers to travel with a ground transportation leader that puts passenger's safety first, than to opt for more mainstream, yet underinsured, ride options. For this reason, many corporations choose to partner with GroundLink, as safety and security is a top priority for our black car and limo drivers.

Safety Pitfalls of Ridesharing

Because of the notable consequences that come along with ignoring safety precautions, you should not assume that your travelers are making smart, safe choices when it comes to transportation during business trips. Recent surveys have shown that an increasing number of corporate travelers are expensing rideshare trips while on the road. This often seems like a viable option for road warriors because of the presumed low costs and convenience that app-based services provide however, as a travel manager, you may want to think twice before allowing workers to expense such charges. These providers often institute "surge/prime-time pricing," raising prices double, triple or even more during periods of high demand, and do not meet your company's duty of care standards.



Passenger Safety

Rideshare services take little to no responsibility for the safety of their passengers, and bury this fact deep in the fine print of their terms and conditions. Research suggests that as few as 1 in 1,000 people actually take the time to skim the fine print associated with online services^[iv], which means that a mere fraction of users are aware of what they're agreeing to. Case in point? Read this excerpt from Uber's Terms & Conditions as of April 2015:



UBER DOES NOT GUARANTEE THE QUALITY, SUITABILITY, SAFETY OR ABILITY OF THIRD PARTY PROVIDERS. YOU AGREE THAT THE ENTIRE RISK ARISING OUT OF YOUR USE OF THE SERVICES, AND ANY SERVICE OR GOOD REQUESTED IN CONNECTION THEREWITH, REMAINS SOLELY WITH YOU, TO THE MAXIMUM EXTENT PERMITTED UNDER APPLICABLE LAW.”

The fine print goes on to detail how the company is not liable for any lost profits, lost data, personal injury or property damage.” Lyft, the other popular ridesharing application, contains similar provisions in its legal agreements.



Screening Drivers and Vehicles

Beyond their limited insurance and liability, these companies also do the bare minimum when it comes to recruiting and vetting drivers. Rideshare services are relatively new, and at best, there are inconsistent laws regarding how they must screen drivers and vehicles. Uber and Lyft established themselves as technology platforms as opposed to transportation services, and as a result, regulations for chauffeurs and taxi drivers are not applicable to rideshare cars. Some cities and states have begun to implement standards for background checks and vehicle inspections, but until nationwide standards are established, screening practices will likely vary by locale.

These facts, coupled with the high risk of auto accidents, make ridesharing an inferior choice for business travelers. The U.S. Department of Transportation estimates that more than 5 million automobile accidents happen every year and more than 2 million people are injured as a result^[v]. It's simply not worth putting your road warriors in harm's way to save a few dollars on ground transportation.



Protecting Corporate Data

Another less-realized aspect of duty of care concerns how ground transportation companies store client data. It's no secret that large-scale data breaches are on the rise. The Identity Theft Resource Center reported that the number of breaches increased 27.5 percent between 2013 and 2014^[vi], and this trend will likely continue as cyber criminals continue to advance their hacking methods. Companies that have databases of their customers' personal and financial information are prime targets for these hackers, which means that travel vendors need to be increasingly stringent about data security.

Make sure to choose service providers that do everything possible to protect customer data, including updating to the latest security software to stay ahead of cyber criminals. By working with reliable, secure vendors, you can remain confident that your travelers' financial or proprietary information will not be compromised because of lax data security.

Duty of Care Best Practices

If you are looking for a safer ground transportation option for your road warriors, you should consider working with GroundLink. Duty of care is an essential part of GroundLink's black car service, and the technology-based booking system provides the added level of convenience that frequent travelers are looking for. Here are some of GroundLink's best practices on duty of care.



Background Checks and Driver Reviews

When it comes to screening drivers, ground transportation companies should have an extensive process that ensures that only qualified individuals are put behind the wheel.

Thorough background checks, proper licensing and impeccable driving records are all must-haves when choosing chauffeurs. GroundLink takes these requirements a step further and mandates that all drivers have at least two years of commercial driving experience. Additionally, GroundLink mandates that drivers sign a confidentiality pledge to ensure that our passenger's personal information is not made public.

Top-performing companies in the ground transportation space continuously check in with customers to ensure that drivers are meeting the necessary quality levels. GroundLink not only issues post-ride satisfaction surveys, but also conducts surprise audits and welcomes direct customer feedback.



Car Inspections

The vehicle your travelers are riding in needs to be in top shape as well. Look for ground transportation companies that regularly inspect their fleets for safety, cleanliness and overall quality. GroundLink requires that all cars be black on black and less than 5 years old. This ensures that your corporate travelers are riding in high-quality automobiles and will be comfortable for the duration of their trips.



Insurance and Liability

In the event that there is an accident, as a travel manager, you need to know that the company you're working with has proper insurance and liability coverage. While a \$1 million policy is a good starting point, GroundLink's \$6 million minimum coverage per incident is a better choice for corporate travelers.



Data Privacy

Finally, as a travel manager, you should look into the data privacy standards upheld by your travel vendors. This will ensure that your company's sensitive information will be safe and secure along with your travelers.

The PCI Security Standards Council maintains strict guidelines for the storage and transmission of consumer data, so look for companies that meet these requirements. Some other noteworthy security measures include data encryption, continuity plans and regular policy reviews—all of which you can expect from GroundLink.



Conclusion

As you review your company's corporate travel policies, it's essential to evaluate whether your preferred vendors are optimized for traveler safety. Every time road warriors leave on business trips, there is a chance that they could be hurt or injured. This unfortunate situation bodes poorly for the company in a number of ways—from expensive workers' comp claims to lost productivity—but the effects can be minimized if you take the time to carefully choose service providers using duty of care as a guiding principle.

References

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