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Seattle

King County

Department:	Rule No:	Supersedes:
City of Seattle **Department of Finance and Administrative Services**	FOR-HIRE TRANSPORTATION-02-2024	New
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Uniform Vehicle Safety Inspections for Taxicabs and For-Hire Vehicles	SMC 6.311.260.C.6, .280, and .360.A.5 SMC 6.311.470 (rulemaking authority)

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City of Seattle Director's Rule FOR-HIRE TRANSPORTATION-02-2024 and King County Public Rule FHT-7-2024-PR – Uniform Vehicle Safety Inspections for Taxicabs and For-Hire Vehicles

Pursuant to an interlocal agreement, the City of Seattle and King County work cooperatively to regulate for-hire passenger transportation. The following Rule is adopted by the City of Seattle and King County as new.

I. Purpose. To establish requirements for uniform vehicle safety inspections. The requirements in this Rule will pertain to all uniform vehicle safety inspections performed on taxicabs and for-hire vehicles unless otherwise specified.

II. Definitions. When used in this Rule, the following term(s) are defined as follows:

1. "Approved mechanic" means a mechanic or technician on a list of mechanics approved to conduct vehicle safety inspections that is maintained by the Director. The list shall contain the name of each mechanic or technician that has been approved by the Director because they:
    1. Have met all requirements of the National Institute of Automative Service Excellence:
    2. Have been awarded a Certificate in Evidence of Competence satisfactory to the Director; and
    3. Do not own, lease, or drive a taxicab, for-hire vehicle, or transportation network company endorsed vehicle.
2. "Director" means the director of King County's Department of Executive Services and/or the City of Seattle's Director of Finance and Administrative Services, or their designees.
3. "Licensee" has the same meaning as Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) 6.311.040 and King County Code (KCC) 6.65.040.

III. Requirements.

Uniform Vehicle Safety Inspection Report and Approved Mechanics

1. Each taxicab and for-hire vehicle shall pass a uniform vehicle safety inspection, pursuant to this rule, certified by a mechanic approved by the Director prior to providing services and annually thereafter.

2. Mechanics who certify uniform vehicle safety inspections must be approved by the Director on an annual basis. A single approved mechanic or a group of mechanics at a single location must hold and maintain valid certificates of competency issued by the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) in the following:

    a. engine repair,
    b. suspension and steering,
    c. brakes, and
    d. heating and air conditioning, or
    e. be currently certified as a master automobile technician.

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All certificates of competency must be current. If certificates expire, the approval issued by the Director is automatically null and void. Approved mechanics may not own, lease, or drive a taxicab or for-hire vehicle. Approved mechanics must certify whether a vehicle passed or failed its inspection prior to the inspection results being recorded in the *Uniform Vehicle Safety Inspection Database*, commonly referred to as VSID, and being made available to the vehicle owner/driver.

3. The approved mechanic must verify that the medallion plates, decals, customer notices, and other markings, as required by the City and County are legible and properly displayed as specified in this rule.

Vehicle Type	External Markings	Interior Markings
Taxicab	**Uniform Color Scheme**: See most recent list from the Director, which is provided to the approved mechanic during training.	**Rates Sign**: Must include the statement: "Rates or fares may vary. Confirm the fare or rate before you accept the ride." Must have a transparent background, be in dark 3/4-inch lettering, and be affixed to the driver's-side rear window. Note to the approved mechanic: the transitional regional dispatch agency or regional dispatch agency may separately post regional taximeter rates or other established rates or fares on the vehicle's interior. See most recent list from the Director, which is provided to the approved mechanic during training.
	Trade Name/Telephone Number: On the upper one half (1/2) of both front doors. Trade name lettering must be at least 4 inches and telephone number lettering must be at least 2 and 1/2 inches.	**Passenger Information Decal**: Must include the regional dispatch agency trade name, medallion number, passenger complaint hotline, and requirement to provide customer with a receipt printed by the system or an electronic receipt. Must have a transparent background, 1/2-inch black lettering, and be affixed to the rear driver-side window beneath the rates decal.
	Medallion Number: Number must be at least 4-inch lettering on all 4 sides of the vehicle: hood, trunk lid, and both rear roof posts.	**Passenger Information in Raised and Braille Lettering**: Must include the regional dispatch agency trade name, medallion number, and passenger complaint hotline. Raised lettering must be at least 1/32 inch and a height of 5/8 inch and must be

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Vehicle Type	External Markings	Interior Markings
		affixed on the inside of all passenger doors above the arm rest. Braille dots must be uniform in size, solid and rounded, with a height of at least 1/40-inch (0.025 inch) and a diameter of at least 3/50-inch (0.06 inch). The interdot spacing center-to-center will be at least 1/10-inch (0.1 inch). The horizontal distance between cells will be at least 3/10-inch (0.3 inch).
	Rates: On the upper half of both rear doors in 3/4-inch lettering. Must include the statement: "Rates or fares may vary. Confirm the fare or rate before you accept the ride." Note to the approved mechanic: the transitional regional dispatch agency or regional dispatch agency may separately post regional taximeter rates or other established rates or fares on the vehicle's exterior. See most recent list from the Director, which is provided to the mechanic during training.	
	Medallion Plate or Decal: Must be riveted or otherwise affixed at the rear end of vehicle.	
For-Hire Vehicle **Requirements end on March 31, 2026. Vehicles operating with a taxicab medallion must comply with the taxicab requirements in this Rule.**	**Uniform Color Scheme**: See most recent list from the Director, which is provided to the approved mechanic during training.	**Passenger Information Decal**: Must include the for-hire vehicle company (or regional dispatch agency) trade name, medallion number, passenger complaint hotline, and notification of the passenger's option to obtain a receipt printed by the system or an electronic receipt. Must be affixed to the rear driver-side window.
	Trade Name/Telephone Number: On the upper half of both front doors. Trade name lettering must be at least 4 inches and telephone number lettering must be at least 2 and 1/2 inches.	**Passenger Information in Braille and Raised Lettering**: Must include for-hire vehicle company (or regional dispatch agency) trade name, medallion number, and passenger complaint hotline.

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Vehicle Type	External Markings	Interior Markings
		Raised letter must be at least 1/32 inch and a height of 5/8 inch and must be affixed on the inside of all passenger doors above the arm rest. Braille dots must be uniform in size, solid and rounded, with a height of at least 1/40-inch (0.025 inch) and a diameter of at least 3/50-inch (0.06 inch). The interdot spacing center-to-center will be at least 1/10-inch (0.1 inch). The horizontal distance between cells will be at least 3/10-inch (0.3 inch).
	Medallion Number: Number must be at least 4-inch lettering on all 4 sides of the vehicle: hood, trunk lid, and both rear roof posts.	**Rates Decal**: A notice stating "Vehicle charges a flat rate and fare is determined by zones. Driver is required to provide a rate book upon customer request. Application dispatch fare supersedes rate book." Must have a transparent background, 3/4-inch lettering, and affixed to the driver-side rear window.
	Medallion Decal: Must be affixed to inside surface of front windshield above rear-view mirror. When a for-hire vehicle medallion owner converts the medallion to a taxicab medallion, the new taxicab medallion plate or decal shall be affixed at the rear end of the vehicle.	**State and Municipal Tolls/Charges Decal:** A notice stating "Additional charges may be added to the taximeter for state and/or municipal tolls or charges on roads, bridges, tunnels and ferries. Please visit the Washington State Department of Transportation's website or the website of the relevant municipality for current toll or charge rates." Must be affixed to the rear driver-side window.
	Flat Rate: Must be clearly marked with "flat rate" on the exterior if operating on a for-hire vehicle medallion.	

4. All vehicle safety inspections require the mechanic to visually inspect under the vehicle. This will be accomplished using a lift, pit or other procedure that allows the mechanic to get under the vehicle. Vehicle safety inspections conducted virtually are prohibited. Vehicle safety inspections will include thorough inspection of the following safety items:

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Inspection Item	Criteria for Passing
a. Foot pedals	Must have rubber or comparable material foot pads in good condition (no metal showing).
b. Brake system	Must operate properly and have no defects. Emergency brake capable of holding vehicle on a 30-degree incline in neutral.
c. Suspension and steering	Must operate properly and have no defects.
d. Windshield and wipers	No chips or cracks larger than one inch. Wipers must operate properly and dispense washer fluid.
e. Rear window and other glass	No chips or cracks larger than one inch and must operate properly.
f. Heating and cooling	Must operate properly and have no defects.
g. Exterior lights	Covered with undamaged lenses and all bulbs operating properly including headlights, high beams, taillights, turn indicators, hazard lights, brake lights, high center brake light, back-up lights and license plate light.
h. Interior lights	Covered with undamaged lenses and all bulbs operating properly, including dome light.
i. Seats	Front seat adjustment mechanism operates properly. All seats are in undamaged condition and fastened securely.
j. Doors and hardware	Must operate properly and have no defects.
k. Horn	Must operate properly.
l. Instrument panel and gauges	Must operate properly and have no defects.
m. Bumpers	No sharp edges or any defect which is 1/2 inch at the deepest point of depression.
n. Muffler and exhaust system	Must operate properly and have no defects.
o. Tires including spare tire, tire jack, lug wrench, and jack handle or comparable equipment	Wheels (including spare) must be properly aligned, inflated, free of defects, and have a minimum tread depth of 2/32 inch. There must be a tire jack, jack handle, and lug wrench or comparable equipment to ensure vehicle can operate immediately after occurrence of a flat tire.
p. Interior and exterior rear-view mirrors	Free of cracks and defects.

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Inspection Item	Criteria for Passing
q. Safety belts and air bags	Must operate properly. Air bag indicator lights must operate per manufacturer standards.
r. Wheelchair accessible vehicles	Must meet the following from 49 Code of Federal Regulations §38.23, §38.25 and §38.31: • Design load – ramp will be 30 inches or longer and will support 600 pounds; • Ramp surface – ramp surface will be continuous, slip resistant, have a clear width of 30 inches and accommodate both three-wheel and four-wheel mobility aids; • Ramp threshold – ramp will have no more than 1/4 inch at transition from sidewalk to vehicle floor; • Ramp barriers – ramp will have side barriers at least two inches high; • Attachment – ramp will be firmly attached to the vehicle; • Stowage – mobility aid or wheelchair will be secured from movement and present no hazard to the passenger; • Contrast – boarding edge of ramp will have a band of color running the full width of the edge which contrasts from the ramp surface, either light on dark or dark on light; • Securement devices – when the wheelchair or mobility aid is secured, the securement devices will limit the movement of an occupied wheelchair or mobility aid to no more than two inches in any direction under normal vehicle operating conditions; • Seat belt and shoulder harness – seat and shoulder harness will be provided for each mobility aid or wheelchair and • Lighting – will illuminate the ramp.
s. Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) Fuel Systems (inspection to be completed by a CSA Group Certified CNG Fuel System Inspector)	All vehicles with CNG fuel supply systems must meet the following requirements: • NFPA 52-6.4.4 Vents will not exit into a wheel well; • NFPA 52-6.5.7 Fuel lines will be mounted, braced, and supported to minimize vibration and should be protected against damage, corrosion, or breakage due to strain or wear; • NFPA 52-6.6.1 Every cylinder will be equipped with a manual shut off valve; • NFPA 52- 6.6.2.4 Where a manual valve is used, the valve location will be indicated with the words “MANUAL SHUTOFF VALVE”; • NFPA 52-6.11.1 Vehicles equipped with a CNG fuel system will bear the following durable labels: a label readily visible and located in the engine compartment will include the following: ○ Identification as a CNG-fueled vehicle;

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Inspection Item	Criteria for Passing
	○ System service pressure; ○ Installer's name or company; ○ Container retest date or expiration date; ○ Total container water volume in gallons; • NFPA 52-6.11.3 Vehicle must have a weather resistant, diamond shaped label located on an exterior vertical surface or near vertical surface on the lower right rear of the vehicle; e.g., on the trunk lid of the vehicle, but not on the bumper and • CNG fuel receptacles must be checked for wear with the Go No/Go gauge.

Note: All equipment must operate properly, and the vehicle owner has responsibility for ensuring all damage is repaired. Replacement equipment will meet manufacturer's original specifications.

5. Regardless if the vehicle passes or fails, all inspections must be entered into the *Uniform Vehicle Safety Inspection Database* on the same day as the inspection. If the *Uniform Vehicle Safety Inspection Database* is not operating properly, paper forms will be provided by the Director. Paper forms should only be used when the database is down. City officials may audit these records on demand during normal business hours.

6. An approved mechanic will not issue a passing *Uniform Vehicle Safety Inspection Report* to the vehicle licensee until all inspection items meet the criteria for passing (above).

7. A vehicle that has been in a collision and determined by the insurance adjuster to be a "total wreck", or having the term "rebuilt" or other applicable brand noted on the certificate of ownership or vehicle registration per Washington Administrative Code Section 308-56A-530, will not be placed in service, or back in service, as a taxicab or for-hire vehicle until an approved mechanic with a current ASE certification in "structural analysis and damage repair" has verified that there is no damage to the vehicle frame or an I-CAR Gold Class shop has verified that there is no damage to the vehicle frame. This inspection is separate from the uniform vehicle safety inspection completed each year.

8. A vehicle determined by the insurance adjuster to be a "total wreck" or having the term "rebuilt" or other applicable brand noted on the certificate of ownership or vehicle registration per Washington Administrative Code Section 308-56A-530, will not be placed in service, or put back into service, as a taxicab or for-hire vehicle until an approved airbag technician has verified that the airbag system is working properly.

9. All vehicles with a CNG fuel system will pass a CNG inspection annually completed by a CSA Group Certified CNG Fuel System Inspector. This inspection is separate from the uniform vehicle safety inspection completed each year. The inspector will verify the tank is installed per NFPA standards and is still operating properly. A copy of the CNG inspection report will be filed with the Director.

10. The Director will require a subsequent inspection if a vehicle has changed its medallion number, has changed its affiliated regional dispatch agency, has been replaced by another

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vehicle or was involved in an accident. In addition, a vehicle that has not passed a uniform vehicle safety inspection will not operate until it passes a subsequent inspection.

A person found operating a vehicle that has failed the inspection and has not passed a subsequent inspection will have the medallion associated with that vehicle summarily suspended because such a vehicle is considered to not have a valid medallion.

11. Approved mechanics are required to certify or supervise vehicle safety inspections but are not required to perform the inspection. If another mechanic is performing the inspection, that mechanic's name will be recorded in the *Uniform Vehicle Inspection Database.* The approving mechanic's name will also be recorded.

12. Should an approved mechanic be found in violation of the procedures outlined in this Rule and of the SMC or King County Code, the Director will take the following steps. Violations could include, but are not limited to, incomplete inspections; failure to use a lift, pit or other procedure to inspect under a vehicle; failure to supervise a mechanic that is not certified, or substantiated complaints from drivers.

    a. **First instance** – the Director will issue a verbal warning and inform mechanic that removal from the approved mechanic list could occur if there is another violation.

    b. **Second instance** (if it occurs within six months of the first instance) – the Director will issue a five-day removal from the approved mechanic list and removal from access to the *Uniform Vehicle Safety Inspection Database* (after all inspections are entered into the system within 24 hours of notice of removal). Removal begins upon entry of all inspections. Failure to timely enter all inspections could result in a longer removal from the approved mechanic list.

    For removals of five days or longer, the Director will require retraining before placing the mechanic back on the approved list. Any inspections completed within the suspended timeframe could result in permanent removal as an approved mechanic.

    In addition, the Director will send written notice to any regional dispatch agency known by the Director to be affiliated with the approved mechanic to inform it of the enforcement action taken against the approved mechanic.

    c. **Third instance** (if it occurs within six months of the second instance) – the Director will issue a minimum 30-day removal from the approved mechanic list and removal from access to VSID (after all inspections up to that point are entered into the system).

    d. **Fourth instance** (if it occurs within one year of the third instance) – the Director will issue a minimum one-year removal from the approved mechanic list and removal from access to VSID (after all inspections up to that point are entered into the system).

    The Director will retain discretion to issue a removal longer than one year, including permanent removal from the approval list, based on the severity and/or pervasive nature of the violations. Mechanics subject to removals for one year or longer, including permanent removals, may appeal the removal to the Director. In the case of a hearing

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before a designee, that person cannot directly supervise the inspector who issued the removal.

The request for an appeal must be in writing and received by the Director within 10 calendar days of the date of the notice of removal. The removal is final if the mechanic fails to timely request an appeal to the Director. If the appeal request is timely, the mechanic will have an opportunity to provide evidence to refute or mitigate the removal. The appeal hearing will be held no more than seven business days from the date received by FAS. The Director will issue an appeal decision within three business days of the appeal proceeding. The appeal decision is final and can affirm, reverse or adjust the length of the removal.

Failed Field Inspections

Summary suspension of the vehicle medallion will occur when a taxicab or for-hire vehicle fails a routine field inspection (outside of the annual inspection process) conducted by the Director.

The summary suspension notice will be issued in person, by email or by first-class mail to the licensee. A copy of the suspension will be issued by email to the regional dispatch agency (based on vehicle's uniform color scheme at time of inspection and/or the regional dispatch agency identified in the vehicle's record in the *Uniform Vehicle Safety Inspection Database*) with which the licensee is affiliated.

The summary suspension remains in effect until the vehicle has either (1) passed a new uniform vehicle safety inspection, which will be recorded in the *Uniform Vehicle Safety Inspection Database*, or (2) the Director receives satisfactory proof the violation has been cured.

A driver cannot continue to engage in the activity for which the license is required pending an appeal of the summary suspension. A driver will be penalized if found to be operating a vehicle under summary suspension because such a vehicle is considered unlicensed. The first offense results in a civil infraction with monetary penalties, and any subsequent violation could result in a misdemeanor charge.

The Director will notify in person, by email or by first-class mail the licensee once the violation has been cured. A copy of the notice will be emailed to the regional dispatch agency with which the licensee is affiliated.

IV. **Implementation.** Unless specified otherwise in this Rule, these requirements take effect immediately after the Director files this Rule with the Seattle City Clerk and with the King County Archives, Records Management, and Mail Services Section (ARMMS).

V. **Rule Maintenance.** The Director will consider the quality and compliance of companies' written documentation and physical demonstrations during the licensing process, relevant passenger complaints received, and relevant enforcement actions taken, among other factors, to determine whether this Rule needs revision.

VI. **Rule Enforcement.** The Director may review written documentation and consider community feedback to ensure compliance with the requirements outlined herein.