



Partitions or screens in hackney carriages or private hire vehicles

Introduction

1. Partitions or safety screens provide a physical barrier between drivers and passengers in the vehicle. They are commonly installed in purpose built hackney carriages as a safety feature to protect the driver from physical attacks or theft. There has been an increase in interest of the use of screens as a way of providing physical separation between drivers and passengers in order to reduce the transmission of COVID-19.
2. Purpose built hackney carriages are already fitted with partitions between drivers and passengers. However, licensed saloon vehicles do not have partitions/safety screens installed. There are a wide variety of different makes and model of these vehicles licences in the Forest of Dean District.
3. There is no evidence available that demonstrates that partitions in hackney carriages or private hire vehicles reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 infection. Partitions in hackney carriages or private hire vehicles do not provide a fully sealed compartment which completely separates the driver from the passenger. Therefore, whilst it is possible that partitions may reduce the risk of transmission of infection, the risk would not be eliminated entirely.
4. Whether a partitions or screens should be installed is a matter for vehicle owners, drivers and/or operators to consider.
5. This policy outlines the authority's policy on the installation of partitions or screens in hackney carriages or private hire vehicles. Any queries can be directed to ers@fdean.gov.uk

Specification

The partition or screen:

1. must comply with the Road Vehicle (Construction and Use) Regulations.
2. must be professionally and securely fitted and maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
3. should be constructed with a transparent polyvinyl chloride (PVC) or polycarbonate and be of firm or solid design.
4. should not impede the driver's vision, movement, or communication with passengers.
5. should not impede driver or passenger access or egress to the vehicle.
6. must be fitted in such a way so as not to affect the structural integrity of the vehicle or interfere or affect any manufacturer fitted safety equipment or features including headrests, seatbelts, airbags, egress points, CCTV.
7. must not wrap around the driver seat and create a partition between the two front seats, in addition to the rear cabin area.

8. must not affect the ability of the vehicle to be properly insured for the purpose of carrying persons for hire and/or reward.
9. must not adversely influence or interfere in any way with vehicle type approval.
10. should not be significantly changed or modified from the original manufactured design. In cases where it is necessary to modify the original design of the device (for example, to facilitate installation of the device in the vehicle), assurances should be sought from the supplier/installer that the modification does not raise any concerns in relation to safety of the device and complies with the relevant UK and/or EC safety legislation.
11. should remain clear and be free of scratches, clouding or stickers which would impede the drivers or passengers' visibility.
12. your agreement to remove the protective screen in less than 21 days after the current social distancing restrictions relating to COVID-19 have been removed.

Approval Procedure

In accordance with the conditions attached to private hire and hackney carriage vehicle proprietors licences, permission must be sought prior to any vehicle alternations including installation of a partition or screen in any vehicles licensed by Forest of Dean District Council.

Permission can be sought by completion of the correct form and returning it to the authority by email to ers@fdean.gov.uk

The authority reserves the right to seek any additional information that it might require including, but not limited to:

1. Technical specifications on any partition or screen installed;
2. Written confirmation that any partition or screen installed has been done so professionally and in accordance with the manufacturers requirements and specifications;
3. Confirmation that the vehicle's insurance cover has not been affected by the installation of the partition or screen; and/or
4. Written confirmation from the vehicle's manufacturer that the installation of the partition or screen does not compromise the integrity of the vehicle structure.

This policy is temporary and for the purpose of the COVID-19 pandemic. We will keep the policy under review and will update as and when any safety issues come to light or any guidance from the DfT (Department for Transport) is given.