

Seattle Regulations

— part of a multi-departmental series on City services, permits and regulations

For-Hire Vehicle Information: Overview of Key Provisions for Operating in Seattle

June 14, 2018

This information sheet gives a brief overview of key provisions that apply to operating a for-hire vehicle within the Seattle city limits. Please refer to Chapter 6.310 of the Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) at <http://bit.ly/seaforhirecode> for complete requirements. You may also find additional information on the City's administrative rules at <http://bit.ly/seadirectorsrules>. Finally, laws governing for-hire vehicle operation outside of the Seattle city limits can be found at <http://bit.ly/kcbusregcode>.

Vehicle requirements

- Operate under the City's medallion system (SMC 6.310.135.A).
- Must have a valid vehicle license (SMC 6.310.130.A).
- Must have an insurance policy with minimum bodily injury liability limits of \$100,000 per person, \$300,000 per accident and \$25,000 property damage; and underinsured motorist limits of \$100,000 per person and \$300,000 per accident (SMC 6.310.300.C).
- Must pass a uniform vehicle safety inspection by a City-approved, ASE-certified mechanic (SMC 6.310.320.E).
- Can be a vehicle model no more than 10 years old prior to the license date (SMC 6.310.320.C).
- Must be clearly marked as "flat rate" on its exterior (SMC 6.310.320.Q).
- Must feature a two-tone color scheme approved by the director (SMC 6.310.320.O).

- Must be equipped with a monitored silent alarm system (SMC 6.310.320.S).
- Must pay the City's annual vehicle license fee (SMC 6.310.150).

Driver requirements

- Must obtain a for-hire driver's license before operating a for-hire vehicle (SMC 6.310.450.A).
- Must renew the for-hire driver's license every year (SMC 6.310.440.B).
- Must pay the annual for-hire driver's license fee.
- Must submit a driver abstract and pass a background check, driver knowledge test and a defensive driving course; please see <http://bit.ly/kcforhirelicfees> for more information about license fees.
- Must obtain a City of Seattle business license; please see <http://bit.ly/seabuslicapp> for more information about how to apply for/renew a business license.

Operating requirements

- Must have a valid for-hire driver's license and valid Washington state driver's license at all times while operating a for-hire vehicle (SMC 6.310.455.C).
- Must have an enlargement of the for-hire driver's license displayed in a permanent frame as prescribed by the director (SMC 6.310.455.C).
- Shall not be in control of a for-hire vehicle for more than 12 hours spread over a total of 15 hours in any 24-hour period (SMC 6.310.455.G).
- Shall allow the director to inspect the for-hire vehicle without notice at any reasonable time or place (SMC 6.310.450.G).



- Shall operate the for-hire vehicle with due regard for the safety, comfort and convenience of passengers (SMC 6.310.455.J).
- Shall provide customers with professional and courteous service (SMC 6.310.465.B).
- Shall not refuse to transport any person (SMC 6.310.465.H).
- Shall use the most direct available route on all trips unless the passenger specifically requests to change the route (SMC 6.310.465.G).

For-hire vehicle rates

- Must charge for service based on a written contract; flat rate per trip, by zone; or by an hourly rate with minimum increments of a half-hour (SMC 6.310.530.B.3).
- Shall file all non-application dispatch system rates and charges, including rate structures that vary by time of day with the director (SMC 6.310.530.B.2).
- Shall conspicuously display all rates and charges in the interior of the for-hire vehicle so to be readily discernible to the passenger (SMC 6.310.B.3 and Director's Rule CPU-01-2015).
- Shall make rates in an application dispatch system transparent to the passenger before confirming the ride (SMC 6.310.530.A.3.a).

Company requirements

- Must maintain required records for two years (SMC 6.310.540.A).
- Must submit data required data on a quarterly basis to the director (SMC 6.310.540.C).

Penalties

- Unlicensed operation: \$513 first offense, criminal misdemeanor on the second offense in five years (SMC 6.310.600.A).
- Fines maybe assessed ranging from \$35 to \$1,000 for service, safety, conduct and operating violations (SMC 6.310).

- Suspension or revocation may occur for service, safety, conduct and operating violations (SMC 6.310).

Appeals process

- If issued a violation, suspension or revocation, the licensee may request a hearing within 10 days by contacting the City's Regulatory Compliance and Consumer Protection Division located at 700 Fifth Ave., Floor 42, Suite 4200, Seattle, WA 98104. Instructions are on the reverse side of the notice of violation or license action.
- If issued a notice of infraction, the licensee must respond within 15 days from the date issued. Instructions will be on the reverse side of the notice of infraction. The Seattle Municipal Court handles payments or requests for hearings.

Questions?

If you have questions, contact our Regulatory Compliance and Consumer Protection division at consumerprotection@seattle.gov or 206-386-1267. Our office is open 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday.