



TLC TIMES

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Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor

Matthew W. Daus, Commissioner/Chair

☆☆☆☆☆ Commissioner's Message ☆☆☆☆☆

Let me begin by wishing all the readers of this column and their families a happy and healthy New Year.

The year 2002 was a very productive one for the Taxi and Limousine Commission. Just a few highlights include our efforts to assist our regulated industries in recovering from 9/11, planning for both the Queens bus strike and the recently averted transit strike (more about this later in the column), a new expedited licensing program, and putting an end to the dreaded "March Madness." We implemented Driver Focus Groups, saw the advent of larger and more comfortable taxicabs, enrolled thousands of drivers and their families in the TLC Health Insurance Program, and streamlined the medallion transfer process. As promised, we put technology to work, allowing us to communicate better and virtually revolutionize the way our licensees do business with the agency. We paved the way for the implementation of LiveScan (more about this later as well). My personal favorite? We happily tracked the decline in complaints against taxicab drivers to their lowest point in more than a decade. Really, this only scratches the surface of what we have achieved - together - in the last year. For a more in-depth look at 2002, I invite you all to visit our web site at www.nyc.gov/taxi and access the TLC's Annual Report to the New York City Council.



assist our regulated industries in recovering from 9/11, planning for both the Queens bus strike and the recently averted transit strike (more about this later in the column), a new expedited licensing program, and putting an end to the dreaded "March Madness." We implemented Driver Focus Groups, saw the advent of larger and more comfortable taxicabs, enrolled thousands of drivers and their families in the TLC Health Insurance Program, and streamlined the medallion transfer process.



ushered in the New Year with the announcement of a number of new programs and innovations, we have no intention of slowing down the wheels of progress in 2003.

The first of these programs is the "TLC Safe Driver Program" to provide insurance discounts. As many of you have read in previous columns, the TLC has been aware for some time of the difficulties facing its licensed vehicle owners, who, despite all that the TLC has done to raise standards and increase industry accountability, still face rising liability insurance premiums. Readers may also recall that, regardless of the TLC's lack of specific jurisdiction in the area of insurance, I believe that it was imperative to provide some form of insurance relief to all those who have worked so hard to make the TLC's many reforms successful in their respective industries. While this program is not - and cannot be - a solution to the problem, it is a step in the right direction, and is there to extend a helping hand.

Almost a year in the planning, the "TLC Safe Driver Program" is the result of negotiations with insurance carriers to identify criteria in the areas of experience, training and safe driving. Those meeting the criteria would be classified as "TLC Safe Drivers," a title they may use to obtain a discount of 15 percent over a two-year period

from a participating insurance carrier. Full instructions on the application process are available at www.nyc.gov/taxi or by calling the TLC's Customer Service Call Center at 212-NYC-TAXI. Most importantly, this program is a three-way win: (1) For the drivers, it helps through discounts; (2) the public will benefit from safer drivers; and (3), the insurers' confidence in the industry will grow with every newly-certified "Safe Driver."

We also announced the late-January implementation date for LiveScan, the new technology that will speed the license application process by allowing the TLC to transmit fingerprints to the Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS), rather than relying on the mail. Not only will this make the process faster and more efficient, but no more messy fingers! This is just one more way that the TLC is putting technology to work for everyone's benefit.

I am also excited to share with our readers the news that the TLC's Special Investigations Unit will heavily focus on issues involving insurance-related fraud as it pertains to the TLC's regulated industries in 2003. This unit will work together with other government agencies and insurance companies to share information and focus on a range of possible fraudulent insurance-related activities. I am confident that this special unit will have a deterrent effect on those who contemplate fraudulent activity, and that it will also contribute to the TLC's efforts in reducing insurance premiums for all of its regulated industries.

While the details are still fresh in my mind, I would also like to take this opportunity to give readers an inside look at the way the TLC and its regulated industries prepared for the threatened Mid-December

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transit strike, which thankfully was averted. While we remained hopeful to the very last seconds that ticked toward the strike deadline that our labors would be unnecessary, we naturally had to gear-up as though the strike were a foregone conclusion. For one thing, this meant the creation of a comprehensive strategy that served as a major facet of the City's overall strike contingency plan, which included the creation of a network of medallion taxicab group ride sites and commuter van staging areas. It also required planning for the suspension of a number of TLC regulations and local laws that would maximize the use of all types of TLC-licensed vehicles to help the largest number of displaced commuters, as well as the design of an alternative fare structure to support these efforts. To accomplish this, the TLC became a 24-hour operation, with staff members working literally around the clock at our already busy Customer Service Call Center.

Next, it was crucial to get the specifics of the plan out to the industries whose cooperation would be key to its success. With the TLC being the regulator of more than 140,000 licensees, this was a challenge that required a three-pronged approach. First, we blanketed our licensees with Industry Notices via fax and e-mail (here, the value of our efforts to communicate more effectively by computer paid serious dividends).

Second, we virtually re-created our web site with the understanding that it would be a vital resource for both the seven million potentially displaced commuters, as well as our regulated industries who needed the very latest information on group ride sites, commuter van loading stands, and other important aspects of the plan. TLC staff worked for hours in the agency's Command Center, brainstorming ideas and honing the web site until it was the most user-friendly and informative resource that it could be. We also created an "Instant E-Mail" link that would allow both members of the riding public and our regulated industries to receive almost real-time responses to e-mailed questions.

Third, we thought it would be highly valuable to communicate the plan directly to our regulated industries. This was accomplished through an all-industry



A briefing at the Mayor's Office of Emergency Management.

summit meeting, held Wednesday, December 11, at LaGuardia Community College. Despite the attendance of more than 500 industry representatives and leaders, the atmosphere was ordered, and allowed us the ability to communicate more directly and effectively than ever before.

Even as all this was being accomplished, it was necessary for the TLC to plan and implement a strategy for getting its own employees to work. Many were re-deployed to act as dispatchers at group ride and commuter van loading sites throughout the city. Many others were called upon to bolster the personnel at the Call Center. Some were assigned to staff workstations at the Office of Emergency Management (OEM), which is the City's nerve center for responses to all emergencies.

Signs to indicate the location of group ride and commuter van loading sites had to be designed and printed. Thanks to the teamwork fostered by Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg between the TLC and its sister agencies, such as OEM, the New York City Police Department (NYPD), the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS), and the New York City Department of Transportation (DOT), this was accomplished with uncanny speed. Despite the fact that the "strike clock" was paused in

time to allow for a "normal" commute on the morning of Monday, December 16, TLC Uniformed Services personnel criss-crossed the city, surveying our network of emergency taxicab and commuter van sites to ensure that all was ready. The TLC's component of the City's contingency plan was launched at approximately 4:00 a.m. that Monday morning, to large extent as a "dry run" in case a strike did occur later that day or the next.

While it cannot be said that the plan was tested in the way it might have been had there indeed been a strike, it functioned flawlessly that day as did the City's contingency plan as a whole. In some ways, it may have seemed anticlimactic, but it was a valuable exercise that illustrated the merit of superior teamwork between TLC staff and the taxi and FHV industries.

It was also an opportunity to see how much our regulated industries truly care about the City we all serve. While I am understandably hesitant to single out any specific segments of our regulated industries, I can say with all certainty that, with only the smallest of exceptions, the leaders, managers and drivers spoke together with one voice during this "crisis that almost was" - a voice that simply said "how can we help?"

Really, this column only scratches the surface of what went on during those rather tense days and nights leading up to the aversion of the strike. But I hope it does leave readers with a flavor for the way it all happened, and for the ways in which we approached the goals we set.

Before I end this column, I just want to yet again thank all those, both at the TLC and in our regulated industries, who worked so hard and cared so deeply about their fellow New Yorkers and about their city. It is because of them that I know there is rarely a problem we cannot solve or an emergency we cannot plan for, so long as we do it together.

TLC Passenger Information:
Transit Strike Emergency Rates of Fare

Yellow Medallion Taxicabs <i>(Not Group Ride Sites located in service area)</i>	Livery Vehicles & Limousines	Commuter Vans
Metered Fare Not to exceed by all passengers, plus \$2.00 surcharge per person* for group ride stands and	Competitive fares set by base, which are filed with the TLC	Single within the zone surcharge: \$1.50 per person Trips from one borough to another: \$4.00 per person <i>(Not included)</i>

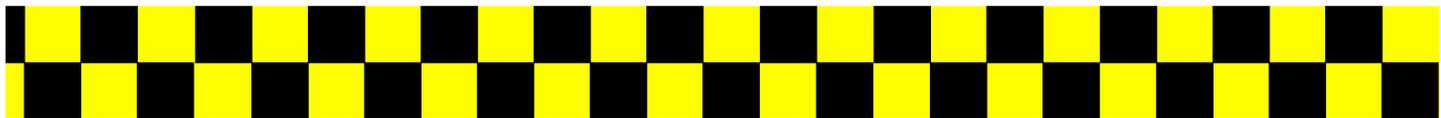
OVERCHARGES WILL BE PROSECUTED TO THE FULLEST EXTENT OF THE LAW!
 Call 312-NYC-TAXI for questions and complaints.
 For the latest TLC-related strike information, log onto our web site at: www.nyc.gov/taxi

Michael R. Bloomberg
Mayor

Matthew W. Dow
Commissioner

Group Ride Sites in Manhattan	Group Ride Sites in the Bronx	Group Ride Sites in Queens
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amsterdam/101st South Ferry Terminal Far 4 (Battery Place & West Street) Far 11 (South Street & Wall Street) West Street and Wall Street West Street and Fulton Street (New York, New York) Liberty Street (between Broadway and Grand) Lower West Side West 72nd Street and Broadway Lower East Side West 72nd Street and 30th Avenue Midtown 125th Street and Adams Clayton Street, Jr. Enclosed Midtown South Side West Street (between North 2nd Ave and West 20th Street) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yonkers Station East 161st Street and River Avenue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flushing Meadows Race Track

All Group Ride Sites are subject to change.



Lost Your Property In A Taxi? Here's How To Get It Back:

It's everyone's worst fear: you leave a taxicab and forget to take your property. And now, your belongings are somewhere in one of New York City's 12,187 taxicabs.

Just in case this unfortunate incident happens to you, here are some tips from TLC as to what to do if you lose your property.

1. Get the taxi's medallion number.

The receipt from your fare contains the taxi's medallion number, as well as the date and time of the ride, which will make finding your taxi easier.

2. Call 212-NYC-TAXI.

Our hotline can assist you in helping to locate your property.

3. Give a full, detailed description of your property to the operator.

The better and more accurate description that you give the operator about the property that is missing, the easier it will be to find.



4. DON'T PANIC!!!

Many New Yorkers have forgotten to take their property when they have exited taxis and a majority of their belongings have been recovered. Rest assured that TLC will do all it can to get your items back for you quickly and safely.

So the next time you find yourself without your belongings because you left them in the back of a taxi cab, just remember that help is only a phone call away at 212-NYC-TAXI.

What's In A Taxi?

Do you know the major components of a taxi? There are many items that must be in every one of the City's taxicabs that provide critical information to the passenger, as well as safety and security for both the passenger and the driver. Here are the major components of a taxicab:



1. The Meter

Probably the most recognizable item in a taxi, the meter calculates the fare and prints out a receipt for the customer. Passengers should hear a "click" whenever the fare increases.

2. The Rate Card

Located on the partition in front of you in a glass lit case, the rate card is an individually numbered card that explains the price of your trip. It also shows the maximum capacity for the taxi and the vehicle's medallion number.

3. Passenger Information Sticker

Behind a plastic shield on the partition, this sticker lists the Taxi Rider's Bill of Rights, explains the way the taxi meter works, and instructs passengers on how to file a complaint.

4. The Driver's TLC License

This very important document, which is located directly next to the rate card, lists the driver's name, license number, expiration date and picture.

5. The Passenger Information Map

This is also located in a plastic shield on the partition and gives passengers an idea as to destinations in the five boroughs, and breaks down the borough of Manhattan by neighborhood (Chelsea, Theater District, etc) so riders have a better understanding of the City's geography.

6. Working Seatbelts

At either side of the passenger, these seatbelts must be working to ensure the safety of the passenger. If your cab did not have working seatbelts, please call 212-NYC-TAXI.

TLC Announces Formation Of Special Insurance Fraud Investigations Unit



The New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC) announces that its Special Investigations Unit will focus on issues involving insurance-related fraud as it relates to the TLC's regulated industries. This unit will work in tandem with other government agencies and insurance companies to share information and focus on a range of possible fraudulent insurance-related activities.

It is hoped that this special unit will have a deterrent effect on those who contemplate fraudulent activity, and will ultimately contribute to the effort of reducing insurance premiums for the TLC's regulated industries.



TLC Annual Report Highlights Active Year

Recently, the TLC released its Annual Report to the City Council, which describes the agency's highlights and accomplishments in 2002, which was one of the most active in the history of the agency.

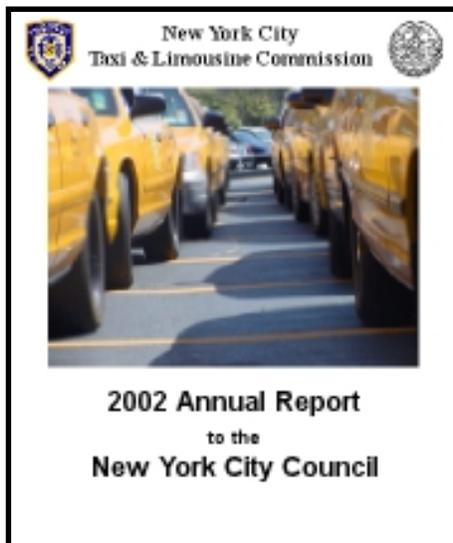
From agency-wide reforms, to new customer service initiatives, the TLC has made quite an effort to improve its services to the public in 2002.

One of the TLC's customer service accomplishments in 2002 was the introduction of the LiveScan System. The use of this LiveScan equipment, which enables TLC to electronically transmit fingerprints of applicants directly to the Division of Criminal Justice Services, will reduce the time necessary to complete the criminal background investigation of licensees, thereby reducing license application processing time.

Another significant TLC customer service achievement in 2002 was the reduction of waiting time in the Adjudications Tribunal. For many years, the TLC Adjudications Tribunal was a place characterized by long lines, and crowded waiting rooms. As part of its commitment to customer service, the TLC undertook a series of bold initiatives in 2002 to reduce waiting times at the Tribunal and to streamline operations. Several policy changes were made, including:

- Waiving the requirement that a licensee post a cash bond equal to the potential fine amount prior to the hearing;
- Opening a new customer window to expedite the processing of guilty pleas;
- Streamlining adjournment procedures; and
- Changing procedures for processing ALJ decisions, including data entry functions to reduce the time to process a decision after the hearing has been completed. As a result of these reforms, the waiting time for respondents appearing at the Tribunal has been reduced from an average of three hours to less than thirty minutes.

In addition to customer service initiatives, the TLC has also concentrated its efforts on eliminating improper and illegal activities. Most significantly, The Uniformed Services Bureau (USB) began combatting unlicensed and illegal activity at and around hotels, by creating a new squad dedicated to the investigation and enforcement against



illegal and unlicensed activity at hotels. This unit's mission is to gather and evaluate information for future deployment, target quality of life violations, unlicensed for-hire vehicle activity and solicitation, and to enforce parking regulations in and around identified hotels in New York City. This enforcement unit is presently meeting and working with the Hotel Association, and the management and security directors of a number of hotels. The new squad is now deployed on a daily basis, and since its creation in August 2002 has issued 544 summonses and seized 25 unlicensed vehicles.

It appears as though the TLC's efforts in improving its operations are being noticed. In Fiscal Year 2002, the TLC received 10,183 medallion driver complaints, as compared to 14,129 in FY 2000 (a decrease of 39%). Perhaps more importantly, the number of complaints fell consistently in areas such as driver rudeness, which declined by as much as 50% cumulatively over the past two fiscal years. This decrease is rendered more significant by a number of factors. First among these is the fact that there are, today, more drivers - an increase of 9% since FY 2000. With the addition of 400 medallions between 1996 and 1997, there are also more taxicabs. Also of note is the fact that access to the TLC has been significantly enhanced through the installation of twice the number of incoming phone lines at our Customer Service Call Center. There has also been an increase in

To view a copy of the TLC's Annual Report in PDF Format, log onto our website at: www.nyc.gov/taxi.

visits to the TLC's official web site of over 700% since its inception. Lastly, taxicab ridership has seen a steady increase. Initially covered by the New York Post on October 7, 2002, the news received both national and international attention over a month after its initial report. The decrease in complaints may be attributed to the confluence of many initiatives, with the primary three being the creation of stricter guidelines (e.g. the Persistent Violator and Critical Driver Programs), a revamped educational curriculum for medallion taxicab drivers which includes continuing education after one year on the job, and the TLC's use of positive reinforcement to promote enhanced levels of customer service.

With such an active year in 2002 and a new year ahead, the TLC will surely continue its commitment to its licensees and the riding public.

TLC Health Insurance Program Receives Award



Recently, the TLC received an award from the Mayor's Office of Health Insurance Access (MOHIA) for its work with the HealthStat Program, which offers low cost or no-cost health insurance to New Yorkers. Working with MOHIA, the TLC launched a HealthStat campaign, reaching its licensees at TLC facilities, airports, and bases.

Anyone interested in applying for the TLC's Health Insurance Program can call 212-NYC-TAXI, or log onto the TLC's website at www.nyc.gov/taxi.

