



PRESS RELEASE
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**TAXI REFUSAL COMPLAINTS UP; BLOOMBERG
ADMINISTRATION SEEKS COUNCIL'S
SUPPORT IN BEEFING UP PENALTIES**

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***BARUCH COLLEGE STUDENTS AID TLC
EFFORTS WITH SECRET SHOPPER PROJECT***

***TLC URGES NEW YORKERS TO REPORT ALL
INCIDENCES OF SERVICE REFUSAL***

The Bloomberg Administration has called for a steep increase in penalties for taxicab drivers who refuse to serve passengers based on their destination. Incidences of service refusal reported to the NYC Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC) have been on the rise over the past year, jumping from 1,963 between July and December 2009 to 2,341 during the same period in 2010 – an increase of over 38%.

“A core component of taxi service is that the passenger chooses where to go in the five boroughs,” said TLC Commissioner and Chair David Yassky. “Unfortunately, it is getting to be like the bad old days when taxis wouldn’t go to Brooklyn.

“I strongly encourage taxi riders to call 311 each and every time they are denied service.”

The TLC enforces against refusals with a “secret shopper” program, but most summonses are issued as a result of passenger complaints. When the TLC receives a passenger refusal complaint, the facts of the incident and the identity of the driver are confirmed, and a summons is issued to that driver to attend a hearing at the TLC. This hearing is scheduled to the convenience of the complaining consumer, who may participate by telephone if they choose, and involves an Administrative Law Judge hearing from both the driver and passenger, and rendering a decision.

Current service refusal penalties are set by Local Law, and require City Council authorization to modify. The proposed penalties would be \$500 for a first offense, and \$750 and a 30-day suspension for a second offense within 24 months. A current refusal conviction carries a fine of \$200-\$350 for a first offense, and \$350-\$500 and a possible 30-day license suspension for a second offense. A third offense within 36 months would remain mandatory TLC license revocation, as it is today.

The TLC recently enhanced its “secret shopper” enforcement efforts by partnering with Baruch College’s School of Public Affairs, to deploy students to perform field street hail tests in the evening and nighttime. The students receive training and are supervised.

“True to the school’s mission of service, these students are proving themselves to be a valuable resource in our fight against service refusal,” continued Commissioner Yassky. “I hope to use such academic resources again in the future to bolster our efforts.”

The TLC continues to monitor service refusal complaints closely, and strongly encourages any members of the riding public to report incidences at either 311, or at www.nyc.gov/taxi.

“Since the TLC instituted conveniently-scheduled telephone hearings,” concluded Commissioner Yassky, “it’s easier than ever before for passengers to participate in the passenger complaint process.”

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