**Be Safe - Taxi Safety Campaign**

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In the run up to the festive season it is important to raise awareness about the potential dangers in using illegal, unmarked vehicles acting as taxi cabs as a way to travel.

Taxis operating within Reigate and Banstead BC are mainly operated in a safe manner, but there are a number of things you can check to ensure your taxi journeys are as safe as possible.

**√ Hail a taxi**

Hackney Carriages or ‘black cabs’ can be hired from designated ranks or hailed (flagged down) in the street. They can also be pre-booked through a licensed operator.

The vehicles are usually people carriers or purpose-built cabs, but can be standard cars. Cars are easy to identify, with an illuminated ‘taxi’ sign on the roof, a taximeter, and Reigate & Banstead BC Hackney Carriage vehicles have a white and green identification plate with black numbers on the rear. Hackney Carriage vehicles are tested regularly to ensure they are roadworthy.

All Hackney Carriage drivers have an identification badge, and have regular police checks and medicals.

**√ Book a private hire vehicle**

Private hire vehicles, or ‘minicabs’, must be pre-booked through a licensed operator (this means that you cannot flag one down).

These are usually standard cars, but can be minibuses. Reigate & Banstead BC Private Hire vehicles have a yellow identification plate with black numbers on the rear of the vehicle. A private hire vehicle is also tested regularly to ensure it is roadworthy.

As with Hackney Carriages, each driver will have an identification badge and regular police checks and medicals.

**X Avoid unmarked taxis**

‘Bogus taxi’, ‘rogue taxi’, whatever you want to call them, please avoid them. These vehicles will not be displaying official identification marks like an identification plate. The vehicles can be un-roadworthy and if you were to be involved in an accident, you will not be insured.

How to avoid getting into an unmarked taxi:

* hail or book a licensed hackney carriage, or book a private hire vehicle through a licensed operator;
* check that the door stickers and identification plate match the vehicle details;
* make sure the driver shows you his badge and that the photo is a true likeness;
* take a note or picture of the identification plate and/or the car registration number.

It is very important that we highlight the dangers of using unlicensed vehicles and drivers. The licensed drivers in particular go through very stringent scrutiny before they get their licence in terms of a medical report based on DVLA group 2 guidelines and a full DBS check.

If there is any doubt about their fitness to hold a licence they are required to appear before a Licensing Committee who will examine the information placed before them to determine whether the applicants is a fit and proper person to hold such a licence.

There have been a number of cases in other parts of the country where unlicensed taxi drivers have been involved in nasty incidents including rape, assault and theft, which highlight the importance of ensuring that taxi & private hire drivers are suitably vetted through the licensing system.