



Police Powers

Taxi Compliance Information Sheet 7

The police have many powers to enable them to protect the public and carry out their work. There are some exceptions to the rules below but I have not included those in this Sheet as it would be too long to read. In this Sheet, I use “taxi” to mean both Hackney Carriage and Private Hire.

Stopping vehicles.

The police do not need any reason to stop you when driving and they can stop your vehicle at any time or place. Failing to stop is an offence. If a marked police vehicle indicates that you should stop try to :

- Find somewhere safe to pull over
- Use your indicators or hazard lights to indicate you have seen the police and intend to pull over.
- Once stopped, stay in your vehicle. Let the officer come to you.

If an unmarked police vehicle indicates you should stop and you have real concerns whether it is genuine, you should put your hazard lights on and drive carefully to somewhere public nearby like a garage forecourt or supermarket car park.

Checking your documents

It is an offence not to produce your driving licence, Insurance and MoT certificates when required to do so by a police officer. Failure to produce your documents are offences for which you can be prosecuted. You are also required to produce your taxi badge.

What if I don't have my driving licence or insurance ?

The officer may be able to check from computer records and you may be given 7 days in which to produce them at a police station. From a crime prevention point of view it is better not to leave your driving documents in your car when unattended. Many officers accept photos of those documents on your phone, and you could also use apps such as “Driver Codes” to store the information. When you are not working, it is advisable to carry one of your taxi badges or have a photo of it to prove you are a licensed driver. If the officer suspects you are not insured and you cannot prove it is insured there and then, your vehicle may be seized. This is particularly important to remember if you rent or hire the vehicle.

Inspecting vehicles

The police have the power to detain your vehicle for testing for compliance with Road Traffic law and your licensing conditions. Failing to cooperate with a test is an offence.

The police and council also have the power to require a licensee of a vehicle to make it available for inspection by appointment at a suitable place at a reasonable time anywhere within your Council area.

Alcohol and Drug Testing

An officer can require you to give a sample of breath or saliva for a test if they suspect you are drink/drug driving. They can also require a sample if you have an accident or you commit a traffic offence (such as not wearing your seatbelt) even if they do not suspect you are drink/drug driving. If you fail to cooperate you may be arrested and prosecuted. It is likely your Council would decide to revoke your taxi licence.

Removing passengers from vehicles

The police do not have a general power to remove customers from your vehicle unless they are under arrest, have to be searched or are committing a breach of the peace. Currently the Coronavirus Regulations do allow an officer to remove a passenger by force if they fail to wear a mask.

Suspending your vehicle licence

Police Officers have the power to immediately suspend your vehicle licence if they believe it is not fit for purpose. Examples of this could include your plates not being displayed, no suitable cleaning materials for removing coronavirus, accident damage or your taximeter being inaccurate. Once suspended, you may not use the vehicle for Hire and Reward until the suspension is lifted. If your licence is suspended, you may have to return your plates to the Council within 7 days, or you can hand them to the police officer suspending your licence.

Seizing badges and plates

Although you have paid for them, your badges and plates still belong to the Council and can be seized for return to them, depending on the circumstances.

Requiring your name, date of birth and address.

In addition to the requirements above for drivers to identify themselves, the police also have the power to demand your details if they suspect you have committed an offence or have acted in an anti-social way. If you refuse to give your details you may be arrested.

Please visit www.askthe.police.uk for more answers that may interest you.

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This is one of a series of information sheets produced for the benefit of Driver, Vehicle and Operator licence holders by Police Constable 4645 Patrick QUINTON, Taxi Compliance Officer, The Bridewell Police Station, Bristol, BS1 2AA

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To join the "Taxi Cop" WhatsApp group, and get information about PC Quinton's work, news updates and licensing/law updates, send a message to 07469 400832. Your details will not be visible to any other members of the group and your privacy is protected.

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