



Coronavirus – update 10

This Notice provides an important update for taxi and private hire (TPH) licensees following the Prime Minister's statement to the House of Commons on coronavirus¹ (Tuesday 22 September) that included the mandating of face coverings for taxi and private hire passengers and the Government's response to the rising number of coronavirus cases.

We continue to monitor the latest Government advice on coronavirus and will issue further Notices as and when appropriate. We want to remind licensees of the importance of following the advice and guidance contained in previous TPH Notices. This advice and guidance is intended to keep you and your passengers as safe as possible.

This Notice supplements, and should be read in conjunction with, TPH Notices [11/20](#), [10/20](#), [09/20 \(Consolidation\)](#) and [08/20](#) – all of which contain important information and practical advice for licensees.

This Notice provides an important update on face coverings, reiterates the importance of personal and vehicle hygiene and also contains updates on increased capacity at vehicle licensing inspection sites, licensee health and wellbeing guidance and Q-Parks.

Licensees should continue to familiarise themselves with updated Government guidance and advice.

Face coverings for passengers

The Prime Minister has announced that, from Thursday 24 September, face coverings **must** be worn by taxi and private hire passengers, unless they have a

valid exemption. As a result of this announcement, regulations have been made to make it a criminal offence for passengers to board a taxi or private hire vehicle without wearing a face covering unless there is a valid exemption.

A copy of the regulations can be found

here: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2020/592/regulation/2

Information on face covering exemptions is provided on the TfL website².

As a driver you are entitled to refuse to carry a passenger who is not wearing a face covering, unless they have a valid exemption.

If a passenger refuses to wear a face covering or refuses to leave the vehicle, you should request police assistance.

A passenger could receive a minimum £200 fine (reduced to £100 if paid within 14 days) for the first offence. This will double each time they are caught not wearing a face covering, up to a maximum of £6,400.

A passenger may also be prosecuted for failing to wear a face covering; for obstructing a relevant officer or refusing the directions of a relevant officer.

Face coverings for drivers

We have previously issued TPH Notices, [11/20](#), [10/20](#) and [8/20](#) that state that taxi and private hire drivers are expected to wear face coverings **at all times** when in their taxi or private hire vehicle. This remains the case, unless you have a valid exemption.

This is an important safety measure to protect licensees, passengers and wider society and is now even more important in the context of the rising number of coronavirus cases.

Face covering compliance activity

The aim is to achieve high rates of compliance with wearing face coverings, rather than high rates of enforcement.

We are pleased that the majority of drivers are already complying with these clear instructions and Compliance Officers will continue to engage with both drivers and passengers.

However, if a driver fails to comply, without a valid exemption, it may result in licensing action.

Personal and vehicle hygiene

It is critical that all licensees observe the following key behaviours:

- **HANDS** – Wash your hands regularly and for at least 20 seconds
- **FACE** – Cover your face in enclosed spaces, especially where social distancing may be difficult and where you will come into contact with people you do not normally meet
- **SPACE** – Stay 2 metres apart where possible, or 1 metre with extra precautions in place

Licensees are also expected to take the following personal and vehicle hygiene precautions as a minimum:

- Wash your hands regularly or, if you are unable to, use hand sanitiser
- Drivers should keep a bottle of hand sanitising gel in their vehicle. It is recommended this be a minimum 60 per cent alcohol. Alternatively keep a large bottle of water and a bar/bottle of soap
- Wash your hands or use sanitising gel after handling cash
- Do not touch your face
- Regularly clean frequently touched surfaces in vehicles, e.g. door handles, window controls and seat belts, with sanitising wipes or spray
- Taxi drivers should also regularly clean card payment devices

- Partitions should be cleaned regularly, including between passenger journeys and changes of driver
- Licensees who share a taxi or private hire vehicle should regularly clean the steering wheel and instruments
- Drivers should avoid using the recirculated air option for the car's ventilation system when carrying passengers and instead use the car's vents to bring in fresh air from outside or lower the vehicle's windows
- If conditions allow, the car windows should be kept open
- Passengers should be encouraged to use contactless payment or to pay online wherever possible

Social distancing

Where possible, you should maintain 2 metres distance.

If you cannot keep a 2 metre distance, reduce the risk to yourself and others by maintaining a 1 metre distance where possible, and taking suitable precautions including:

- Seating passengers as far away from the driver as possible, ideally in the rear passenger-side seat
- We recommend that passengers do not sit in the front passenger seat in PHVs
- Licensees should ask passengers to handle their own personal bags and belongings during pick-up and drop-off
- Drivers should maintain a 2 metre distance from people wherever possible, including at taxi ranks and other areas where drivers and/or passengers may congregate. TfL has added social distancing signage at busy ranks where there is a risk of overcrowding
- Licensees and passengers should avoid physical contact and try to face away from one another as much as possible
- Keep the time you spend near other people as short as possible, ideally under 15 minutes
- Be aware of the surfaces you or others touch

Private Hire Operators

The Government has provided guidance for transport operators, including licensees providing taxi and private hire services, to use and share³.

Private hire operators and taxi apps and booking platforms should communicate these messages on their services and communications channels so that passengers are aware of the need to wear a face covering and other requirements.

Taxi and private hire drivers should follow the guidance on face coverings⁴.

Private hire operators and taxi apps and booking platforms should support drivers in using face coverings safely and provide communications advising them to:

- Wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser before putting a face covering on, and after removing it
- Avoid touching their face or face covering, to prevent contamination with germs from their hands – this is particularly important
- Change their face covering if it becomes damp or if they've touched it
- Continue to wash their hands regularly
- Change and wash their face covering daily
- If the material is washable, wash in line with manufacturer's instructions – if it's not washable, dispose of it safely
- Practise social distancing wherever possible

Taxi and private hire drivers should also be made aware face that coverings can prevent some disabled people from accessing oral information and instructions (from staff and fellow passengers).

Coronavirus signage

Following the mandating of face coverings for passengers in taxis and private hire vehicles, we are introducing a temporary exemption to allow the display of coronavirus-related signage with specific wording.

This exemption allows taxi and private hire licensees to display signage in a taxi or private hire vehicle advising passengers to wear a face covering.

The following form of words can be used to advise passengers:

- A face covering must be worn at all times in this vehicle, unless you have a valid exemption
- The driver is entitled to refuse to carry anyone who is not wearing a face covering

However, signage may not include:

- Information or instructions that are not related to coronavirus
- Names or logos for private hire operators or taxi companies

As part of their duties taxi and private hire Compliance Officers will ensure any signage displayed in licensed vehicles complies with this guidance.

We are also developing our own signage and we will update licensees when the signage has been finalised, including how to obtain it, should you wish to display it in your taxi or private hire vehicle.

We continue to encourage private hire operators and taxi app companies and radio circuits to advise passengers, at the time of making the booking and as part of a booking confirmation, of the requirement for passengers to wear a face covering and that they will not be carried if they fail to do so.

Increasing capacity at vehicle licensing inspection sites

As of 28 September 2020, we are increasing the number of staff across all of our vehicle licensing inspection sites to manage any increase in demand and to help prevent delays.

A number of safety measures have been implemented at the vehicle licensing inspection centres, in line with Public Health England guidance, including: social distancing markers, hand sanitiser stations, providing PPE to staff and minimising contact between staff and those presenting vehicles for inspection.

Customers presenting a vehicle for inspection should wear a face covering, unless they have a valid exemption. If they do not, we will not inspect the vehicle. Please familiarise yourself with the requirements detailed in your vehicle booking confirmation letter.

The increase in demand for vehicle licensing inspections is likely to lead to the volume of phone calls exceeding our capacity to answer them. We would therefore recommend licensees use the [online booking portal](#) – which allows you to book or reschedule an appointment 24-hours a day, seven days a week.

We will not be able to accommodate re-scheduling of appointments over the phone and would ask that if licensees have to do so, in exceptional circumstances, they make use of the online booking portal.

Q-Parks scheme extended until 31 December 2020

The owners of ZEC taxis can obtain an access card to use the rapid charge points in 10 Q-Park car parks. Taxis can stay for up to an hour to charge. Taxi drivers can then reclaim the £2 entry fee paid on entering the Q-Parks.

To continue to support taxi drivers in accessing these rapid charge points in central London locations, we are extending the scheme up until 31 December 2020.

Further information, including how you can submit a claim form and your receipts, will be made available here: www.tfl.gov.uk/info-for/taxis-and-private-hire/emissions-standards-for-taxis

Licensee health and wellbeing

We continue to encourage licensees to prioritise their mental and physical wellbeing during these uncertain times. It is important to be self-aware and spot any early warning signs of feeling physically or mentally unwell and to seek help and support at the earliest opportunity.

Our dedicated [Taxi and Private Hire Health and Wellbeing webpage](#) remains available and lists a wide range of organisations that provide specialist support and advice on mental and physical health, a number of which have developed specialist coronavirus-related advice.

The Government has also produced [guidance for the public on the mental health and wellbeing aspects of coronavirus](#), which is regularly updated with advice on how to look after your mental health and wellbeing during the coronavirus outbreak.

We encourage all licensees to familiarise themselves with these resources and to seek support where needed.

Please do stay safe and well.

Graham Robinson

**General Manager
Taxi and Private Hire
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¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-commons-statement-on-coronavirus-22-september-2020>

² <https://tfl.gov.uk/campaign/face-coverings#on-this-page-2>

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-transport-guidance-for-operators>

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing#face-coverings>

Previous TPH Notices can be viewed [here](#); for additional licensing information, please visit tfl.gov.uk/tph