

Protective Screens in Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles



Introduction

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, we have recently received enquiries from drivers regarding the installation of protective screens in their vehicles between the front and rear seats.

The Licensing Team appreciates that anything which helps to protect drivers and passengers from the spread of coronavirus is to be welcomed but it is important that the installation of any aftermarket equipment is safe and doesn't introduce new and unintended safety hazards.

Following comprehensive safety testing, vehicles will have achieved European Whole Vehicle Type Approval and changing or adding to the interior of the vehicle can potentially alter the 'type approval' of the vehicle. Additionally, badly fitted, inappropriately constructed units, or products made using unsafe materials, could have a catastrophic impact in the event of a vehicle being involved in a road traffic accident.

As such, prior to voluntarily installing any screening device in your vehicle you must contact us at licensing@swdevon.gov.uk to confirm that you have read, understood and agree to install/maintain your chosen device in accordance with this guidance document. You will also need to confirm the type of device that you are installing and provide confirmation from your insurance company that they have no objection to the device being installed in your vehicle. In addition, you will need to send us a photograph of the screen in situ once it has been fitted.

If you have installed an approved safety screen in your vehicle you must ensure that you clean the screen after each passenger journey, along with other hard surfaces such as door handles, window winders, seat belts, car payment devices, the rear or the front seats and other surfaces passengers may have touched using normal household disinfectant. Drivers should then wash/sanitise their own hands. A thorough clean of the vehicle with normal cleaning products should be completed at the end of each shift/working day.

General requirements

Due to the wide and diverse variety of vehicles and different types of safety partition screens available, it is not possible to offer specific purchase or installation advice in respect of these devices.

The decision to install a safety screen is for the driver, proprietor and/or operator to make, after carrying out your own risk assessment. In making this decision, you should consider a number of issues, including, but not limited to, the following:

- i. Ensuring that all relevant safety, UK and European Community (EC) legislation is complied with, including the Road Vehicle (Construction and Use) Regulations.
- ii. Ensuring that this guidance is complied with.
- iii. Consideration of health and safety responsibilities and personal liability to employees, hirers and passengers.
- iv. Informing insurers of the intention to fit a device – **we will require confirmation from your insurance company that they have no objection to the installation of the device in your vehicle.**

Specific requirements

If a driver safety partition screen is installed in a vehicle being used for taxi or private hire purposes, we will require the following specific requirements to be satisfied:

- i. The device must be purpose-built to use as a safety screen within a vehicle and must be suitable for your specific make and model of vehicle.
- ii. The installation and / or design of the device must not adversely influence or interfere in any way with vehicle type approval or any driver and passenger safety systems (including airbags).
- iii. Certification from the vehicle's manufacturer should be sought to confirm that the screen does not compromise the integrity of the vehicle structure. iv. The screen must be approved by MIRA or other comparable independent product engineering, testing, consultancy and certification organisation.
- v. Screens should be constructed of PETg or polycarbonate. vi. Screens must be professionally and securely fitted and maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications and recommendations. vii. The device installed should not be significantly changed or modified from the original manufactured design. In cases where it is necessary to modify the original design of the device (for example, to facilitate installation of the device in the vehicle), assurances should be sought from the supplier / installer that the modification does not raise any concerns in relation to safety of the device and complies with the relevant UK and / or EC safety legislation.
- viii. Devices should remain clear and be free of scratches, clouding or stickers which would impede the drivers or passengers' visibility.
- ix. Screens should not impede the driver's movement or communication with passengers.
- x. Screens should not impede driver or passenger entry or egress to the vehicle or present a trip hazard.

Compliance

Vehicle owners, drivers and operators should seek to fully comply with these guidelines. If during a licensing inspection (or during a compliance inspection) it is found that these guidelines have not been complied with the vehicle may have its licence suspended (or an application may be refused).