



Northern Territory minibus drivers and operators code of conduct

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Introduction

What is the Code of Conduct?

The Code of Conduct is a set of service requirements designed to set minimum minibus industry protocol and standards of customer service.

These are service standards that can be improved upon by licensed operators, drivers and communications networks as they seek to differentiate themselves from other competitors in the commercial passenger vehicle industry. To do this the Northern Territory Minibus Industry is expected to maintain high standards and provide a high quality of service to the hirer.

The impression visitors often gain of the Northern Territory can be influenced by the quality of service received from the driver of a commercial passenger vehicle.

Why have a Code?

This Code of Conduct has been developed through consultation between the Minibus Industry, the Passenger Transport Division of the Department of Transport and other user groups. The Code of Conduct is designed to advise drivers and operators of their responsibilities and obligations to comply with the applicable legislation.

This Code of Conduct is also available to members of the general public to advise them of the minimum standard of service they can expect from the minibus industry.

Minibus drivers are expected to be professional in their approach and to drive safely and defensively in all weather and traffic conditions.

It is in the interest of owners and operators to provide professional training for all drivers to ensure a high quality of service is provided to all customers.

It is essential that operators and drivers are aware of the legislative requirements and manage any minibus operation in accordance with these requirements.

In addition to this Code of Conduct, drivers and operators are required to comply with all the conditions set out in the Commercial Vehicle Licence (CVL).

What status does the Code have?

The Director, Commercial Passenger (Road) Transport, under section 72(1) of the Commercial Passenger (Road) Transport Act, has approved this Code of Conduct. Drivers and operators of the commercial passenger vehicles (minibus) are required to comply with this Code of Conduct when carrying passengers for hire or reward. Contravention of this Code of Conduct when carrying passengers for hire or reward may result in fines (up to \$2000) and possible restrictions of the minibus operation.

Other relevant legislation is, but not restricted to:

- Motor Vehicles Act
- Traffic Regulations
- Minibus Regulations
- Commercial Passenger (Miscellaneous) Regulations

Copies of the relevant Acts and Regulations are available at the Government Printing Office in Darwin and the Town Library in Alice Springs. The Code of Conduct is available from all Motor Vehicle Registry Offices in the Northern Territory.

Passenger Expectations

Conditions relating to the carriage of passengers

Passengers travelling in commercial passenger vehicles (minibus) expect the operator and driver to conduct themselves in a professional and courteous manner and to comply with all the relevant legislation. Passengers expect a high level of service in accordance with the appropriate standards prescribed in this Code of Conduct.

- These expectations are, but not restricted to:
- Charge the appropriate fare in accordance with distance or sector.
- Informed about the conditions of operation of a minibus.
- Timely response to all hirings.
- Clean and presentable driver and vehicle.
- Good knowledge of local routes, major and tourist destinations.
- Friendly, courteous and helpful driver behaviour.
- Assistance with luggage and doors.
- A sense of safety while travelling.
- Road rules to be observed at all times.

If a passenger believes they did not receive the appropriate standard of service from a minibus driver or operator, they may lodge a complaint to the relevant authority. In the first instance this would be the minibus network provider which that minibus is operating for, Police or the Commercial Passenger Vehicles Branch of the Department of Transport. The complaint will be investigated and, if the allegations are proven, appropriate action will be taken.

Passengers with Special Needs

Passengers with special needs are to be given all reasonable assistance based on consideration of their specific needs. Passengers in wheelchairs must be transported in accordance with all safety guidelines and recommendations specifically appropriate to the use of wheelchair restraint.

Passengers with disabilities, who are members of the Northern Territory Taxi Subsidy Scheme, may use the Smartcard as part payment of the prescribed fare. Passengers in the scheme are entitled to pay up to 50% of the fare using the Smartcard when travelling in a normal minibus, and up to 75% of the fare using vouchers when travelling in a wheelchair modified minibus. Drivers cannot demand that these passengers pay the full fare with the Smartcard only.

All States and Territories issue members of their Taxi Subsidy Schemes with special vouchers to use when travelling interstate. Conditions for the use of each of these interstate vouchers are printed on each voucher, and differ from State to State.

All of these vouchers are green and gold in colour. The Northern Territory provides mutual recognition for these interstate vouchers and all Northern Territory minibus drivers must accept them.

The Vehicle

The Traffic Regulations require all vehicles, including minibuses, to be in a roadworthy and safe condition at all times. They are required to be maintained to a standard, approved by the Registrar of Motor Vehicles, while registered and operating as a commercial passenger vehicle.

The Registrar, or his delegates, may inspect or require a minibus to be inspected at any time. If a vehicle is found to be unroadworthy, unsafe, cosmetically poor or dirty in appearance, remedial action may be taken against the driver or operator. The operation of that vehicle may be restricted until the situation is rectified.

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A driver operating a vehicle that has mechanical defects may be issued with a Defect Notice and/or a summons may be issued. A vehicle under such a notice will not be able to operate for hire or reward until the identified mechanical faults are repaired and the Defect Notice removed by the Transport Inspectors or Northern Territory Police in some remote areas.

A driver operating a vehicle that does not achieve the approved minimum cosmetic standard may be issued a traffic infringement notice or a summons may be issued. Vehicles that do not meet these minimum standards will not be able to operate for hire or reward until the condition of the vehicle is such that it meets the required standards.

Driver Appearance

The minibus drivers shall maintain a neat and tidy appearance. The minimum allowable standard of dress is:

Male

1. Full covered shoes and socks.
2. Shirt with collar and sleeves.
3. Tailored slacks, shorts, full-length denim pants or tailored denim shorts.

Female

1. Shoes with flat heel, less than 50 mm.
2. Tailored slacks, shorts, skirt, full-length denim pants or denim shorts.
3. Shirt with collar.
4. Dress.

Interpretations

Neat and Tidy

Clean and free from stains and wrinkles. Not frayed, torn or holed, or having loose threads detracting from the original condition when new. All buttons are to be done up except for the top collar button, which is optional.

Tailored

Tailored clothing is generally designed to present a higher standard of dress. Sports or fitness clothing, standard stubby type shorts and Lycra etc are not acceptable.

An operator or network provider may introduce a company/network uniform. The uniform must meet these minimum dress requirements and requires approval by the Director. Drivers operating within that network or company are required to wear that uniform at all times, unless that uniform is unavailable from that company or network.

General

Individual companies may submit their uniform to the Director for approval. The Director may approve that dress standard as the minimum standard of dress for that company.

Comment

Drivers and operators of minibuses working with a company or network, which has had a uniform approved, are to comply with that company or network's uniform standard. Negotiations

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relating to supply and or costing of these uniforms are the responsibility of the drivers, operators and networks.

Certificate of Identity

All drivers must be appropriately licensed under the Motor Vehicles Act. That driver then requires a "h" endorsement on their licence prior to commencing work as a commercial passenger driver. Minibus drivers require a certificate of identity, commonly known as an ID Card. This card must be displayed in a prominent location clearly visible to all passengers at all times. Drivers, who fail to display their ID card as required or who drive a minibus without obtaining one, may be subject to remedial action.

If a driver fails to display or has not obtained an ID card, that driver will not be able to drive any minibus for hire or reward until the situation is rectified. Only the ID card belonging to the driver operating the minibus should be displayed. Using or displaying another driver's ID card may result in a fine or a summons.

Driver and Vehicle Performance

The minibus industry should endeavour to employ drivers who have the ability, maturity and high degree of professionalism, to enable them to deal with all types of people and situations.

It is expected that drivers will have a good knowledge of the:

- Commercial Passenger (Road) Transport Act;
- Minibus Regulations; and
- Code of Conduct

and observe these at all times.

The driver of a Minibus is required to comply with all the relevant road rules when driving that vehicle.

The driver is also required to drive the vehicle in such a way that the passengers are afforded a smooth and stress free ride with a feeling of safety.

Comments

This Code of Conduct is designed to assist in providing a high quality of service to all minibus passengers. The Code of Conduct is not intended to provide for all the required actions, which will ensure that the passenger leaves the minibus satisfied with the service received. All operators and drivers should strive to improve the quality of service at all times.

It should be noted that the minibus industry has an important road safety role to encourage intoxicated persons not to drive. Drivers are, however, entitled to judge whether the prospective passenger is likely to cause a nuisance or hazard. An understanding of the relevant legislation will assist the driver in appropriate action.

Industry Training

Requirements

Operators are required to provide professional training for drivers and drivers are required to undertake such training to ensure high quality of service is provided to all minibus customers.

It is essential that drivers entering the minibus industry are properly trained to provide high levels of service. Similarly, it is important that drivers already in the industry are provided with

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regular refresher training to ensure they keep up with changing customer expectations and legislation. Shortcomings in a driver's behaviour may require that driver to undertake complete re-training or specific sections of re-training at that driver's own expense. Operators and network providers may set a training or refresher training schedule for all drivers. They may also request individual drivers to undertake full or part re-training if shortcomings are identified in that driver's behaviour or conduct.

Minibus drivers will enter the industry in one of the Gazetted minibus areas and may then relocate to one of the other Gazetted areas. It is the responsibility of a minibus operator and or network provider to ascertain each relocating driver's knowledge of the local area. Relocating drivers may be required to undergo location re-training to improve their knowledge of the new area.

Fatigue Management

Under the Work Health legislation all employees have a duty of care to provide a safe workplace. The Commercial Passenger Industry is no different.

Employers have a duty of care to identify the hazards in the workplace, assess the risks and control the risks. In this case the hazard is the effect of fatigue which can be caused by extended periods drivers spend behind the wheel of the minibus transporting passengers and themselves from location to location. The risk assessment can be high and the control is to implement a fatigue management system in accordance with the Northern Territory Fatigue Management Code of Practice.

The Code

Operators, owners and drivers are required to follow this Code of Conduct at all times when carrying passengers for hire or reward.

Driver Obligations and Behaviour

1. Carry a current street directory for the area of operation noted on the Commercial Vehicle Licence issued to that minibus.
2. A driver must display his/her own identification card in a conspicuous position clearly visible to all seating positions in the vehicle.
3. Be polite and courteous to passengers and provide assistance in loading and unloading luggage.
4. Be understanding and sensitive to passengers' needs, including the needs of people with disabilities as noted elsewhere in this Code of Conduct.
5. Comply with Northern Territory and Interstate Taxi Subsidy Scheme conditions as set down in this Code of Conduct.
6. Carry a copy of the Minibus Regulations, and the Minibus Operators Code of Conduct in the vehicle for immediate reference at the request of a passenger or intending passenger or an Inspector acting in the execution of that Inspector's duty.
7. Maintain the vehicle to the minimum cosmetic and mechanical standards.
8. Drivers must maintain the minimum dress standards stated elsewhere in this document.
9. Where the minibus company or network has submitted a uniform and that uniform has been approved, it must be worn by the driver of that company or network at all times while the vehicle is being used for hire or reward. A driver that is not employed by that company or network shall not wear that company's or network's approved uniform.
10. A driver shall not to use a communication device, including a mobile phone, to coordinate or control any other commercial passenger vehicle, regardless if the driver is using a hand free device.
11. Drivers are not to use a communication device, including a mobile phone, for personal conversations when carrying passengers; this includes a hand free device (emergency situations excepted).
12. Drivers are not to take or hold any item or goods as bond until the passenger has furnished the driver with the prescribed fee, unless a receipt for that item is issued and the communications network is notified.
13. Drivers are not to hold or take any passengers' cash as credit in advance for future journeys, booked or otherwise, unless a receipt is issued and the communications network is notified.
14. Drivers are not to hold or take any form of passengers' credit/debit or savings card, or other electronic cash transaction card, for any reason other than handling a card during the process of performing a transaction for the payment of travel that has just ceased.

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15. A Minibus driver must not park on another Commercial Passenger Vehicle's approved rank even if required to do so by a passenger.
16. When parked on a rank, place the minibus at the first position available on the rank or immediately behind the rearmost vehicle on that rank and move forward as soon as the front moves forward or leaves the rank.
17. Not to put the minibus in motion unless all doors are correctly closed.
18. Not to open the side door on a minibus which is parked on a rank unless the vehicle is at the front of the rank or unless engaged in a hiring by a passenger.