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## **IRU POSITION ON COMPULSORY WEARING OF SAFETY BELTS IN TAXIS**

IRU Position on compulsory wearing of safety belts in taxis, adopted at the meeting of the IRU Group "Taxis and hire-cars with driver" on 7 November 2007.

### **I. BACKGROUND**

Road safety is of paramount importance to taxi companies and their drivers, since they are transporting the most precious cargo – their customers. Accidents often have dramatic consequences for individual passengers and taxi drivers, whilst damaging a company's business, as well as the image and the market share of the sector itself.

EU legislation (Directives 91/671/EEC and 2003/20/EC) provides for the possibility for national authorities to exempt taxi drivers from the compulsory use of safety belts.

A recent IRU survey among its Taxi Member Associations showed that the situation varies considerably in the individual countries, including the EU Member States. The survey also revealed that a trend towards a generalisation of the compulsory use of belts by taxi drivers can be observed, even in cases where passengers are carried on board. However, in many countries, for reasons mainly related to security (assault), such legal obligation does not exist for taxi drivers when carrying customers on board.

Scientific evidence shows that wearing of safety belts can contribute to reducing significantly the seriousness of accidents and the severity of injury for both drivers and passengers in the event of a crash. As a matter of fact, available figures show that the risk of dying in a head-on collision:

- for a belted driver sitting in front of a non-belted passenger is increased by a factor of 2.27,
- for a non-belted passenger on the rear seat is increased by a factor of 2.71.

Indeed, according to the European Transport Safety Council, universal seat belt use alone could prevent 6,000 deaths and 380,000 injuries every year in Europe alone.

A pro-active taxi industry commitment can not only improve safety for drivers and their passengers, but it can also contribute to a better business environment and raise the profile and acceptance of industry initiatives and proposals.

The IRU Taxi Driver Checklist (2004) strongly recommends the use of the safety belt by both the taxi driver and his passengers, whilst at the same time advising the driver to encourage passengers to wear their safety belt and, in cases where a legal obligation exists, to inform passengers about this obligation.

## **II. IRU POSITION**

Recognising the absolute priority of passengers' and drivers' safety, the IRU is in favour of a compulsory wearing of safety belts by all taxi occupants, including the taxi driver.

Governments, trade associations, taxi companies and their drivers should join their efforts to improve the situation and increase resolutely the rate of wearing safety belts by all taxi occupants.

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