

Safety information for travelling in a wheelchair accessible vehicle

FACT SHEET

Background

Wheelchair accessible vehicles play a vital role in supporting people travelling in wheelchairs to get where they need to go, safely and conveniently.

The NSW Point to Point Transport Commissioner is committed to ensuring safe journeys for all and works with the point to point transport industry and passengers travelling in wheelchairs.

This fact sheet outlines important safety information for people who travel in wheelchairs in wheelchair accessible vehicles, and answers frequently asked questions.

Making every ride a safe ride

In NSW, there are safety laws that apply to providing taxi and hire vehicle (including rideshare) services.

Additional safety standards and obligations apply to people involved in providing wheelchair accessible passenger services, for instance, the minimum size of the space for a passenger in a wheelchair, compliance with the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport, requirements to carry tie-down straps and driver training for securing passengers and assisting them into and out of a wheelchair accessible vehicle.

Passengers travelling in wheelchair accessible vehicles and people who book wheelchair accessible vehicle passenger services can also play a role in supporting every ride to be a safe ride. For instance, where possible, the safest way to travel in a vehicle is for the passenger to sit in one of the vehicle's seats and use a seatbelt.

If a passenger cannot sit in one of the vehicle's seats, they should travel in a wheelchair which is designed for use in a vehicle - otherwise it can be dangerous.



Which wheelchairs are safe to sit in while travelling in a wheelchair accessible vehicle?

Passengers who need to remain seated in their wheelchair as they travel from place to place in a wheelchair accessible vehicle should have a compliant wheelchair that meets Australian Standard AS/NZS 3696.19.

Not all wheelchairs are suitable to remain seated in during transfer and travel.

Suitable wheelchairs must:

- be designed for the passenger travelling in a wheelchair to use as a seat while travelling in a wheelchair accessible vehicle
- safely support the size and weight of the passenger.

If a wheelchair complies with Australian Standard AS/NZS 3696.19 it will be safe and suitable to remain seated in during transfer and travel. A suitable wheelchair may have a label showing it complies with AS/NZS 3696.19.

A wheelchair manufacturer's product guidelines should also indicate if it is safe to remain seated in during transfer and travel.

Mobility aids, such as walking frames, scooters, princess chairs, tub chairs and other high-care chairs are not safe to remain seated in during transfer and travel. There are a variety of reasons why they are not safe including low backs, single pole seats, insufficient base/frame to attach tie-down straps or no headrest.

A passenger must be seated in one of the vehicle's seats, secured with a seatbelt, before the driver loads and secures a mobility aid.

A mobility aid must only be carried as luggage in the wheelchair accessible vehicle if it can be safely loaded and secured. This is for the safety of the passenger, the driver and any other passengers in the vehicle.

For more information about wheelchairs that are suitable for use in wheelchair accessible vehicles, see our [Quick Reference Guide](#).

What can passengers expect when being transferred into a wheelchair accessible vehicle?

The driver will check, for instance, that:

- the passenger is secure in their wheelchair before being transferred
- the passenger is transferred into the vehicle so they are facing forward (it's usually the best position)
- the passenger is secured with the vehicle's own seatbelt (not just with the wheelchair's pelvic belt)
- once transferred, the wheelchair's brakes have been locked
- the wheelchair is secured by two tie-down straps from the front and two from the back
- any headrest is positioned directly behind the passenger's head
- any removable parts, such as tray tables, are taken off and stored securely.

Examples of suitable wheelchairs:



Examples of mobility devices that are not safe to remain seated in during transfer and travel:



What happens when a passenger has an unsuitable wheelchair?

The driver will check whether the wheelchair is suitable for transfer and travel in a wheelchair accessible vehicle. If it is unsuitable, and the passenger is not able or willing to sit in one of the vehicle's seats, the driver cannot transport the passenger – it is not safe to do so.

In this case, the driver will usually contact their service provider and seek advice or alternatives.



What can passengers expect when being transferred out of a wheelchair accessible vehicle?

The driver will check that:

- the passenger is secure in the wheelchair, ready for transfer
- after transfer, the wheelchair's brakes have been locked and the wheelchair is parked in a safe place.

Are the tie-down straps sufficient?

Standard tie-down straps can secure a load of up to 120kg. The weight of the wheelchair and the passenger should be added together when calculating whether standard tie-down straps are suitable. It is recommended that this be considered and checked with the provider when booking. Alternative tie-down straps may be needed.

What is the process for reporting safety incidents that happen in a wheelchair accessible vehicle?

Report safety incidents immediately to the company who provided the transport, providing as much information as possible, including:

- date/time of journey
- name/ID number of the driver
- vehicle registration number
- specific details of the incident.

If the response from the service provider is not considered satisfactory, reach out to the Point to Point Transport Commissioner on 131 727 or pointtopoint.nsw.gov.au/contact-us

What is the process for reporting fare-related issues?

Report fare-related issues to the Taxi Fare Hotline 1800 500 410 or report using the online form.

Examples of fare-related issues include:

- failure to use the meter
- overcharging
- refusing a fare if a passenger does not agree to a fixed fare
- refusing a fare where the trip is considered too short.

Specifically, for passengers travelling in a wheelchair, issues may include:

- starting the meter before the passenger has been transferred
- continuing to run the meter after arriving at the destination
- using multiple TTSS vouchers.



How do I book a wheelchair accessible taxi in NSW?

In metropolitan Sydney contact 'Wheelchair Book & Ride', Sydney's central booking system for wheelchair accessible taxis. Call 139 000 or book online transportnsw.info/bookandride.

Alternatively, for a list of providers authorised by the Commissioner, please go to our website pointtopoint.nsw.gov.au/what-a-service-provider/find-a-service-provider.

What details should be given when making a booking?

When booking, give the number of wheelchairs to be transported, vehicle preference of the passenger(s), pick-up and drop-off locations and any other information necessary, particularly around passenger needs.

For example, a person who uses a wheelchair may be able to sit in one of the vehicle's seats for the journey and prefer a lower 'sedan-type' vehicle as it is easier for them to get into and out of.

Does the NSW government offer financial assistance towards travel in taxis?

The Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme (TTSS) supports NSW residents who are unable to use public transport because of a severe and permanent disability. Eligible people receive a subsidy of 50% of a taxi fare, up to a maximum subsidy of \$60, and only pay the remaining fare. This includes travel in wheelchair accessible taxis.

Further Information

- [Wheelchair Book & Ride | NSW Government](#)
- [Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme | NSW Government](#)
- [Disability Gateway - Transport | Commonwealth Government](#)
- [The Point to Point Transport Commissioner's website](#)
- [Spinal Cord Injuries Australia \(SCIA\)](#)

