



Duress Alarms

To ensure the safety of drivers and passengers in metropolitan areas, all taxis providing rank and hail services must be fitted with a compliant and fully operational duress alarm as well as an efficient system to monitor and respond to the alarm quickly if activated.

This safety alert calls for action by all responsible persons to inspect, check and test that the duress alarm system of taxis providing rank or hail services in the Sydney Metropolitan, Central Coast, Newcastle and Wollongong areas (specified areas) is compliant and in working order.

Background

A duress alarm system allows the driver of a taxi to discreetly call for help when the safety of the driver and/or passengers is threatened. When activated, the system will notify the service provider with the location of the taxi.

Due to the anonymous nature of providing rank and hail passenger services, a duress alarm system is vital to ensure the safety of taxi drivers and their passengers.

Drivers must be able to notify quickly and easily of threats, and raise an alarm when safety is at risk.

The Issue

The Commissioner's Authorised Officers have found that the duress alarm systems being used by a small number of service providers operating taxis in the specified areas are not compliant with the system specifications.

Examples of the non-compliances that have been observed are:

- When the duress alarm is activated by the driver, there is no one monitoring the duress alarm system.
- If the duress alarm has been activated, there is no logging/recording of the activation for incident management purposes.
- When a duress alarm is activated by the driver, the vehicle's location report is not always being sent immediately to the monitoring facility and re-sent at least every 5 seconds.

Action Required

All taxis providing rank and hail services in the specified areas should be inspected to ensure they have appropriate systems to monitor duress alarms and that these alarms are being continuously monitored, as described above.

Taxis providing rank and hail services should also be checked to ensure each vehicle is fitted with a compliant duress alarm system that is in working order, and that:

- the duress alarm system is always 'powered on' and fully operational
- the boot time for the alarm to 'power on' is less than 30 seconds.

NSW has strong safety laws to ensure the safety of taxi, rideshare and hire vehicle passenger services, and every provider must comply with these safety standards.

All service providers must ensure their vehicles are appropriately registered and safe to be driven on the road, and drivers must clear a series of background checks before they can provide passenger services.

As part of the Commissioner's ongoing oversight of the industry, enforcement action is taken against service providers who are not meeting their safety obligations.

Responsibilities

The provider of a taxi service (other than an affiliated provider) or the facilitator of an affiliated taxi service which work in the specified areas must provide and operate an efficient duress alarm system that:

- monitors the activation of the duress alarms
- ensures the prompt response of the provider when a duress alarm is activated.

The taxi licence holder must ensure that the taxis associated with their licence have a compliant and functioning duress alarm system if they operate in the specified areas.

Drivers should perform a pre-departure check every time they drive a vehicle. Drivers must not provide rank and hail passenger services in the specified areas if the duress alarm system is not compliant or in working order.

Resources

More information on safety standards for taxis and duress alarm systems can be found on the Point to Point Transport Commissioner's website:

- [Safety Standards for taxis](#)
- [Taxi operating areas fact sheet](#)
- [Transport for NSW Taxi Security System standards](#)