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Dangers of Ridesharing Services

There are many dangers that the public should be aware of when using a ridesharing service such as Uber and Lyft. It is becoming quite common to learn about crimes regarding Uber and Lyft services. Particular crimes that have been receiving some attention are sexual assault and sexual abuse crimes. According to a CNN Business report, there have been “103 Uber drivers in the U.S. who have been accused of sexually assaulting or abusing their passengers in the past four years. The drivers were arrested, are wanted by police, or have been named in civil suits related to the incidents. At least 31 drivers have been convicted for crimes ranging from forcible touching and false imprisonment to rape, and dozens of criminal and civil cases are pending, CNN found”. This investigation was conducted in early 2018. Unfortunately, there is no public data in regard to these crimes or any crimes for ridesharing company drivers.

The following is excerpt from a cnet.com article by Dara Kerr:

*“What exactly do passengers agree to when they use Uber? That depends on whom you ask. “People don't know what they're getting into when they get into one of these cars, they don't know what they're getting into when they download the app,” said lawyer Chris Dolan of Dolan Law Firm, who is representing a 6-year-old girl struck and killed by an Uber driver earlier this year. “They're giving Uber a free pass -- up to death.” Dolan claims Uber's terms and conditions are a way for the company to absolve itself of any liability in cases of injury or accident and to avoid responsibility for a driver's actions. “It completely covers their a** and says ‘We're not responsible for anything that happens to you, period,’” Dolan said. “It says, ‘You can be raped, you can be killed, you can be murdered, and it's not our responsibility.””*

There are multiple women fighting Uber in US sexual assault cases. There are multiple reports that services such as Uber do not report to police when their drivers are accused of crimes especially against passengers. New York City legislatures want ridesharing companies to be required to notify the NYPD when their drivers are accused of crimes against passengers.

This should be a requirement for ridesharing companies to notify all Police agencies in every town and city in the United States!

Gabriel Sima, owner of GS Limousine Service, which is located in Suffolk County, NY and offers luxury car services, states “All drivers should have a TLC license, fingerprint and background checks by the state and required drug testing”. He further states “None of the ridesharing companies or drivers are required to have livery insurance”.

Currently Uber uses Checkr to perform their background checks. There have been multiple lawsuits because ridesharing companies' background checks have failed to catch some drivers with criminal records.

According to Uber's website anybody can drive with Uber, although there are a few minimum requirements:

- Meet the minimum age to drive in your city
- Have at least one year of licensed driving experience in the US (3 years if you are under 23 years old)
- Have a valid US driver's license
- Use an eligible 4-door vehicle

The following documentation is required for drivers of Uber:

- A valid US driver's license
- Proof of residency in your city, state, or province
- Proof of vehicle insurance if you plan to drive your own car
- A driver profile photo

If using ridesharing services, here are some suggestions:

- Travel with another person
- Check the license plate of the vehicle and make/model/color of vehicle picking you up to make sure it is the same on the online app
- Check driver's name
- Ask the driver for your name
- Sit in the backseat
- Always have an exit plan in case of an emergency
- Visual inspection of vehicle to make sure it is safe to the best of your ability such as making sure tires are not flat
- Do not share personal information with the driver

Christopher Alger, Vice President of Pro Protection Security Inc., states "Always look at your surroundings. Text a relative or friend if you are using a ridesharing service. Do not give exact address to your home. Use adjacent addresses. Your personal safety is paramount".

In the future, hopefully there will be better regulations for all drivers of ridesharing services. There should be, at the minimum, licensing requirements such as TLC guidelines. The New York Department of State requires all Security Officers and security companies in New York to be properly trained, fingerprinted, background checked and licensed. This should be implemented for all ridesharing companies and their drivers. Background checks for drivers of ridesharing companies need to be more stringent and regulated to prevent drivers with criminal backgrounds to slip through the cracks.

The author, Christopher Innace, is the CEO/President of Pro Protection Security Inc., holds a Bachelor's Degree in Private Security Management, is an active Police Officer and has been published in multiple security books. Pro Protection Security offers licensed armed Law Enforcement personnel for services such as schools, corporate offices, places of worship, special events, catering halls and driving services among many other services on Long Island and in the New York City area. Pro Protection Security Inc. is licensed by the Department of New York State and is insured and bonded. For more information call 631-439-6842 or visit proprotectionsecurity.com.