

# LICENSING REGULATORY COMMITTEE

## Suitability of Portable Fire Extinguishers in Taxis 30<sup>th</sup> August 2018

### Report of Principal Licensing Officer

#### PURPOSE OF REPORT

To enable Members to consider and determine whether to amend the current licence condition in relation to the type of fire extinguisher required to be carried in Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicles.

**This report is public.**

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

**That Members consider the use of fire extinguishers in licensed vehicles and determine any amendment to the Rules, Regulations and Procedures for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing to specify the type of fire extinguisher required to be carried in a licenced vehicle.**

#### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 At a meeting of the Licensing Regulatory Committee on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2017 it was resolved by members that, following the appointment of a Principal Licensing Officer, a sub-committee of the Licensing Regulatory Committee be formed to research the provision of fire extinguishers in licensed vehicles and report back on its findings to the Licensing Regulatory Committee, such sub-committee was to comprise of members, officers and members of the trade.
- 1.2 That sub-committee has now been established and have been re-named the Taxi working group. The group met on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2018 and discussed the types of fire extinguishers that may be used in licensed vehicles and the pros/cons of each type.
- 1.3 There is a requirement within the Council's Rules, Regulations and Procedures for Hackney Carriage & Private Hire Licensing to provide a suitable and efficient fire extinguisher which shall be carried in such a position as to be readily available for use. However, we do not provide any further description or specification and we do not prohibit the use of dry powder type fire extinguishers.
- 1.4 During a vehicle compliance check previously reported to this Committee on the 13<sup>th</sup> July 2017, officers working for VOSA raised concerns about the use of dry powder fire extinguishers in confined spaces with passengers. It is understood that there is a

risk that the discharge of a dry powder fire extinguisher in a vehicle carrying passengers could place the passengers at risk of asphyxiation.

- 1.5 Advice was sought from VOSA following the vehicle operation last year. The response from VOSA is included as Appendix 1 to this report. Current advice sought from the Lancashire Fire & Rescue Service is attached at Appendix 2.
- 1.6 There is no clear guidance available on specific fire extinguishers that **must** be used in licensed vehicles, but there are several references to warnings that dry powder should not be used where there is a risk of inhalation or significant contact with skin due to its corrosive nature.

## 2.0 Conclusion

- 2.1 The Taxi working group discussed the fire extinguisher matter, reviewed the previous LRC report and sought the opinion of the Principal Licensing Officer.
- 2.2 It was concluded that there is insufficient clear guidance to support the initial concerns raised by VOSA concerning the use of Dry Powder extinguishers or any other notable guidance to suggest a suitable alternative for the use in vehicles.
- 2.3 The group also concluded that on balance, there is justification to maintain the requirement for Hackney Carriage Vehicles and Private Hire vehicles to carry fire extinguishers that are regularly checked to ensure they are charged, and to retain the current requirement to carry a suitable and efficient fire extinguisher within the vehicle.
- 2.4 Members are asked to consider the matter raised in this report, taking account of the comments made by the working group, and decide whether to specify types of fire extinguishers to be carried in licensed vehicles or allow the conditions of vehicle licence to remain unchanged, with clarity given to vehicle proprietors that “suitable and efficient” also means in-date.

<b>CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT</b> (including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)
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None identified.
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<b>FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS</b>
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Financial Services have not been consulted.
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<b>LEGAL IMPLICATIONS</b>
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Any person aggrieved by a condition attached to a licence has the right of appeal to the Magistrates Court.
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<b>BACKGROUND PAPERS</b>	<b>Contact Officer:</b> Miss J Curtis
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Background paper – not applicable.	<b>Telephone:</b> 01524 582317
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