

Hoquiam Cracks Down on Unlicensed Taxi Company

Local News

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HOQUIAM, Wash. - Police on Friday cited Tri-City Taxi for operating without a license, Police Chief Jeff Myers tells us the driver that responded to their call didn't have a current taxi license either. Myers said after the business was cited, the owner, a 53-year old Hoquiam man admitted to detectives that he did not have a business license, but didn't realize his taxi license had expired. Myers noted that this same company was put on notice by the city in December of 2012 for failing to file proof of insurance or verification of safety inspections for their vehicles in 2012. The notice was served in person by a police sergeant and indicated Tri-City's 2012 tax cab company license would be revoked if they failed to comply. The owner was cited for operating a taxi company without a license and conducting business without a city business license. The owner is scheduled to appear in Hoquiam Municipal Court on Monday to answer to the charges.

Based on a citizen complaint, the Hoquiam Police Department conducted an investigation of Tri-City Taxi on Friday, February 1, 2013. It was alleged the company was operating taxi service within Hoquiam without a taxi cab license, a city business license, city licensed taxi cab drivers, proper markings or vehicle safety inspections. Upon investigation, it was verified with the city Finance Department that the company had not applied for a business license or company taxi cab license form 2013 and no drivers for Tri-City Taxi had applied for a Hoquiam taxi cab operator license for the new year. Under city code, taxi service providers are regulated, to include the license requirements for the company, which require a safety inspection by a mechanic, insurance and a city business license. Citizens receiving taxi transport rely on these regulations to assure their safety and wellbeing while partaking in this service. Employees driving for the company must have a city taxi cab operator license which verifies the driver does not have physical or mental infirmity, including addiction to the use of intoxicating liquor or drugs, which jeopardizes his/her ability to operate a taxicab; possesses a current Washington State driver's license with any endorsements required by the Washington State Department of Licensing for the type of vehicle being driven; is at least eighteen years of age; has not been convicted of a felony, or of operating a motor vehicle while under the influence of intoxicating liquor or drugs or of being in control of a motor vehicle while under the influence of intoxicating liquor or drugs, or of reckless driving or negligent driving, or of vehicular homicide or vehicular assault, within five years preceding the date of application of a license, or of a sex crime requiring registration as a sex offender under Chapter 9A.44 RCW, or under the laws of any other state or jurisdiction; and has not been found to have committed three or more moving violations during any twelve-month period during the five years preceding the date of the application of a license. It was alleged the company was providing service while out of compliance with requirements as listed in city code. Taxi company and driver licenses expire December 31st of each year and must be renewed accordingly. Renewal also involves filing current proof of insurance and proof of a vehicle safety inspection. The requirement for a vehicle safety inspection was effective as of July 1, 2012. Any violation of the city taxi regulation ordinance is a misdemeanor criminal offense under Title 4.14 of the Hoquiam Municipal Code.



At approximately 1415 hours, an undercover Hoquiam detective called Tri-City for a ride from one motel to another at the other end of town. It took almost 30-minutes for the taxi to arrive. The detective was picked up at the location and transported to other motel and paid a \$10 fare. Officers stopped the Tri-City taxi, as identified only by the magnetic sticker signs on the door, as the taxi driver pulled out from the motel. The 51-year old Aberdeen taxi driver was arrested at the scene and transported to the station for an interview. His daily fare sheet was confiscated for evidence as well as the cash in his possession, apparently received from cab fares. The driver had a taxi operator license in his wallet, however the form indicated it had expired December 31, 2012. According to the fare sheet, the driver had been picking up and transporting patrons all over the Aberdeen and Hoquiam area throughout the day. The vehicle, which was a black 1994 Ford Explorer, was impounded at the scene. The owner of the business, a 53-year old Hoquiam man was interviewed by detectives later in the afternoon. He admitted he did not have a business license but said his taxi license was valid. The owner claimed today was the first time he realized the licenses were expired and he had just overlooked or neglected to renew. However, this same company was put on notice by the city in December 2012 as they had failed to file proof of insurance or verification of safety inspections for their vehicles in 2012. The notice was served in person by a police sergeant and indicated Tri-City's 2012 tax cab company license would be revoked if they failed to comply. The company apparently failed to respond regarding the 2012 requirements and never renewed any licenses for 2013. The owner of the company was cited for operating a taxi company without a license and conducting business without a city business license. Both the driver and the owner are scheduled to appear in Hoquiam Municipal Court on February 5th to answer to the charges.