

Passenger Assistance & Safety

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Minnesota's Road to Volunteer Drivers Virtual Forum Series

 MINNESOTA

Overview

- Physical Assistance for People with Different Types of Disabilities
- Incidents
- Accidents
- Acts of Nature
- Vulnerable Adults

Physical Assistance for People with Different Types of Disabilities

- Assisting a person to stand or sit
- Assisting people who are ambulatory or semi-ambulatory
- Assisting a person who uses a wheelchair
- Barriers and hazards
- Things to remember

Assisting a Person to Stand

- Have the person who is sitting scoot slightly forward on the base of the chair.
- Have the seated person place their feet directly under them – not out in front of them about hip width.
- Ask the person to lean forward.
- Position yourself with a staggered stance, in front of or slightly to one side of, the person you are assisting.

Assisting a Person to Stand, continued

- Allow your knees to be flexible, so you shift your weight as the person rises.
- Extend one of your arms horizontally in front of you and form a brace by grasping the wrist of the horizontal arm from above with your other hand. (Your arms should be at the person's shoulder height.)
- Ask the person to grasp your arm and use their strength to rise.
- When the person begins to pull on your arm, offer resistance while keeping your arms locked, & shift your weight back.

Assisting to Stand

- Your arm brace should provide enough support for the person to pull themselves up.
- Do NOT pull the person up or lift them.

Poll Question

When assisting a person to stand, you should:

- a. Never have them lean forward – they could tip out of the chair.
- b. Always stand behind them to help lift them up.
- c. Stand in front of the person, take their arm and help pull them to a standing position.
- d. None of the above.

Assisting a Person to Sit

- Position yourself with a staggered stance, in front of or slightly to one side of, the person you are assisting.
- Allow your knees to be flexible, so you shift your weight as the person rises.
- Extend one of your arms horizontally in front of you and form a brace by grasping the wrist of the horizontal arm from above with your other hand. (Your arms should be at the height of the person's waist.)

Assisting a Person to Sit, continued

- Ask the person to put the back of their knees against the chair.
- Ask the person to grasp your arm and use their strength to lower themselves to a sitting position.
- Your arm brace should provide support for the person to hold on to when moving to a seated position.
- Make sure they scoot back in the chair while still holding on to your arm.
- You do NOT lower the person down or lift them in any way.

Poll Question

When assisting a person to sit, you should:

- a. Stand in front of or slightly to one side of the person you are assisting.
- b. Ask the person to grasp your arm and use their own strength to sit.
- c. Ask the person to put the back of their knees against the chair.
- d. All of the above.

Assisting People Who Are Ambulatory or Semi-Ambulatory

- When escorting an ambulatory or semi-ambulatory person up and down steps, you should always stage yourself on the downhill side.

This gives you the best vantage location to steady the person or perhaps to break a fall in case the person loses their balance.

- Before negotiating any steps, be sure to point out the handrails to the person and encourage their use.

Assisting a Person with Hemiplegia or Weakness on One Side of Their Body

- A person with hemiplegia (paralysis or weakness on one side of the body) should always go up the steps with their stronger leg first.

This allows the stronger leg to support the person while the weaker leg follows.

- When going down steps, have the person lead with their weak leg.

This way the person can use the stronger leg to support their body weight.

Assisting a Person a with Stroke-related Arm Disability

- It is key that you never pull on a person's arm who has suffered a stroke and has limited or no movement in an arm. Damage can result from getting underarm support to stand or walk.
- Assist the person by having them grasp your arm with their strong arm to help pull themselves up.

Poll Question

When escorting an ambulatory or semi-ambulatory person up and down steps, you should always stage yourself on the downhill side.

- a. True
- b. False

Assisting a Person Who Uses an Assistive Device

- Many individuals use canes or walkers in order to ambulate.
- Make sure their assistive device is available before attempting to assist the person to stand or walk.

Helping a Person Get into a Car Safely

- Push the car seat back as far as possible.
- Open the car door fully and ensure it cannot swing back. Position your body to stop the door from slamming shut.
- Open the car door window. The window ledge may be used to help support the person when standing.



Helping a Person Enter a Car Safely

- If the person is using an assistive device, have it available up until it is time to transfer into the vehicle. Put the brakes on wheelchair and lift up the footrests or remove them.
- Never let the person you are assisting hold or hug you around the neck while you are helping them. (This can cause serious neck or back injuries for the driver.)

Providing Assistance to Get a Person in a Car Safely

- Lightly support the person so the back of their legs are touching the car seat.
- Remind them to watch their head as they lower themselves into the vehicle.
- Using the techniques explained earlier, assist the person to gently lower themselves onto the car seat using your arms as a brace.
- Encourage the person to lift and swing their legs into the car. If they need assistance, lift one leg at a time making sure you bend your knees.

Poll Question

When helping a person get into a car safely, make sure you:

- a. Open the car door fully.
- b. Remove the walker or wheelchair as soon as possible to get it out of the way.
- c. Lightly support the person so the back of their legs are touching the car seat.
- d. A and C

Helping a Person Get Out of a Car Safely

- Push the car seat back as far as possible.
- Open the car door window. The window ledge may be used to help support the person when standing.
- Make sure you have the assistive device (if using) as close as possible to the car (cane or walker) If a wheelchair is being used, make sure the brakes are on and the footrests are up or removed.



Providing Assistance to Get a Person out of a Car Safely

- Ask the person in the car to rotate their body so they are facing out of the car. They need to slowly swivel on their bottom and bring their legs around outside of the car.
- If you are helping to lift their legs, lift one leg at a time. Make sure you do not strain your back. Bend your knees to do this.
- Position your body against the back of the door so it cannot swing shut.
- If helpful, the person can hold on to the window ledge to support themselves.

Helping a Person Exit a Vehicle Safely

- If needed, offer your arm brace using the technique explained earlier.
- Ensure both of the person's feet are firmly on the ground before they lift up from the seat.
- Never let the person you are assisting hold or hug you around your neck while you are helping to move them. (This can cause a serious neck or back injury for the driver.)
- If you have a free hand, protect their head while they lift themselves out of the vehicle. If not, remember to warn them to watch their head.

Assisting a Person to Exit a Vehicle Safely

- Ask the person to help lift themselves by using your arm as a brace and their legs to support them.
- Help the person move toward their walking aid (assistive device) or wheelchair. If using a wheelchair, assist them to turn around so the back of their legs touch the edge of the seat of the chair.
- Have the person put their hands firmly on the armrests of the wheelchair before slowly lowering themselves into the chair.
- Lower the footrests into place (or reattach them if they have been removed). Help the person position their feet securely on the footrests.

Assisting a Person Who Uses a Wheelchair

- Do not automatically hold onto a person's wheelchair and begin to move them. It is part of the individual's personal body space.
- Offer assistance and let them know what you plan to do.
- If you grab the wheelchair too quickly and move it when the person is not expecting it to move, they may lose their balance.
- Make sure the person's feet are on the footrests before moving the wheelchair.

Poll Question

If a person needs additional support, have them put their arms around your neck as they exit the car.

- a. True
- b. False

Tilting a Wheelchair

- Tilting a wheelchair back on its rear wheels can make it easier to maneuver over bumps.
- ALWAYS let the person know before you tilt the wheelchair that you are going to tilt it; be sure their feet are securely on the footrests; make sure their arms are on their lap and not over the side of the armrests.
- BEFORE TILTING a wheelchair, be sure that there is enough room to maneuver the chair around the obstacle once the chair is tilted.

Tilting a Wheelchair, continued

- Tilt the wheelchair slowly back on the rear wheels.
- Rotate the chair back on the axles of the rear wheels to the “balance point”.
- Maneuver the balanced chair by pivoting the rear wheels.
- Let the person know what you are navigating around.

Returning the Person and the Wheelchair to Its Original Position

- Let the person know you are going to return the wheelchair to its original position.
- Place your foot on the tilt lever extension (a bar near the rear wheels of the wheelchair).
- Lean on the tilt lever as you lower the wheelchair to its normal, horizontal position.
- Lower the wheelchair carefully and smoothly so it does not “jar” the customer when the front wheels touch the ground.

Tilt Lever on Wheelchair



Poll Question

You should only tilt a wheelchair in cases of an emergency.

- a. True
- b. False

When Assisting People with Mobility Devices Barriers and Hazards to Avoid If Possible

- Uneven asphalt or cracks in concrete or sidewalks
- Gravel
- Dirt or sand
- Wet or muddy grass or turf
- Snow or ice-covered pathways
- Low-hanging tree branches or intrusive shrubbery



Barriers and Hazards, continued

- Always be aware of your path of travel when assisting people with mobility devices (canes, walkers, or wheelchairs)
- You must be aware of the surfaces you are crossing because the front wheels of a wheelchair have a tendency to stop abruptly at obstructions and to “dig in” which could launch the chair’s occupant out of their seat.
- A walker or cane can easily get stuck or off balance and cause the person depending on it for stability to stumble or lose their balance.

Things to Remember

- Mobility aids are used by people, never used to describe people.
(People first language dictates that the person comes first, then the mobility aid. Example: person who uses a wheelchair/never wheelchair bound or wheelchair person)
- Handle a mobility aid with great care. They are an extension of the person.
- You only have one back. Take care of it! Use good judgment at all times when helping to maneuver a wheelchair or to assist someone.

Packages

- You may be asked to assist with your passenger's packages.
- Do not try to “take it all in one load” – more trips are safer.
- When lifting:
 - Keep a wide base of support (spread your legs hip wide or more).
 - Squat down, bending at the hips and knees only.
 - Keep your back straight.
 - Lift by straightening your hips and knees (not your back).
 - Hold the load as close to your body as possible at the level of your waist.
 - Do not twist. Use your feet to change directions.

More Things to Remember

- Plan ahead. Work smarter, not harder.
- Safety first!



Poll Question

A mobility aid, such as a wheelchair or walker, is considered an extension of the person and is part of their personal space.

- a. True
- b. False

Questions

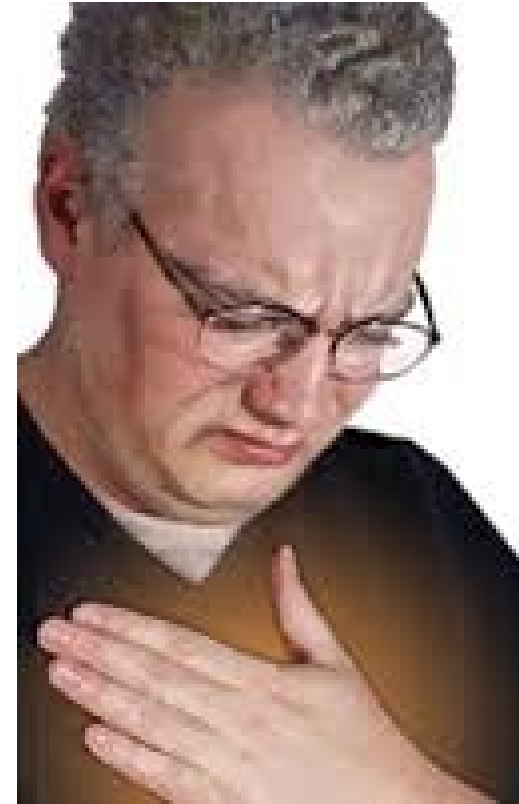




BREAK – 5 minutes

Incidents

- Body Fluids/Blood-borne Pathogens
 - Incontinence
 - Motion Sickness or Vomiting
 - Needle Safety
- Passenger Illness
 - Seizures
 - Heart Attack
 - Stroke



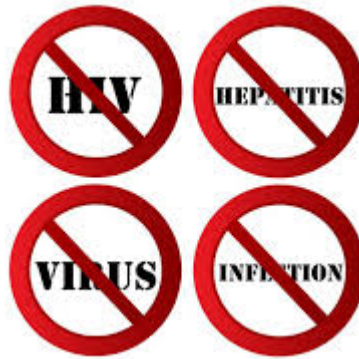
Incidents, continued

- Passenger Trips or Falls
- Passenger Personal Hygiene
- Harassment
- Speeding Tickets/Citations



Body Fluids/Blood-borne Pathogens

Body fluids – blood, vomit, urine, excrement and saliva – can all transmit blood-borne pathogens such as Hepatitis B, HIV, and others.



Steps to Take

1) Carry a spill kit in your vehicle. This is a special kit that can be provided by the human service or transit agency. It is designed for biohazard clean-up. It contains disposable gloves, an absorbent (can substitute kitty litter if making your own kit); a scoop (can substitute a small dustpan or child's plastic shovel); disinfectant (can substitute bleach or over-the-counter spray); a mask (use one from your COVID-19 supplies); and a heavy duty disposal bag (contractor garbage bags will work); bag tie; hand sanitizer. Paper towels are a handy addition.

Steps for Clean-up of Blood-borne Pathogens

- 2) Avoid touching, stepping in or splattering the spill.
- 3) Move passenger away from the spill area.
- 4) Locate the biohazard kit from your vehicle.
- 5) Put on the gloves and mask from the kit.
- 6) Cover the spill area with the absorbent.
- 7) Using the scoop, place any contaminated materials in the biohazard or contractor's bag.



Clean-up, continued

- 8) Apply disinfectant to the area (use bleach only if appropriate)
- 9) Carefully discard all cleaning materials in the biohazard or contractor's bag. Double bag, if possible. Seal bag. Put in trunk of car away from all other materials.
- 10) Thoroughly clean hands with hand sanitizer.
- 11) Complete incident report as soon as possible after incident (same day).

Poll Question

Drivers do not need to take precautions regarding potential illness transmission caused by body fluid contamination.

- a. True
- b. False

Needle Safety

Exposure to bloodborne pathogens from accidental sharps injuries and disposing of needles is a serious problem.

You may never be exposed to needles, but you need to know what to do should you accidentally experience a needle stick from a diabetic passenger or other accidental needle stick.

If you are pricked by a contaminated needle (any used medical needle), follow these steps:

Safety Steps for Needle Sticks

- 1) Wash any needle sticks with soap and water. If soap and water are not available use plenty of hand sanitizer.
- 2) Seek medical treatment as soon as possible (same day)
- 3) Report the incident to your human service or transit provider & complete an incident report form (same day)



Poll Question

Needle sticks from a needle used by an older person who is diabetic are not dangerous since they are likely not drug users.

- a. True
- b. False

Passenger Illness

- Seizures

Recognizing a seizure is the first step to handling the situation. The person's back may arch; their arms and legs may jerk or flail; their eyes may flutter or roll; and/or their body may convulse.

- 1) Pull the vehicle off the road and turn it off.
- 2) Do not put anything in the person's mouth. (It is a myth that a person can swallow their tongue.)



Seizures

- 3) Remove the person's glasses if it is safe to do so.
- 4) If possible, put a soft object like a coat, sweater, pillow or blanket under the person's head or other part of the body that might be in contact with a hard object.
- 5) Let the seizure continue its normal course.
- 6) Talk calmly to the person. They will likely not respond. Just reassure them that you are there.

Seizure Assistance

- Stay with the person and give them your full attention throughout the duration of the seizure.
- Call the human service or transit office to report the seizure. Try to determine if this is a known condition. Follow the directions provided by the office.
- If no directions are available, seek medical treatment for passenger/911.
- Complete an incident report (same day)

Heart Attack

Symptoms of a heart attack may include: profuse sweating; hyperventilation (dizziness caused by rapid breathing); paleness; claustrophobia (feeling of being closed in or difficulty breathing/unable to take deep breaths); pain or pressure in arms, neck jaw or chest; OTHER...

Often a person experiencing a heart attack will deny having a problem. It is best to err on the side of caution and request medical attention because of the risk of serious injury or death.

Heart Attack, continued

- Consider opening a window to improve airflow near the passenger and reduce nausea and possible feelings of claustrophobia while waiting for medical help/911 or while transporting to hospital.
- Try to have the person take slow, deep, controlled breaths to prevent hyperventilating and panic.
- Complete incident report (same day)

Stroke

Signs of possible stroke include: disorientation; difficulty speaking or slurred speech; loss of movement on one side of the body; or loss of consciousness.

Remember this easy test: **FAST**

Face – Ask the person to smile. Is one side of the face drooping?

Arm – Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?

Speech – Ask the person to repeat a simple sentence. Are the words slurred?

Time – If the person shows any of these symptoms call 911 or take them to the hospital immediately.

Complete an incident report (same day)

CPR & AED

- The American Red Cross as well as other organizations offer CPR (Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation) training classes to provide the information and skills needed to help adults, children and infants during breathing and cardiac emergencies. CPR training takes just a few hours, but they can help you add years to someone's life. Successful completion gives you a 2-year certification.
- The American Red Cross also offers Automated External Defibrillator Training classes in combination with CPR and First Aid.

Passenger Trips and Falls

- If a passenger falls, check the passenger. If they appear to be dazed, have hit their head, or may have broken a hip, fractured a rib, or have another injury, if it is safe to do so, have them remain on the ground and make them comfortable.
- If conscious, keep them calm. Most will be embarrassed and want to get up and move as quickly as possible. This is often not a good idea.
- Call 911 and get assistance.
- Complete an incident report (same day)

Passenger Slips or Trips

- If the person you are assisting slips or trips, but does not fall, you can assess the situation. Ask the passenger how they are feeling. Try to find a place for the person to sit down and rest to determine if they are ok before continuing on with the journey.
- Complete an incident report (same day).

Poll Question

It is always a good idea to seek medical care for a passenger if you believe they may be having a heart attack, stroke, or have been hurt from a trip or fall, even if the person claims to be okay and does not want to seek assistance.

- a. True
- b. False

Passenger Personal Hygiene

Any number of factors can cause personal hygiene problems...an older person who has trouble bathing; clothes that are not washed between wearings; medication issues; etc.

This is an issue that demands sensitivity. You must be careful not to take away a person's dignity.

- Report the issue to the transit director. They can do the appropriate follow-up with the individual.
- Complete an incident report.

Harassment

Sexual Harassment, Physical Harassment, Verbal Harassment from Passengers:

Harassment can take many forms. It is never okay for a driver to be harassed. You may be embarrassed about reporting harassment, but it is important that you do. If a person is harassing you, they are probably harassing others too.

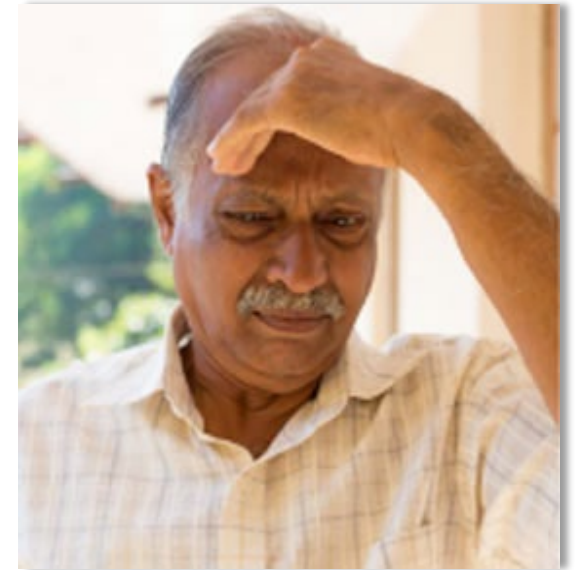
What To Do About Harassment

A driver should never encourage a flirtatious comment or gesture made by a passenger. Flirtation may seem harmless, but it can lead to more aggressive and uncomfortable interactions. It is best to not allow it in the first place. Inform the passenger that their comments make you uncomfortable and ask them to please refrain from making the comments in the future. Focus on the behavior not the person.

Physical Harassment

Physical harassment can be sexual (overt touching) or it can be punching, slapping, pushing, and other physical gestures that are inappropriate but may be disguised as teasing or rough-housing. Again, this needs to be stopped immediately or it can escalate. Concentrate once again, on the behavior, not the individual.

Complete an incident report.



Verbal Harassment

Verbal harassment can come from passengers who decide that you “work” for them; you need to “listen to them”; they are in general, aggressive or exploders; impatient with you; etc. You do not have to put up with abuse. Empathize as appropriate with your passenger, but do not bend to their extreme behavior. Let them know that you are there to assist them with their transportation.

Complete an incident report.

Poll Question

Harassment should not be brushed aside but must be reported to the human services or transit agency.

- a. True
- b. False

Speeding Tickets/Citations

- First of all, don't speed. The speed limits are clearly posted. It is much more important that you arrive at your destination safely than saving a few minutes by breaking the speed limit.
- If you receive a speeding ticket or citation while performing your services for a human service program or transit system, notify them and complete an incident report (same day).
- It is much better that the information come from you!

Vehicle Breakdown

- Safely guide your vehicle off the road onto the right shoulder as far out of the path of traffic as possible.
- Immediately engage your emergency flashers.
- Notify the human service or transit agency that your vehicle is out of commission and you have a passenger onboard.
- Get roadside assistance.
- In winter, do not let your vehicle run standing still for more than 10 minutes/hour. When your vehicle is running the windows should be cracked open. Make sure your tailpipe is clear.
- Complete an incident report.

Accidents

- Try to remain calm.
- Ensure that the vehicle and your passenger are out of immediate danger from other vehicles.
- Check on the condition of your passenger – need for medical attention. Check on condition of other vehicle/pedestrian(s) and need for medical attention.
- Contact emergency personnel and/or law enforcement. Give exact location. Describe extent and number/type of injuries, if any.
- Find insurance information.



Handling Accidents

- Do not discuss accident with anyone but law enforcement and the human service or transit agency personnel.
- Do not admit fault.
- Remain at the accident scene unless you require medical attention.
- Complete an accident report ASAP (same day if possible).

Acts of Nature

Tornado

The least desirable place to be in a tornado is in a motor vehicle. Cars are easily tossed by tornado winds. Do not try to outrun a tornado in a vehicle. If a tornado is seen:

- Get to shelter immediately.
- Avoid windows in buildings. Go to the innermost part of the building or basement.
- If no structure is available, lay flat in a ditch or low-lying area. Get in the fetal position and protect your head with your arms.
- Stay away from utility poles.

Severe Thunderstorms

In addition to making driving conditions treacherous, severe thunderstorms can create a variety of problems including flooding, downed trees and power lines.



- Be alert for flooding situations.
- If a lightning storm is active, stay inside the vehicle.
- Stay away from downed or damaged utility lines.
- Do not drive through moving water that may be more than 6" deep.
- If a power line falls across your vehicle, keep passengers inside and, if possible, drive away.

Flooding

- Listen to the radio for flood information and warnings.
- Stay alert. Roads may be blocked or closed due to collapsed pavement or debris.
- Stay away from moving water, storm drains, ditches, ravines, & culverts.
- Do not drive across flooded roads or bridges – turn around and go another way.
- If the vehicle stalls in floodwaters, evacuate immediately and seek higher ground. It only takes a foot of rapidly moving water to sweep away a vehicle.

Vulnerable Adults

Who qualifies as a vulnerable adult in Minnesota?

- A person living in a hospital, nursing home, or facility that serves adults with mental illnesses, developmental, or physical disabilities, functional impairment, or chemical dependency.
- A person receiving services from one of the facilities above as an outpatient.
- A person receiving assistance from a home care provider or any person or organization that provides personal care assistance services under Minnesota's medical assistance program.
- A person regardless of living situation and assistance received, who is physically or mentally infirm or has a physical, mental or emotional dysfunction that impairs their ability to care for themselves without assistance.

Reporting of Suspected Maltreatment of Vulnerable Adults

Minnesota has established a central system for reporting suspected maltreatment of vulnerable adults. The state-wide common entry point (CEP) is available 24 hours per day/7 days per week.

The toll-free number to make a report is
844-880-1574

Reporting Elder Abuse!

(Especially of Dementia & Alzheimer's Patients)



“If you suspect abuse, do not allow your fear of meddling in someone else’s business stop you from reporting your suspicions. You could be saving someone’s life, and drastically improve the quality of their life. Call the police or Adult Protective Services.”

Poll Question

It is a driver's responsibility to report a situation where they believe a vulnerable adult is being abused.

- a. True
- b. False

Questions



ROADS

Minnesota's Road to Volunteer Drivers Virtual Forum Series

Contact Us!

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