

SENIORS ASSISTED TRANSPORTATION SOCIETY OF GREATER EDMONTON



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Information Sheet for Volunteer Drivers and Organizations interested in Volunteers Driving!

What we do is door through door” outreach personal supportive volunteer driving services. We believe that Volunteers Driving comes at a higher price than most people expect. There are many safety issues to consider. Even with clear standards and screening procedures in place, liability and risk issues weigh heavily on community service agencies and their Volunteers Driving. When involving volunteers as drivers, there are a number of important issues that individuals and non-profit organizations, must consider! This information sheet looks at good practice issues, the licensing and screening of volunteers, the gas re-imbusement of volunteer drivers, person vehicle insurance and non-profit insurance and issues around the safety of volunteer drivers and their passengers!

Best Practices at an Organization where Volunteers are driving others everyday, as we see it:

From an organizational liability and insurance viewpoint, Seniors Assisted Transportation Society of Greater Edmonton or SATS as some call us, purchases nonprofit organizational insurance as to liability concerns every non-profit organization or business faces, plus we purchase extra liability insurance for any non-owned vehicles in the mount of five million each volunteers driving others. We believe every non-profit should automatically purchase this insurance just to protect themselves. Plus SATS purchases extra insurance for the agency on behalf of volunteer directors and officers and staff. This is all purchased yearly just to keep our organization feeling well covered or PROTECTED as to any law suits. We wish to feel we help to cover any individual volunteer drivers’ personal risk and to add extra support for each volunteer’s personal vehicle insurance coverage paid for by themselves or their families... It is not meant to replace the

priority of each person volunteers driving' insurance responsibility but to top it up for best coverage and for any accident scenario.

Volunteer driver Insurance and Vehicle registration:

SATS makes a copy of volunteer drivers' vehicle insurance cover page detailing coverage of at least one Million dollars and vehicle registration copies. This data is registered or noted of when they expire on the SATS database. This copy is a proof of insurance coverage details, and it is placed on the file of the volunteer driver and sent to our SATS insurance agent. In return our Insurance agent issues a certificate to the Volunteers driving showing proof that we at SATS have purchased \$5,000,000.00 insurance on the volunteer drivers behalf for each occurrence. This is to mitigate stress of liability concerns on behalf of the volunteers driving. This coverage must be in the name of the volunteer driver or an immediate family member living at the same address. This means a spouse or a parent who purchases the insurance and vehicle registration must be aware of the volunteer driving and give a verbal knowledge statement if the insurance is not in the name of volunteer driver. This is done because we believe the insurer should contact their insurance company agent to state that a person is volunteer driving under their coverage. We do this to ensure that insurance is continuous at all times. Individual Volunteers Driving should not be a concern or a liability, as absolutely everyone driving a vehicle does it and it has always been covered at no extra cost ever since vehicle insurance was mandated. So to review clearly we **strongly believe that no-one should have to purchase extra insurance to volunteer drive in Alberta and if asked by an insurance agency to purchase extra insurance, please be advised this is just a money making scheme by the insurance agency and is not deemed necessary at all for the volunteers.**

We have two letters from the Insurance Bureau of Canada and from the Alberta Government Finance department Superintendent of Insurance that volunteer driving is to be covered under any person's regular insurance even if a gas honorarium is paid from an organized volunteer driving program. These are both posted on our SATS website, as listed above. The Insurance Bureau of Canada clearly states: "Occasional driving by volunteers is in no way a violation of the automobile policy and there should be no need in such circumstances for the company to be

advised of this activity. We point out this is so, even though there may be a payment toward the cost of the trip". The SEF Number 6A endorsement is NOT REQUIRED when a volunteer is paid mileage and expense when using their vehicle for `volunteer purposes`. So please note; clearly volunteer driving is automatically covered under average persons insurance in Alberta.

Volunteer Application and Screening:

Volunteer drivers must have a current drivers license which is copied (both sides) for the volunteers file. SATS insists on all new volunteer drivers apply for a Security Clearance application with Edmonton Police Service or RCMP, dependent on where the volunteer lives but we cover the costs. SATS has received a permission letter from Edmonton Police Services to be able to apply for the Security Clearance Detail, with a volunteer's knowledge and on their behalf and with the volunteer drivers signed permission on a special form for a reduced cost of only \$10.00 for a registered organization. When these security clearances detail forms are returned to the non-profit organization, which often takes two weeks, then a person can likely volunteer drive with us, if no record is found. If a small record is found, from older difficulties, we can help by working with the possible volunteer to receive a pardon from the Canadian Gov.

A non-profit can register with the Alberta Government to allow the org. to apply for a copy of a volunteer drivers abstract, with the volunteer drivers' permission. How SATS does it is that we pay for the volunteer drivers to make arrangements for an abstract either through arranging us a charge account with an Alberta Registry business where we pay the monthly invoices for the charges or we re-imburse drivers directly after the volunteer drivers themselves purchase an abstract from any registry business. Some organizations do not feel they have enough funds for this screening. It is preferable that volunteer drivers have no record on their license at all but an occasional exception of an older accident details or of a ticket from another area, is acceptable. At this time we only screen every three years. These usually cost \$20.00 each!

Organizational issues as to health:

From an organizational perspective, a group may want to set a minimum or a maximum age, a person can volunteer drive, but the organization must be aware of age discrimination! Volunteer Drivers must or should be asked about health, illness and disability, which may affect their ability to drive. However do not assume that a disability will automatically stop people from becoming a great volunteer driver. We have a volunteer driver in a wheelchair who is the best ambassador for us...Illnesses of volunteer drivers that may concern an organization are diabetes and lung and heart disease so we ask the volunteer drivers if they can disclose any health concerns that will affect driving others and then we can make a judgment call if we have concerns then.

As with all volunteers, an organization should follow good practices for recruitment and selection and ask for the contact details of two people who can act as references and make sure these are followed up on. Plus we ask for a backup number in case of illness or accidents.

Vehicle Safety:

Any organization needs to be reasonably sure that the vehicle the volunteer is using is safe. You could ask for a certificate for cars over five? Years old or have a staff look at the car for obvious defects and ask the volunteer driver how they maintain the car. But SATS does neither. But they do speak to the volunteer driver about this safety issue if they are driving an older car but we must depend on the volunteer driver to maintain their car in the manner that they would expect as if they were putting their cherished grandparent in it!

Gas Monies Charged:

We are aware that many non-profits do not have funds for volunteer driving. But at SATS, we charge the seniors gas monies of \$7.00 for a regular ride gas ticket and 2 are required for a longer ride. We have a \$20.00 yearly membership. Our volunteer drivers are then re-imbursed \$10.00 a trip or \$20.00 on a long trip over two hours, when they turn in a volunteer driving log recording the ride details. Please note that when we count our volunteer hours, we take in to

account travelling time of the volunteer drivers, but we do not expect our clients to do this, so we cover only the volunteers time to take them to and from the appointment to give the outreach support of what we call “door through door” outreach personal supportive volunteer driving services._

Database Management of rides:

As to keeping track of the seniors and volunteers, SATS has designed a volunteer matching database. SATS insists on having all rides booked through the office and knowing where the seniors are to be picked up and where the senior is going to the best of our ability. It would be safer if the people at the destination would know approximately what time the volunteer is to arrive but some rides are at more casual times as in visiting a spouse at a hospital or nursing home or picking up groceries with the seniors. We would prefer to know the route but that is not possible on our system but we do like to record all needed stops.

Personal safety of Volunteer Drivers:

Please note; we discourage volunteer drivers from fraternizing with vulnerable seniors outside of their volunteer time....

If a volunteer driving organization feels they can afford vehicle breakdown insurance as in AMA on behalf of the volunteer drivers this is ideal. But we do not! But what we do if possible is to encourage the volunteer drivers to carry such insurance as best practices. We encourage all volunteer drivers to be extra vigilant or safer by regularly checking gasoline, oil, and tires and by using regular vehicle maintenance procedures. We advise drivers with car trouble or a car accident to coast to a safe spot off the main or busy street and to put on emergency flashers immediately. We suggest that if they have a personal cellular to call for help immediately. If a frail elder is in the car, it may be best to wait with them but help may not come soon. We would hope that an emergency phone is available or a business is close by to call from. If they can call the SATS office and we make sure someone is available to help them out as best practices. Seat belts must be in good working order and must be worn at all times by volunteers and clients of

SATS. If SATS had the funds we would purchase cellular phones and headsets for volunteer drivers to use for safety concerns or issues developing for the volunteers driving others.

SATS has been able to arrange defensive driving classes last year for volunteer drivers and this is recommended for all volunteer driving programs if they can be made possible. We have been held back in the past because of the cost so it is the same scenario as mobile cellular phones for the volunteer drivers – we feel we cannot afford them as an organization but we believe it would be safer and due diligence on our part.

We specialize in `door through door` volunteer driving services which is what our elderly clients need to live independently and safely in their own homes and apartments. So we pick up the seniors inside their door and return them safely there. Plus as volunteer drivers need to assist clients in and out of the car too we believe they should know how to do this safely. We have not addressed this directly yet. We just tell them to listen to the seniors firstly as to how they can help them in and out of the car.

We encourage volunteer drivers to park carefully in well lit areas when it is dark or it will be dark and to lock cars carefully. Volunteer drivers are recommended to drive with the windows closed and doors locked, if possible. We state never ever to pick up hitchhikers or even friends, if possible. We need to know who is in the car with the senior clients.

This information has been posted only to educate others who are dealing with Volunteers as Drivers as to how we try to practice Best Practices...

Please note this information has been posted by:

Anna Der, CFRE, Executive Director, Seniors Volunteer Driving Centre of Edmonton`

Seniors Assisted Transportation Society of Greater Edmonton or SATS received the Duncan and Craig Laurel Award as an innovative and creative society in 2006!

SATS volunteer patrons are the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta; His Honour Norman Kwong and Her Honour Mary Kwong.