

SENIORS ASSISTED TRANSPORTATION SOCIETY OF GREATER EDMONTON



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

We believe that Volunteer 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 Volunteer Drivers. 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 reimbursement of volunteer drivers, person vehicle insurance and non-profit insurance and issues around the safety of volunteer drivers and their passengers!

Best Practices as an Organization where people are doing Volunteer Driving:

From an organizational liability and insurance viewpoint, Seniors Volunteer Driving Centre of Edmonton, purchases regular nonprofit organizational insurance as to liability concerns every organization or business faces, plus we purchase extra liability insurance for any non-owned vehicles. Actually I believe every non-profit should automatically purchase this insurance just to protect themselves. Plus SVDCE 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 as to any law suits and to feel we help to cover any individual volunteer drivers personal risk and to add extra support for each volunteers personal vehicle insurance coverage paid for by themselves or their families... It is not meant to replace the priority of each person volunteer drivers' insurance responsibility but to top it up for best coverage and any accident scenario.

Volunteer driver Insurance and Vehicle registration:

SVDCE makes a copy of volunteer drivers' vehicle insurance and vehicle registration making note of when they expire. This copy is proof of coverage details, and it is placed on the file of the volunteer driver. 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. 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 Volunteer 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 attached 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 honourarium is paid. These are both posted on our SVDCE 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 an 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. Seniors Volunteer Driving Centre of Edmonton (SVDCE) insists on all new volunteer drivers apply for a Security Clearance application with Edmonton Police Service or RCMP, dependent on where the volunteer lives. SVDCE 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 three weeks, then a person can 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 Seniors Driving Centre of Edmonton does it is that we pay for the volunteer drivers to make arrangements for an abstract either through arranging a charge account with an Alberta Registry business where we can pay 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. Organizational issues as to health issues :

From an organizational perspective, they may want to set a minimum or a maximum age, a person can volunteer drive, but the organization must be aware of age discrimination law suit opportunity! 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.

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.

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 Seniors Volunteer Driving Centre of Edmonton 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 grandmother in it!

We are aware that many non-profits do not have funds to replace gas monies spent whilst volunteer driving. But at SVDCE, we charge the seniors gas monies of \$7.00 for a gas ticket along with a \$15.00 yearly membership. Our volunteer drivers are then re-imbursed \$7.00 a trip or \$14.00 on a long trip over two hours, when they turn in a volunteer driving log recording 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 volunteer time to take them to and from the appointment to give the outreach support of what we call "door through door" personal supportive volunteer driving services._

Personal safety of Volunteer Drivers:

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. 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 SVDCE office and someone is available to help them out this is best practices. Seat belts must be in good working order and must be worn at all times by volunteers and clients of SVDCE. If SVDCE had the funds we would purchase cellular phones and headsets for volunteer drivers to use for safety concerns or issues.

SVDCE is in the process of arranging defensive driving classes for all volunteer drivers and this is recommended for all volunteer driving programs if they can be made possible. We have been held back because of the cost as 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.

As to keeping track of seniors, SVDCE insists on knowing where the seniors are to be picked up and where the seniors 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. Please note; we discourage volunteer drivers from fraternizing with vulnerable seniors outside of their volunteer time....

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. 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 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 driver's 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.

Please note this information has been posted by:
Anna Der, CFRE, Executive Director, Seniors Volunteer Driving Centre of Edmonton`

Seniors Volunteer Driving Centre of Edmonton received the Duncan and Craig Laurel Award as an innovative and creative society in 2006!

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