



Transporting Passengers - Healthcare and Social Service

Transporting passengers can be a tricky and risky situation for the patient/client as well as for the employees themselves. Injuries related to falls and sprains/strains from lifting can occur. Properly loading and positioning of these passengers involves pre-planning and consideration for the risks. Planning and preparation can make this process much safer. Let's reflect on the different points to consider:

Safe Vehicles:

Safe vehicles start with ensuring that the vehicle is appropriate for the passenger. Whether it is a company-owned or employee-owned vehicle, some points to consider include:

- When was the last time the vehicle was inspected/maintained?
 - Ideally, this is a pre-operation inspection
 - Inspecting not only the vehicle but lifts, tie-downs, and other added equipment.
 - Maintain the vehicle according to manufacturer's recommendations.
 - Inspect all wheelchairs, walkers, crutches, or other durable medical goods for any defects that may make securing passengers difficult or pose risk to employees from a loading/unloading perspective.
- For those with ambulation issues, selecting a taller vehicle is advised.
 - Assisting with entering and exiting can present potentials for sprain/strain, fall, and other risks to the employee, as well as the patient.



Image source: iStock.com

Safe Procedures:

- Pre-Plan the process. Discuss lifting, adjusting, and placing with the passenger as well as any other employees to ensure that all are comfortable with the process and know their role to play.
 - Allow for those with full or some ambulation to assist to the extent that they are able, therefore reducing the load on the employee(s).
- Park the vehicle in a safe, level space with sufficient clearance for passengers to enter, exit, accounting for lifts and additional employees (if applicable).



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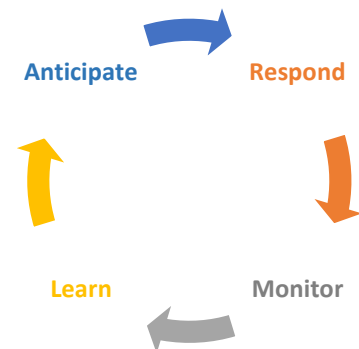
- Open, lower, extend all doors, lifts, and other equipment to the full extent to provide as much space as is possible.
- Secure wheelchairs according to tie-down requirements from the manufacturer.

Additional Considerations:

- Be aware that loose objects can become projectiles in the event of a crash; secure them in a trunk or the very back of the vehicle.
- Be mindful of potential behaviors of the passengers.
 - If possible, place passengers in the rear passenger side of the vehicle, furthest from the driver. Account for additional aide(s) to assist if potential behaviors are likely aggressive.
- Pre-plan for what to do in an N3L3 Moment (stop-work) if the vehicle, wheelchairs, passengers, or environment of work should become unsafe for the employee or passenger.

It is advisable to review your procedures at least yearly and when any situations should change, such as type/style of vehicles, care plan, or ambulation of client/patient, or any other element that would create a change in the dynamic in which the employees are working.

Follow the **Anticipate.Respond.Monitor.Learn** model. Plan for the known and **Anticipate** the unknown, recall that the past does not predict the future. **Respond** to and implement controls, training, and systems for passenger and employee safety. **Monitor** that your controls are adequate or if additional resources or people are needed. **Learn** from implemented controls, opportunities for improvement, and employee suggestions.



With every trip, opportunities for errors, injuries, as well as fatal and life-changing events are possible. Keep in mind that the most dangerous part of every employee's day is behind the wheel of a motor vehicle. Ensure that your organization is prepared for the entire trip and has taken into account all areas where risk is present and implement controls appropriately. Also, ensure that the organization is accounting for conditions (error precursors) such as rushing/time pressures, fatigue, new employees (<5years with the organization), physical stressors, lack of resources, distractions as well as a lack of management commitment supporting employee safety and health. Finally, always seek employee involvement for areas of improvement as to how the operations can be improved upon for passenger and employee safety.