



Bed Time! Uber Announces Mandatory Rest Periods

Insights

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In a move met with near-universal praise, Uber recently announced it will now require drivers take at least six hours of time off for every 12 hours they spend driving. After announcing this decision last month, Uber rolled it out across the United States over the course of two weeks. The company already has mandatory rest times in the United Kingdom where drivers must take a six hour break after 10 hour shifts. Fellow ride-sharing company Lyft currently has a mandatory break period after 14 hours of driving. In fact, several local laws already mandate certain rest periods after a length of time driving in order to combat drowsy driving.

The policy will be enforced by having the Uber app automatically go offline once the driver has worked for 12 hours, preventing them from using the app to pick up new fares, and it will not reactivate until a six-hour period has passed. The app will also provide warnings after 10 hours, 11 hours, and 11.5 hours so that drivers know they are approaching their limits. Time that drivers spend idling for more than five minutes (such as time spent waiting for fares outside of airports) would not count towards the 12-hour limit.

The rationale behind this policy shift is likely multifaceted. Clearly, there is a public safety concern that comes with drowsy driving. In fact, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that drowsy driving was responsible for 72,000 crashes, 44,000 injuries, and 800 deaths in 2013. While it is always possible that drivers will use their 12-hour shift at Uber only to then switch over to driving for another service, the change does encourage the importance of rest for drivers.

Additionally, the move may be a way to combat criticism regarding the high number of hours some drivers choose to work.

This change has been widely supported as demonstrating a commitment towards the safety and protection of not just gig workers and their passengers, but everyone who shares the road with them. It seems likely that as this policy is rolled out, it may be modified as needed to best achieve its aims. The move is also significant for an industry that is designed around letting its workers essentially be their own boss, and make their own decisions as far as when and how much they want to work. While that is still largely the case, putting some safeguards in place makes sense as more and more people continue to work for, or use, the services provided.

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