

## Taxi Drivers warned to watch their speed

31 January 2010

ABU DHABI // Starting today, taxi drivers in the capital are being warned to watch their speed – because an automated fining system will be, too.

TransAD, the hired-car regulator, said in a memo to the taxi franchisees last Tuesday that new speed limited would be imposed starting today, monitored through the tracking and dispatch centre.

But TransAD officials confirmed yesterday that the new system was being used in a limited number of cabs for another two to three weeks before it will be rolled out to the entire fleet.

The plan has raised concerns among taxi drivers, who fear that other motorists will respond to the slower-moving cabs with anger and that passengers in a hurry will complain.

“Too many private cars blow horn on the road,” said one driver from India.

However, the 25-year-old driver added that he thought the enforcement measure would lead to fewer accidents.

Within Abu Dhabi and Al Ain, the speed limit for taxis will be 70kph. Near the airport, the limit will be 60kph and on external roads and major highways such as the Abu Dhabi-Dubai Road, cars will be limited to 120kph.

Although the taxi is not physically restricted from exceeding the imposed speed, the automated system can see, through the GPS-enabled data terminal in the cab, the type of road on which the car is traveling. Warnings and a fine can be issued electronically.

A written warning will flash across the cabbie’s screen accompanied by a voice message stating “Please slow down, you are crossing the speed limit.” The driver then has 30 seconds to slow before receiving another automated warning.

If they continue to speed, the driver will be informed he has been fined between Dh100 (US\$27) and Dh 1,000, depending on their speed. Repeated violations can result in a suspension.

Franchisees yesterday said they had been informing the drivers about the new system. Meanwhile a sticker with a message to passengers about the new limited will be put in the cabs, TransAD said.

The Roads and Transport Authority piloted a similar system in Dubai last spring, installing a speed-limiting device in 200 cabs to prevent them from going faster than 100kph.

TransAD piloted its own speed-limiting device to stop taxis exceeding 120kph in October 2008 but later abandoned the plan in favour of the GPS-based technology.