



TLC Debuts “Operation Free Transportation” Documentary About Drivers and Officers Who Helped During and After 9/11

Video Sheds Light on a Little-Known Effort that Saw TLC and the Driver Community Come Together to Provide Thousands of Free Trips to Families and Responders

[\(Watch the video here\)](#)

New York, NY – As New York City observes the 25th anniversary of the September 11, 2001 attacks, the Taxi & Limousine Commission (TLC) has released a [documentary video](#) highlighting memories of the day from TLC staff and drivers, and how they quickly came together to provide thousands of free trips to New Yorkers in need over the following weeks.

Until now, much of the history and stories discussed in the video have been known only to those who participated. At the time of the attacks, TLC headquarters was located at 40 Rector Street, a few blocks south of the World Trade Center. Like thousands who worked and lived in Lower Manhattan, TLC employees arriving at work witnessed the attacks and the collapse of the towers firsthand, including some who were seriously injured.

Officers from TLC’s Uniformed Service Bureau, based in the outer boroughs, were initially dispatched to the Twin Towers to assist in the first response, but were ordered to turn back following the collapse of the second tower. Many then redeployed to the city’s bridges to control vehicle traffic and provide aid to people fleeing the devastation.

Over the next two days, drivers contacted the agency wanting to help the city, so TLC quickly organized “Operation Free Transportation”—a series of emergency taxi stands across the city where victim family members, responders, and blood donors could obtain free trips from volunteer taxi, car service, and commuter van drivers.

More than 1,000 drivers—including six members from the Sikh community who are interviewed in the video—provided thousands of free trips, many to family members gathering at the Family Relief Center at Pier 94 in the hopes of learning information about their missing loved ones and accessing resources. The operation was so successful that the agency launched a similar effort after American Airlines Flight 587 crashed in Belle Harbor on November 12, 2001.

“In the days after September 11, more than a thousand taxi drivers gave their time and their earnings to help grieving families, blood donors and first responders get where they needed to go,” said **Mayor Zohran Kwame Mamdani**. “Many were immigrants who showed up for this city in a moment of unimaginable pain. Twenty-five years later, we’re making sure their service and sacrifice are remembered as part of New York’s story.”

“This was an extraordinary moment when TLC and the driver community came together to do whatever we could to ease the suffering and help responders,” said **Taxi & Limousine Chair and Commissioner Midori Valdivia**. “We wanted to preserve this history, which speaks volumes about the character of the city and its drivers, who paid for the free trips out of their own pockets because of their intense desire to help the city and country they love. Many of them were immigrants who were under intense scrutiny at the time, some even faced hostility, and yet that was no deterrent. I have no doubt that today’s drivers would be just as eager to help.”

Some of the drivers and officers in the video tell harrowing and heartbreaking stories. On the day of the attacks, an FBI agent commandeered Partap Singh’s taxi and ordered him to take him to Ground Zero. They arrived in the area just as the second tower was collapsing.

The agency later created a commemorative medallion and presented the volunteer drivers with certificates in a recognition ceremony the following year that received little attention, and one of the goals of the video is to ensure that their history, along with TLC’s contributions, is kept alive.

“I would like to thank Commissioner Valdivia and the TLC for taking the time to ensure we ‘never forget’ not just the victims and first responders, but the little-known role the TLC and its volunteer drivers played, lending helping hands at such a tragic and surreal time for our city and our nation,” said **Matthew Daus, who served as TLC’s Chair and Commissioner from 2001 to 2010**. “So many New Yorkers, the TLC’s industries, and other city agencies were trying to figure out how to help, and at the time, TLC decided to do what we do best – provide transportation. TLC drivers stepped up to help the victims’ families, blood donors, emergency workers, and others in need with free rides during such stressful times.”

About NYC TLC

Created in 1971, NYC TLC is the agency responsible for licensing and regulating New York City's medallion (yellow) taxi cabs, for-hire vehicles (community-based liveries, black cars, and luxury limousines), commuter vans, and paratransit vehicles, along with the businesses that operate them. It is recognized as the largest and most active taxi and for-hire vehicle regulatory body in the United States.

Almost 180,000 TLC licensees complete approximately 1,000,000 trips each day. To operate for hire, drivers must first undergo a background check, have a safe driving record, and complete 24 hours of driver training. TLC-licensed vehicles are inspected for safety and emissions at TLC's Woodside Inspection Facility.

To find out more about the TLC, or to review its rules, regulations, and procedures, we encourage you to visit our official website at www.nyc.gov/taxi or contact 311/[311 Online](#).