

Cape Town impounds more than 300 Uber vehicles

By [Bekezela Phakathi](#)

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Storm clouds continue to gather around app-based ride service Uber as more than 300 of its partner drivers' vehicles have been impounded by the City of Cape Town.



Picture: [Reuters](#)

This is the latest in a string of setbacks for Uber, which has been under fire from metered-taxi associations that have bemoaned the e-hailing service's unfair advantage.

Cape Town traffic services spokesman Richard Coleman confirmed on Wednesday that metro officials had impounded 302 Uber vehicles since the beginning of the year. However, Coleman denied that the city was targeting Uber partner drivers, clarifying that its officials were carrying out random operations to enforce the law.

He explained that when a vehicle was impounded, its owner had to pay a fine to secure its release. If the vehicle was impounded again, the fine increased.

In 2015, Uber accused law-enforcement agencies in Cape Town of targeting its partner drivers in a blitz that resulted in more than 200 vehicles being impounded. The company blamed the clampdown on its drivers not having permits for metered taxis.

Some partner drivers, who are still awaiting operating permits, alleged that traffic officers seemed to be targeting Uber vehicles.

"We know that officers look out for sedan vehicles with a smartphone mounted somewhere near the dash (board) ... That is

how they pick out Uber drivers," said a driver, who asked not to be named.

The partner driver said Uber had promised to pay fines when vehicles were impounded, allowing drivers to continue operating while awaiting permits. The driver conceded that this could be seen as a way of circumventing the law.

Uber did not respond to detailed questions about the impoundings and its supposed arrangement to pay off fines.

In a general statement, however, the company said that partner drivers had completed the requisite steps for permits under the National Land Transport Act.

"For over two-and-a-half years, we have been actively working with regulators across SA to adopt appropriate regulations to accommodate new technologies that can help solve many of the current problems with urban transportation — safety, accessibility and lost productivity at work," an Uber spokesperson said.

Earlier in 2016, the Cabinet approved the National Land Transport Amendment Bill, under which Uber and metered taxis fall.

Uber had pushed for an e-hailing subcategory to be included in the bill, but the government rejected this.

The bill does, however, allow the use of a smartphone in lieu of a taxi meter.

Source: Business Day

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