Comfort cabbies can now deliver meds amid demand surge

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Public healthcare institutions can now tap ComfortDelGro taxi drivers to deliver medicine to patients with pre-existing conditions who require regular top-ups, amid a surge in demand for medication delivery since January.

ComfortDelGro Taxi said yesterday that drivers will need to undergo online training before they can start delivering medicine to patients’ homes.

“They are to also ensure that all medications are transported in accordance to the temperature requirements,” said the firm, which is the largest taxi operator here with a fleet of about 10,000 taxis.

“They will also be taught to ensure that the parcels are kept away from direct sunlight, heat and moisture.”

Upon delivery, cabbies have to verify the identity of the recipient before signing off on behalf of the recipient to minimise contact.

The new ComfortDelGro service is in partnership with the Agency for Logistics and Procurement Services (Alps), a healthcare logistics firm set up by the National Healthcare Group, National University Health System and SingHealth.

The Ministry of Health (MOH) said that as of May 27, Alps has worked with the public healthcare institutions to make more than 63,800 deliveries in total for the month.

This is up from 7,600 deliveries in January.

MOH said Alps has increased its delivery capacity in order to handle the surge brought about by the Covid-19 situation.

Other than ComfortDelGro, new delivery partners include Keppel Logistics, Alex Fulfilment, IM Freight International, XDel and SingPost.

MOH said all deliveries follow guidelines on the supply and delivery of medication.

“The medications must not be exposed to adverse conditions such as unacceptable temperature, light and moisture, and the vendors must put in place measures for the medication to be secured against spillage and breakage and to prevent theft and loss,” it said.

The Straits Times reported in April that public healthcare institutions are waiving delivery fees for patients on prescription medication, as more stay at home amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Delivery costs usually range from $4 to around $20, depending on the volume and speed.

Professor Chng Wee Joo, director of the National University Cancer Institute, said it has arranged more deliveries since the Covid-19 outbreak, and an additional delivery option is good “as long as it comes at an affordable cost”.

ComfortDelGro said that its delivery fees are charged according to the distance travelled, with a starting fee of $6.50 for up to the first 3km.

The cabbies will keep all of the fees, which they will receive via direct credit into their bank accounts.

“The public healthcare institutions will book the service via the ComfortDelivery platform, which has almost 2,000 drivers.

“The expansion of the firm’s delivery service comes after the Land Transport Authority extended the temporary liberalisation of restrictions on such services until end-September.

Taxi driver Jade Cho, 46, who has been delivering food and has signed up to deliver medicine, said she is glad to have an extra option to increase her earnings.

“I was so stressed out at the start of April, when the situation was very bad. I could wait at the mall or drive around for hours without getting a passenger. But now it is the end of circuit breaker and there is an additional job option... it’s still not like before, but we can manage,” she said.

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