

# Uber fending off Fed suit

## Women contend drivers not properly screened

Friday, October 9, 2015

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Two women who claim they were sexually assaulted during Uber rides are suing the popular ride-hailing service in federal court, saying it fails to adequately screen drivers.

“Through its relentless marketing efforts, Uber has urged the public to defy common sense and undermine every parent’s edict — ‘don’t get in a car with a stranger,’” the lawyers for the women — one from Boston and one from South Carolina — said in their complaint, which was filed in the northern district of California yesterday. “Unfortunately, despite its self-proclaimed ‘commitment to safety’ opening the Uber App and setting the pick-up location has proven to be the modern day equivalent of electronic hitchhiking. Buyer beware — we all know how those horror movies end.”

The lawyers state the San Francisco-based company goes to great lengths to market its rides to women who have been drinking too much.

“Uber even gives out swag at concerts with taglines such as ‘Drink Up & Uber On,’” the suit states. “But what Uber does not share with riders is that making the choice to hail a ride after drinking also puts them in peril from the Uber drivers themselves. By marketing heavily towards young women who have been drinking while claiming that rider safety is its #1 priority, Uber is instead putting these women at risk.”

In the Boston case, the suit states the victim was out with friends in February 2015 when they summoned an Uber ride driven by Abderrahim Dakiri.

“After dropping off her friends, Dakiri took Jane Doe 1 on an off-route detour to her destination, during which he took the opportunity to sexually assault her,” the suit states.

Dakiri has pleaded not guilty to indecent assault and battery.

The lawyers also say Uber’s background checks are inadequate: running a driver’s information through a database “which only goes back for a period of seven years.”

“The application process is entirely online and involves filling out a few short forms and uploading photos of a driver’s license, vehicle registration and proof of insurance,” the suit states. “Uber does not verify vehicle ownership. ... At no point does any Uber employee verify that the person apply(ing) to be the driver is uploading his or her own personal documents.”

Uber said in a statement: “Our thoughts remain with the victims of these two terrible incidents. We proactively worked with law enforcement in Massachusetts and South Carolina at the time to share information and aid their investigations. Both drivers have been permanently removed from the platform.”