

Uber Accused Of Endangering Women With Lax Safety Rules

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Law360, New York (October 8, 2015, 8:01 PM ET) -- Two women alleging they were sexually assaulted by Uber Technologies Inc. drivers launched a suit Thursday in California federal court accusing the ride-hailing company of sacrificing strict background checks and other safety measures in favor of higher profits.



Two woman say investigations reveal Uber fails to adequately screen employees and hires drivers with criminal history. (Credit: AP)

Despite Uber's ad campaign that it's the best option for a safe ride home after drinking, the Jane Does accused Uber of having inadequate safety measures to protect its customers, saying investigations reveal the company fails to adequately screen employees and hires drivers with criminal history.

"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.' 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 plaintiffs said.

One Jane Doe said she was sexually assaulted in Boston after an Uber driver took an off-route detour to her destination after dropping off her friends, while the other said she was raped in Charleston, South Carolina, on her way home from a bar.

"Had Uber not sacrificed rider safety for the sake of profit and expansion, and actually cared about who it was employing to drive its cars rather than being preoccupied with racing to control its share of the taxi market, at the expense of existing taxi companies and consumers, plaintiffs would not have been viciously attacked," the plaintiffs said.

These two incidents are far from isolated events, the plaintiffs added, saying more than 30 sexual assaults by Uber drivers against passengers have been reported in the media in the last two years alone.

The women demand that Uber start requiring nationwide in-person screenings for interviews and vehicle inspections, install tamper-proof cameras in Uber cars, conduct regular background checks on Uber drivers, offer passengers the option to request a female driver and bar registered sex offenders from working as Uber drivers, among other safety improvements.

Their suit asserts claims for negligence, fraud, battery, assault, false imprisonment, intentional infliction of emotional distress and negligent infliction of emotional distress and asks for damages and punitive damages in addition to a permanent injunction directing Uber to improve its safety practices.

“It is our hope that this case sends a strong message to Uber that no woman should have to be physically violated because a company has decided to put profits over safety,” Douglas H. Wigdor, the plaintiffs’ attorney, said in a Thursday statement.

An Uber spokesman said Thursday that “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.”

The plaintiffs are represented by Douglas H. Wigdor, Jeanne M. Christensen, Tanvir H. Rahman and Elizabeth J. Chen of [Wigdor LLP](#) and Jamie C. Couche of Anderson & Poole PC.

Counsel information for Uber wasn’t available Thursday.

The case is Doe 1 et al. v. Uber Technologies Inc., case number [3:15-cv-04670](#), in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California.