Uber to Record Audio During Rides

Riders and drivers can record audio for each trip, but only Uber customer support agents will be able to listen to the recordings 'to better understand an incident.'

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If you're a regular user of Uber in the US, there will soon be an option to record the audio for each trip you take. It's a feature Uber is introducing in a bid to offer better security for both drivers and riders.

As *The Washington Post* reports, Uber is classing audio recordings as a security feature and intends to pilot it in Latin American cities starting in December followed by tests in the US "soon." It will be an opt-in feature for drivers and riders who can agree to recordings per trip or for all trips.

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An Uber executive explained in an email, "When the trip ends, the user will be asked if everything is okay and be able to report a safety incident and submit the audio recording to Uber with a few taps … The encrypted audio file is sent to Uber's customer support agents who will use it to better understand an incident and take the appropriate action."

Other tech companies have come under fire recently for the audio recordings they keep and the privacy problems that creates. However, Uber is viewing the recordings as a positive

move, with Sachin Kansal, Uber's head of safety products, explaining, "We have taken a position that whenever you are in an Uber, the feeling that we want both parties to have is 'the lights are on'…That leads to safer interaction on the platform."

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The privacy concern here is that both parties have the option to record the audio, meaning if one opts-out of the recording it may still occur. Even if recordings aren't shared with Uber customer support agents, they will remain in driver and rider trip histories for future use. There's also a question mark regarding wiretapping and eavesdropping statutes, which vary by state. Will Uber take that into account when launching the new feature?

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