

Companies tie up transport, timings to keep women safe

Firms turn to hotel stays for women, SOS buttons and CCTV in transport vehicles for safer work

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At a time unsafe workplaces for women have come under harsh scrutiny, companies across sectors highlighted flexible timings, helplines, safe transport and hotel stays, among a series of measures to instil confidence and deter harm.

The measures come in an environment where a big chunk of women have expressed their decision to move on in two years citing reasons such as the lack of an inclusive work culture and disparity in pay.

“We have many women working at our factories, in shifts, across India. They are picked up from and dropped at their home locations. During night shifts, women security guards are stationed at the premises, besides having active CCTV cameras at all locations,” said Supratik Bhattacharyya, chief talent officer at RPG Group. Raychem RPG, which offers engineering solutions and services, allows women employees to stay at a hotel closest to the airport in case she arrives late at her destination, irrespective of her travel entitlements.

Apart from the generic zero-tolerance policy on harassment, Tata Motors offers flexible shift timings for women and door-to-door transport equipped with female security personnel and audio-enabled CCTV. For women who work on the shop floor across shifts, there are mid-level managers in some locations who voluntarily rotate supervision until the last woman employee reaches home and reports back to the local leadership team, said Tata Motors CHRO Sitaram Kandi.

E-commerce giant Amazon also has similar measures in place. The company offers commute services with designated pick-up and drop-off points, and



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encourages female employees to use company-provided safe transport that includes the accompaniment of a security guard at night, said Liju Thomas, Amazon India's director of human

resources across the country after a Kolkata doctor was found raped and murdered in the Kolkata hospital where she worked.

At Indian companies, more harassment cases are surfacing as a larger

SAFETY FIRST

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LACK of safety for women employees has become the focal point for Kolkata rape case

resources. Thomas added that all vehicles are equipped with live speed monitoring, SOS buttons, and real-time alerts.

Lack of safety for women employees has become the focal point for protests

share of woman women register their grievances.

Only 81 out of the top 300 companies listed on NSE had reported complaints in FY23, showed a study by the Centre

for Economic Data & Analysis (CEDA). In FY14, the year when the Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH) Act came into force, these 300 companies reported 161 cases. The number shot up to 767 in FY22, and 1,160 in FY23.

Quick commerce firms employing women delivery partners have added more security. Big Basket's women delivery partners have guidelines on doorstep delivery, alignment of convenient delivery slots and SOS facility for use in case of emergencies.

Food and grocery delivery company Swiggy said it has several safety protocols to ensure the safety of women delivery staff. In the past, the company had instituted measures like 'safe zones' and capping delivery hours at 6 PM for female delivery partners. However, this cap became a challenge during peak delivery slots.

Swiggy said it has now put in place several security processes including situational training and SOS-emergency support that connects the delivery person to a helpline, local police or an ambulance as needed. Female and male delivery workers alike have the option to decline deliveries if they deem an area to be unsafe, with no questions or disincentives.

The safety metrics gain prominence at a time companies are working to improve their gender diversity and prevent exits. As much as 47% of the 24,000 women employees surveyed by consulting firm Aon said that they are unsure or will leave their firms in two years, citing workplace bias, absence of an inclusive work culture, pay disparity and limited career progression. The study — Aon's 2024 Voice of Women — was conducted between March and June this year.

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