

292 Hurt in FY '99

MTA Taking Measures to Prevent Slip-Fall and Lifting Injuries



(April 20) During FY 1999, 155 bus operators were injured in slip and fall accidents. Another 137 employees hurt themselves lifting things. Total cost: \$2.56 million in insurance claims.

Slip-fall and lifting injuries are the two most frequent types of injuries that MTA

employees suffer. And they can take a severe toll on employees. Of the 137 who injured themselves while lifting, 64 were off the job an average of 54 days.



In an effort to reduce workplace injuries and hold down workers compensation costs, Transit Operations is working with Human Resources, Risk Management and Systems Safety and Security on a number of accident prevention measures.

Employees, MTA will benefit

"The best way to control workers comp costs is to prevent injuries from ever happening," says Lucille Van Der Heyden, Risk Management claims manager. "If we can prevent injuries, both employees and the MTA will benefit."

According to a Risk Management report, too many bus operators were being hurt adjusting side mirrors during the required pre-trip bus inspections. They would fall while standing on the vehicle's bumper or stretch in an awkward position from the stairwell to reach the mirror. One operator lost a finger.

To prevent operators from being hurt while adjusting bus mirrors, each operating division has designated a special area with a platform and/or safety step ladders operators can use. To improve their visibility in the bus yard, operators will be given upgraded reflective safety vests.

Slip, Trip and Fall Injuries

The Office of Systems Safety and Security currently is conducting a survey of transit properties to determine whether they require operations employees to wear non-slip safety shoes. If industry data suggests that non-slip shoes are a factor in reducing slip, trip and fall injuries, the MTA will explore the possibility of requiring safety shoes to be worn as part of the bus operator uniform.

Recently, the MTA launched a multi-media "Safe Lifting Campaign" to educate operations maintenance managers and supervisors about safe lifting. They will train mechanics and service attendants during division safety meetings. A new safety pamphlet titled "Practice Safe Lifting at Work" also is being distributed.

"A lot of injuries aren't necessarily a physical trauma," says Van Der Heyden. "Many involve an underlying medical condition that can aggravate an injury or can be intensified by an injury."

Conditions can be controlled

Hypertension and diabetes are two debilitating conditions that can increase the likelihood of sustaining an injury or increasing the seriousness of an injury. Both can be controlled by proper diet, exercise and medication.

The Office of Central Instruction and Human Resources Development and Training are developing a wellness program that will cover stress management, diet and healthy eating habits, exercise tips, fatigue awareness and conflict resolution. The program also will cover practical tips on proper seat, steering wheel and mirror adjustment.

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