



^ Deputy CEO John Catoe promised to improve the working environment as part of the Safety's First effort.

Division 3 Hosts Safety's First Rollout with Speeches, Barbecue

(Jan. 31, 2002) Wearing operators' blue uniforms and mechanics white coveralls and reflector vests, a large crowd of Division 3 employees gathered, Wednesday, for the grand kickoff of the MTA's new Safety's First program.

Deputy CEO John Catoe was joined by UTU General Chairman James Williams, Local 1607 Chairman Rick Ortega and Vice Chairman Joe White, Deputy Executive Officer John Roberts and others to participate in the program rollout. The festivities included a safety game, with prizes of Safety's First ball caps and gift baskets, and a barbecue.

"The key to being Number One in safety is to make sure you are safe, to give you the best equipment, to listen to you and to ask for your input as we order new vehicles, as we modify facilities and as we put out new services," said Catoe.

Speaking for his union members, [UTU General Chairman James Williams lent his union's support to the Safety's First program.](#)

Williams said, "This union cares about its members and we're particularly concerned about their safety. For that reason, we're pleased that the MTA has launched this Safety's First program aimed at improving safety, not just for our members, but for all employees."



Noting that some 3,000 employees report injuries every year, Catoe said the MTA is committed to improving on-the-job safety and making the working environment safer on board Metro Buses, in the maintenance shops and in administrative offices.

Funds budgeted to upgrade safety

His visits to operating divisions have revealed that "we have not made the proper expenditures to bring our facilities up to...modern-day standards," Catoe said. But, he said funds have been budgeted to upgrade safety of vehicles and operating facilities.

[John Roberts, deputy executive officer, Bus Operations, said the Safety's First program will be a 24-7 effort.](#)

He cited the Division 2 maintenance shop as one of the first places that will see a safety upgrade. "Contracts will be issued soon to bring that facility up to standard," he said.

Pointing at a large banner with the words, "Thank you for



another safe day...We need you back tomorrow," Catoe expressed concern about the number of injuries associated with bus operator seats.

He said the agency will look at operators seat construction and the design of the operator's compartment "...and make sure we spend the money where we should – that is, on your 'office.'"

The Deputy CEO called on employees to get involved in the Safety's First program. "I ask each of you – whether you drive every day, work on fueling and cleaning our vehicles or supervise the organization – to help us by taking the responsibility for safety. Be an individual leader in safety at work and at home."

Catoe noted that the MTA has set a goal of reducing lost-time accidents by 50 percent over the next five years. But, he said, "Our target should be no accidents, no lost time. And, when you work toward that, that's when you have a true commitment."

EDITOR'S NOTE: Members of the Division Advisory Committee and Division 3 volunteers, working with DAC coordinator Helen Ortiz, arranged the kickoff program and the barbecue. DAC members responsible for cooking and food preparation were Melvin Lesure, Socorro Mitchell, Barbara Davis, Jackie Jones, Rosalia Medina and Florence Bingham. Norma Carrasco assisted with setup of the Metro Safety wheel and provided game prizes. Division volunteers are Manny Haro, Mike Mestyanek, Colon Gomez and Albert L. Parker, Jr.

Judges for the Safety's First game were Robert Torres, Gary Schachel, Colon Gomez, Maria Canales and Al Cote.

Division Manager Dan Frawley and Acting Maintenance Manager Gary Schachel hosted the event.

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