

WEST VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF
TRANSPORTATION
DIVISION OF PUBLIC
TRANSIT

S.P.I.D.E.R. Web

Getting Caught Up In Safety: A Newsletter for Transit Professionals

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The West Virginia DOT Division of Public Transit is pleased to present this first issue of the S.P.I.D.E.R. Web, a semi-annual, on-line newsletter written specifically for West Virginia's transit professionals. Each October and April you will receive this publication containing articles and updates on safety topics and relevant issues.

Since 1989, SPIDER, **S**afety **P**lanning **I**nformation **D**irected to **E**very-day **R**esponse, has been West Virginia's program and resource for the safe and secure operation of transportation systems. This newsletter is just another way to provide you with useful information and to encourage these qualities at your agency. This is your newsletter. Please let us hear from you about what topics you would like to see discussed in the next issue, by sending your comments to dptPublicTransit@wv.gov. Please indicate 'safety newsletter' in your subject line.



Fatigue May Be Symptom of Other Serious Medical Conditions

Driver fatigue has become a huge issue within the transit industry. With long hours behind the wheel, limited breaks, and often high stress that transit drivers must tolerate, it is important to educate the drivers about the indicators that could mean that fatigue may not just be the result of not getting enough rest or from dealing with the challenge of operating a transit vehicle. In some cases, it could be an indicator of much more serious and even life threatening conditions as a result of undiagnosed sleep disorders. Sleep deficits (the cumulative effect of not getting enough sleep) have been linked with poor work performance, driving accidents, relationship problems, and mood problems like anger and depression. And a growing list of health risks—heart disease, diabetes, and obesity have all been linked with chronic sleep loss.

health and can affect a person's mood, their weight, and in extreme cases, can even be life threatening. For instance, sleep apnea is a serious sleep disorder that occurs when a person's breathing is interrupted during sleep, most often as a result of snoring. People with untreated sleep apnea stop breathing repeatedly during their sleep, sometimes hundreds of times. This means the brain -- and the rest of the body -- may not get enough oxygen.



The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has developed a short, 30-minute, on-line training course on this topic.

Sleep problems include snoring, sleep apnea, insomnia, sleep deprivation, and restless legs syndrome. Good sleep is necessary for optimal

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Tri-River Transit

“Speed causes nearly one-third of all fatal motor vehicle crashes.”



Tri-River Transit

With the summer of 2014 behind us and fall in full swing, all too soon we will need to turn our attention to winter driving conditions. What makes West Virginia a great state for skiing and other winter sports can make it a challenge for West Virginia’s public transit drivers who are out and about on the roads every day, spring, summer, fall and winter. So even though it may be a beautiful fall day today, it’s not too soon for you to be thinking about winter driving safety.

The secret to transporting your passengers safely on wet, icy, or snow-covered roads is a little advanced planning to meet winter weather driving conditions. Begin to prepare yourself now by thinking about what changes to your driving habits may be in order and what to do if you are in an accident.

First Things First: Prepare Yourself and Your Passengers

In winter driving, consider both personal preparation as well as preparation of your bus for unforeseen conditions. While avoiding driving in known hazardous conditions is the wisest choice, storms may strike with little or no warning. Time spent in preparation is your best defense. If winter weather deteriorates, you are less likely to panic and stress out and more

likely to react calmly during an emergency.

Make sure as part of your pre-trip inspections during the winter session, that your vehicle is equipped with proper emergency travel supplies. The American Red Cross and the National Weather Service have created a list for these supplies. This list is only a suggestion, and changes are recommended based on your specific service area and/or length of your route, the areas where you are driving, and the number of passengers who are likely to be on board at any given time. The important thing is to have a checklist and be sure you have everything you need on your bus before you start your run. Share this list with your maintenance supervisor and highlight any items that your system may not already include in your emergency winter travel kit:

- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Ice scraper/snow brush
- Blankets
- Fire Extinguisher
- First Aid Kit
- Bottled Water
- Non-perishable high-energy foods, such as granola bars, raisins or peanut butter
- Shovel
- Reflective emergency trian-

gles (3)

- Sand or cat litter (for tire traction)
- Knife
- Pencil and paper
- Candles (even one lit candle can provide emergency heating)
- Matches
- Cell phone
- Red bandana (to tie to the antenna when help is needed)

Review Your Trip Manifest

An essential tool to use in winter conditions is the trip manifest. Make sure you notify dispatch if you veer from the manifest. On out of town trips, you should notify dispatch of the route you will be traveling and the expected time of arrival. If dispatch knows the starting point and time, the route and the destination, help can reach you much more quickly, in the event of an emergency.

You should not only remain alert during hazardous weather to highway conditions, but you should also know where you are on your route at all times. Pay attention to mile markers and highway exit numbers. Know the state, county, or interstate number for the road on which you are traveling. Know what county, city, or area you are near.

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With Fall and Winter Come the Cold and Flu Season

Yes, fall is here, and unfortunately, so is the cold and flu season. The flu season typically lasts fall through spring, and the cold virus seems to have no season, although winter seems to be the most common time. With the numbers of passengers transit drivers interact with on a daily basis, being exposed to illness is unavoidable. There are, however, some things you can do to reduce your exposure, and in some cases, prevent the illness altogether.

Wash Your Hands

Thorough and regular hand washing is one of the most effective means of avoiding colds and other viruses. Wash your hands often with soap, lathering for about 20 seconds, then rinsing and drying with a paper towel or hand dryer. Do this especially after coming into contact with anyone with obvious cold symptoms, equipment or other items used by other individuals, etc.

Cover Your Nose and Mouth

If you do catch the sniffles, always cover your nose and mouth with your arm when sneezing or coughing, if possible, and not your hand (if you do have to use your hand, wash it immediately). This will help stop the spread of the virus to those around you.

Practice a Healthy Lifestyle

Getting enough sleep, eating healthy, balanced meals, drinking plenty of water, and exercising regularly aren't going to stop your exposure to the cold or flu viruses, but they can increase your resistance to the viruses and maybe even shorten their length.

Flu Vaccines

The common cold and the flu are viruses; antibiotics are not effective, and sometimes, if taken, can work to reduce the drug's effectiveness when you do have an infection that needs treating. Taking the flu vaccine each year, while not 100% effective, can significantly reduce your chances of getting the flu. Flu vaccines are dead viruses; you cannot catch the flu by taking the vaccine. You may experience some soreness around the injection site. And, a small number of people may experience fever, chills, or achiness for a day or two. This, however, is minimal compared to coming down with a real case of the flu. Talk to your physician about the vaccine. Today's vaccines are not only available from your physician's

office, but also at most pharmacies and walk-in clinics without an appointment, making it convenient to get the vaccine even with the most hectic of schedules.



Prescription and Over-the-Counter Medications

If despite all of your best efforts, you catch a cold or come down with the flu, there are some prescription and over-the-counter medications that can reduce the symptoms or even shorten the duration of the illness. For example, there are some prescription medications which physicians can now prescribe which can be effective with influenza. If you experience symptoms which you believe are more than just a cold (fever, muscle aches, headache, sweats/chills, etc.), you should see a physician.

Over-the-counter medications are often effective in reducing cold symptoms. But, beware. These medications can have side effects which could affect your ability to perform your driving or other safety-sensitive functions (check with your transit system's drug and alcohol program policy for information on the use of prescription and over-the-counter medications). Always read the label carefully and check with your physician, pharmacist, or other health care provider if you have any questions.

Often the cold and flu present many symptoms, and we want to treat each one. It's not unusual to take Aspirin or Tylenol for fever, cough medicine, along with an antihistamine or decongestant to treat our colds. This could have a serious health impact, especially if you are taking any prescription medications for other conditions.

If you take several different medicines, see more than one doctor, or have certain health conditions, you and your doctors need to be aware of all the medications you take. Drug interactions, when two or more drugs react with each other, may make your drug less effective, cause unexpected side effects, or increase the action of a particular drug.

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“Tires are your first defense to prevent crashes.”



All pictures on this page provided by: Bluefield Area Transit

Winter Driving *Continued from Page 2*

And, as basic as it may sound, you should know what direction you are traveling, so that you can relay that information to dispatch or to emergency workers at any time.

Bus Prep

In addition to the added dangers that winter driving brings, the change in weather can challenge the vehicle itself. Freezing temperatures, salted roads, and wintery precipitation can gang up on your bus if maintenance checks specific to winter driving aren't done. The following steps are suggestions for preparing your vehicle for winter weather. Many of these items should already be a part of a routine, pre-trip inspection. If any of these steps aren't currently apart of the winter pre-trip, and if you aren't the person who is responsible for this for your transit system, share it with your maintenance supervisor.

Check the antifreeze. Your antifreeze is an essential part of your vehicle's winter protection. Your vehicle contains a mix of water and antifreeze. Make sure the level is full and

the mixture is close to 50/50 to prevent freezing.

Inspect your tires. Tires are your first defense to prevent crashes. Take the time to check the tread depth during your pre-inspection and to inquire when the tires were last rotated. According to the National Highway Transportation Safety Board, tires need at least 2/32" of depth to be safe. Also, be sure to check your tire pressure. Tires lose a little pressure when it gets cold, so make sure they are "pumped up."

Replace the wipers. What do windshield wipers have to do with winter weather? Two things: First, anything falling from the sky is going to end up on your windshield, and second, in addition to snow and ice on the roads, you will also be driving on a lot of sand and salt which can end up on your windshield. It takes wipers that are in good shape to keep the windshield clean and safe.

Check your windshield washer fluid. You'll be using lots of washer fluid as you try to keep your windshield clean. Tip:

Don't fill your washer fluid reservoir with anything except washer fluid or it will freeze.

Pay attention to the vehicle's brakes. Re-



port any squealing, grinding, or other indications that the vehicle's brakes might need attention to your maintenance supervisor immediately so that the brakes can be inspected and replaced, if needed.

Check your engine oil. Your transit system's preventive maintenance schedule requires the oil to be checked regularly. Never skip this step, but especially in the winter it is important that the oil and filter are checked and changed regularly.

According to the Farmer's Almanac, winter in areas across West Virginia will be colder than normal this year, and while precipitation is predicted to be below the average, we can anticipate at least flurries in late October and winter driving conditions from November thru, in some areas, March. So, dust off your winter driving hats and boots and be ready for whatever Mother Nature has in store for us.

Excerpts for this article from the Kansas TransReporter, January 2014



Fatigue May Be Symptom of Other Serious Medical Conditions *Continued from Page 1*

The "Fatigue and Sleep Apnea Awareness for Transit Employees" is available for use by transit systems to educate their drivers on the indicators and symptoms of sleep disorders which are, in some cases, the cause of driver fatigue. Ask your transit supervisor or safety officer about this on-line training which is available on the FTA website, www.fta.dot.gov. Click on Transit Safety and Oversight, then Safety Training, and scroll down to locate the training.

More importantly, if you believe you are getting enough sleep, but still feel fatigued, or have experienced any of the symptoms mentioned in this article, see your family physician.

Sources:
WebMD
FTA Dear Colleague Letter, July 2013

With Fall and Winter Come the Cold and Flu Season *Continued from Page 3*

Discussing with your physician what other medications you are taking and reading the label every time you use an OTC medication are critical. For safety-sensitive employees, it becomes a safety risk, both for you and the travelling public.

Consider taking the flu vaccine, wash your hands thoroughly and often, cover your nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing, maintain (or start) a healthy lifestyle, and use prescription and over-the-counter medications responsibly.

The cold and flu season are inevitable, but there are ways to reduce, if not eliminate, their effects on your health. Con-

Sources: WebMD; FTA D&A Quarterly Update #43

CALENDAR

October:

10/31/2014—Happy Halloween

November:

11/19/2014—Advanced Mobility Device Securement—Charleston
11/20/2014—Defensive Driving/Pre-Trip—Fairmont
11/25/2014—Thanksgiving Day

December:

12/25/2014—Christmas Day

January:

1/1/2015—New Years Day
1/19/2015—Martin Luther King Day

February:

2/12/2015—Presidents Day
2/14/2015—Valentines Day

March:

3/8/2015—Daylight Savings Starts

April:

4/5/2015—Easter Sunday
4/14/2015—Customer Driven Service—Parkersburg
4/15/2015—Driver's Role in System Safety/Emerg. Evac.—Clarksburg
4/16/2015—Advanced Mobility Device Securement—Clarksburg

Look for the next edition of the S.P.I.D.E.R Web in April 2015

The West Virginia DOT Division of Public Transit sponsors safety-related training throughout the year at centralized locations on a variety of topics. To inquire about the above listed training, or any other training topics, contact the Division at dptPublicTransit@wv.gov.

If you are not receiving this newsletter directly, or know of someone who is not currently receiving it, and would like to, please contact Zach Kincade (zkincade@rlsandassoc.com). This publication is free.

