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A semi-annual newsletter, S.P.I.D.E.R. Web is published under contract with the West Virginia Department of Transportation from a grant received from the Federal Transit Administration under 49 U.S.C. Section 5311—Formula grants for other than urbanized areas (CFDA 20.509).

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## Do You Know What You Are Drinking?

Transit drivers tend to work odd hours and due to the nature of their job, lead sedentary life styles. A part of this lifestyle often includes consumption of caffeine to “stay alert.” Many may decide to drink coffee, soft drinks, or an energy drink, which is growing more and more in popularity. The typical energy drink has three times the amount of caffeine than in other drinks, such as coffee or soft drinks. High intake of caffeine can trigger rapid heart rates, palpitations, can raise blood pressure and in severe cases, result in seizures, or sudden death.

Think about the amount of caffeine that is consumed. Caffeine starts to become dangerous when one consumes more than 1 gram of the substance, and it can be lethal at 10 grams. Cleveland Clinic cardiac surgeon Dr. Marc Gillinov recommends that people do not consume more than 400 to 500 milligrams of caffeine per day. The average cup of coffee has about 100 milligrams of caffeine, although a cup of Starbucks coffee contains 260 milligrams of caffeine. Dr. Gillinov states that consuming large amounts of caffeine can lead to caffeine toxicity, which in turn can lead to irritability, hyper-aroused states, an abnormal heart beat, and cardiac arrest.

A new study presented at the American Heart Association’s 2013 Scientific Sessions revealed that energy drinks may increase blood pressure and change the

heart’s rhythm. The Food and Drug Administration has confirmed that it received five reports in the past few years suggesting that people died after drinking caffeinated energy drinks. The number of emergency department visits involving energy drinks doubled from 10,068 visits in 2007 to 20,783 in 2011.

In addition to the concern about caffeine, most energy drinks are high in sugar in the form of high fructose corn syrup and/or cane sugar. High sugar drinks are linked to obesity, tooth decay, and the increased risk of type 2 diabetes. Increased sugar consumption can also cause blood sugar and insulin spikes, later resulting in a “crash-like” feeling. So, while you may think these energy drinks are the solution to drowsiness and/or fatigue, they are actually quite the opposite. With the normal stressors that come with the occupation, transit drivers encounter higher rates of cardiovascular, gastrointestinal, and musculoskeletal disorders, increased blood pressure and higher levels of stress; why add to the list?



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## Steps to Take in Deciding to Evacuate Your Vehicle



Buckwheat Express

“If evacuating is the safest choice, then do it quickly and calmly. Don’t panic.”



Little Kanawha Transit Authority

Making the decision to evacuate a vehicle is something you hope you never have to do as a rural transit driver. But planning in advance about when, where, and how you would do it is important. It’s not just about walking off the bus. Important decisions must be made before evacuating, and often will need to be made in seconds. Discuss potential circumstances with your transit director and other staff and participate in evacuation and staff training to practice the necessary steps. No one situation is the same, and it is ultimately up to you, the driver, to quickly make the best possible decision. Here are some basics to use in deciding when to evacuate in an emergency.

1. **Assess the risk.** You must quickly assess the situation and determine the safest option: stay on the vehicle or evacuate. It is generally safer to keep passengers on the vehicle unless you have such conditions as smoke, fire, fuel leaks, water submersion, suspicious packages, a dangerous location, or any other condition that would endanger passengers on the vehicle. Once you decide to evacuate, move the vehicle, if possible, to a location away from traffic, avoiding blind curves, and preferably on a level grade with a safe, unobstructed area to alight next to the
2. **Call for help.** You must decide, call 911, or call dispatch? When in doubt, call 911 first to quickly get help on the way. Breakdowns don’t require an emergency response, but do require a quick response from your agency. In these cases, immediately call dispatch to apprise them of the situation. When calling 911, always start by giving your name and location. Provide a description of the problem and additional details as you have time.
3. **Rapidly evacuate.** If evacuating is the safest choice, then do it quickly and calmly. Don’t panic. You know your passengers and know which need more assistance than others, and which passengers can assist others. While you are assisting passengers, also enlist and direct your ambulatory passengers to help with others. Remember to stay calm, especially if it appears that you may not be able to evacuate everyone. You
4. **Stay together.** When announcing the need to evacuate, also include the path for evacuation (which door, hatch, or window) and then where to meet after evacuation. For example, “Folks, we need to evacuate this vehicle because I suspect a fire. We will be using the rear exit. John and Sue, I need your assistance in helping people out the back door. Please stay together, and move as far away from the vehicle and the road as possible.”
5. **Help the injured.** This usually involves preventing or slowing shock symptoms, including rapid, shallow breathing, cold, clammy skin; rapid, weak pulses; dizziness; bluish lips or fingernails; and sweating. Lay the person down, if possible, and elevate their feet, about 12 inches above the head, unless you suspect leg, hips, back, or neck injury. Cover and keep them warm. Be prepared to turn the person on their side if they vomit.

*Continued on page 4*

# Providing Exceptional Customer Service In Transit

## Top 10 Considerations

By: Michael R. Noel

Providing exceptional customer service in the transit industry is a team effort; it takes everyone from the Transit Board and Transit Manager down to the drivers, dispatchers, and maintenance staff to relay one consistent message: Customers are our most valued resource. Here are ten characteristics that if embraced will result in exceptional customer service.



- 10. Create a culture of customer service.** Great transit Operators & Bus Drivers set high expectations and hold themselves accountable and measure the quality of services they provide.
- 9. Recognize that internal morale = customer service.** All transit employees must recognize that customer service is largely a reflection of how well co-workers treat each other.
- 8. Value your customers.** Great transit organizations and their employees understand that it is customers, not subsidies, that make possible everyone's paychecks.
- 7. Understand the pivotal role the dispatcher plays.** Great transit Dispatchers are trained professionals who hold themselves accountable for setting either a positive or negative tone with both customers and bus operators.
- 6. Recognize the entire community as transit customers.** Great transit organizations and their employees recognize the value they bring to the entire community by providing business with customers, schools with students, medical facilities with patients and social service agencies with clients.
- 5. Understand the marketing concepts of "moments of truth and power of generalization."** Great transit Operators, Bus Drivers and Maintenance Personnel understand that the image they present in the equipment, facilities and interactions with each other and customers is constantly being judged and that a single good or bad experience becomes the long-term impression people will have of the organization.
- 4. Hire customer-focused individuals.** Great transit organizations focus as much on hiring service-oriented individuals as they do on safety-related matters.
- 3. Recognize the seven basic needs of all transit customers and how different customers prioritize these needs.** Great transit Operators & Bus Drivers are committed to providing services that the customers want, need and expect: Reliable, Safe, Convenient, Clean, Understandable, Affordable and Friendly transit services.
- 2. Understand that transit operations are stressful and that employees need to live and work in a supportive and caring environment.** Great transit organizations recognize that employees need to be cool, calm, in-control and respectful and provide the support and tools to help them manage their stress.
- 1. Technology is not a replacement for motivated, professional, and friendly employees.** Great transit organizations will always look for ways to improve sharing of information with their customers, but know that their employees are the key to exceptional, people-focused, customer service.



“Being prepared helps to instill confidence in your ability to cope in an emergency.”



George Levitsky  
Fairmont-Marion  
County Transit  
Authority

## Steps to Take in Deciding to Evacuate Your Vehicle

*Continued from Page 2*

6. **Re-assess the situation.** You have completed steps 1-5. Now re-assess. Everyone is evacuated and away from the vehicle. Remain calm and collected. Let everyone know you called 911 and help is on the way. Continue to re-evaluate the condition of your passengers, in particular the injured. Call 911 again, if necessary, to get an update on the estimated time of arrival for first responders.

Participating in emergency exercises is very important to ensuring that you are prepared for emergencies, and in particular those that may require evac-

uation. Being prepared helps to instill confidence in your ability to cope in an emergency. It has been shown that transit agencies that conduct emergency exercises are better prepared to respond to emergencies. But, remember, every emergency situation is different, and no one response fits all circumstances. The best way to prepare is to work out scenarios of possible risks, use role-plays, and discuss responses for each scenario.

Evacuation training is available through the West Virginia DOT, Division of Public Transit's safety and training contract with RLS & Associates,

Inc. To discuss scheduling a training, contact Cindy Fish at (304) 558-0428 or Rosamary Amiet at (614) 562-5177, [ramiet@rlsandassoc.com](mailto:ramiet@rlsandassoc.com).

*This article was excerpted by RLS & Associates, Inc. from the Kansas RTAP Fact Sheet originally published by Anne Lowder and Pat Weaver, based on TCRP Synthesis 160: Paratransit Emergency Preparedness and Operations handbook, 2013. To view both of these documents in their entirety, go to:*

<http://www.kutc.ku.edu/pdffiles/KTRFS14-StepEvacuateVehicle.pdf>

[http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/tcrp/tcrp\\_rpt\\_160.pdf](http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/tcrp/tcrp_rpt_160.pdf)

## Do You Know What You Are Drinking? *Continued from Page 1*

Although there is a growing awareness of the effects of energy drinks, there are no regulations of sales. If you choose to consume these drinks or other caffeine beverages, be aware of the amount of caffeine you ingest and the potential side effects.

Article used by permission from the Indiana RTAP [Dispatch](#) published by INDOT and RLS & Associates, Inc.

Resources:

Can caffeinated drinks kill you? Experts say it's possible.

[www.syracuse.com/news/index.ssf/2012/10](http://www.syracuse.com/news/index.ssf/2012/10)

Energy drinks may increase blood pressure, change heart's rhythm.

[www.cbsnews.com/news/energy-drinks-may-increase-blood-pressure](http://www.cbsnews.com/news/energy-drinks-may-increase-blood-pressure)

Dentist in Redding: When Energy Drinks Kill

[www.redding.com/news/2014/jun/16/dentist-in-redding-when-energy](http://www.redding.com/news/2014/jun/16/dentist-in-redding-when-energy)

# Different, Difficult and Dangerous Passengers

By: Patti Swartz-Noel



Bus driver to another bus driver, “The problem with driving a bus are all of those annoying passengers. A happy bus is an empty bus!”

Remember, passengers are the reason that “you do what you do,” and you provide a valuable service to those who need or choose to use public transit. At times, complaining, irritable, argumentative, and demanding passengers can make bus drivers’ jobs extremely difficult and trying. Different passengers may have intellectual disabilities—those who may not communicate well, become confused easily, or forget where they are going or returning. Difficult passengers may have rude and unpleasant personalities, or they may have just had a terrible day. Dangerous passengers pose a completely different situation that must be handled with care.

Having a plan to deal with these special situations if and when they happen can help minimize the stress of the situation for you and the other passengers. When dealing with different, difficult, and dangerous passengers, certain assessments should be made:

- Assess the condition of the passenger
  - Intellectual disabilities
  - Physical disabilities
  - Language barriers
  - Frail elderly
  - Adolescent
  - Possible drug or alcohol misuse
- Assess the problem
  - Listen
  - Focus on the problem
  - Do not blame or make excuses
  - Restate your understanding of the problem to the passenger
- Encourage the passenger to suggest a solution to the problem
  - If the solution is viable, try it
  - If the solution is not viable, suggest an alternative
- Be friendly and fair, but firm—especially in a safety-related issue

Some warning signs of a passenger’s temperament moving from different and difficult to dangerous include:

- Increased agitation, sudden movements
- Loud voice or shouting
- Threats or swearing
- Threatening actions
- Possible or visible weapon
- History of violent behavior

Should a passenger’s behavior escalate from difficult to dangerous, protect yourself and passengers, and:

- Don’t overreact
- Assume non-threatening body posture and speech
- Try empathy
- Defuse the situation, if possible
- Discreetly alert dispatch or management with a panic button or code. Dispatch should be notified anytime you believe there is potential for a situation to escalate so that they are aware of the situation and can be prepared to assist you
- Do not board new passengers
- Tell the dangerous passenger what you are going to do before you do it
- Make no sudden movements or attempt to disarm an armed passenger
- If possible, park the bus in a well lit and public place; open the doors
- Allow the dangerous passenger to get off the bus with no pursuit
- If another passenger is threatened or attacked, alert Dispatch or 911 with
  - Location
  - Nature of the incident
  - Description of dangerous passenger
  - Possible or visible weapons

Remember, while you cannot control passengers – different, difficult, or dangerous – you can control your own reaction to them and possibly avoid any incidents. Keep yourself and your passengers safe. Keep calm, keep cool, and stay in control.



# Is Customer Service Training Safety Training?

By: Michael R. Noel



Michael R. Noel

“What do transit drivers want at the end of their day?”



Fairmont-Marion  
County Transit

I am often asked when I conduct Customer Service training if it “counts” toward the agency’s safety training. My answer is always the same--a resounding YES! In fact, when you look at the data, the likelihood of a serious confrontation with a passenger takes place many times a day. The likelihood of a serious accident, thankfully, is rare and seldom.

When I train, I often ask the question, “What do transit drivers want at the end of their day?” Usually a quick response comes from the group... “To go home!” That certainly is what most people want, but I like to add to the want to go home response, “and to be safe and enjoy your evening.” That outcome, to arrive home safely and to enjoy one’s evening is more than likely directly related to how well you as a transit driver responded to the passengers throughout the day.

Transit drivers need first and foremost to be well-rested, cool, calm, and in control of his or her emotions. Passengers will sometimes ask questions, behave oddly, or even express anxiety and anger toward the driver. They might be upset about being late or worried about something that has nothing to do with the transit system or the driver. A transit driver who is cool, calm, and in control can respectfully answer questions, give out information and even de-escalate a threatening or out of control person. Mastering that skill will largely determine the outcome of your day.

Here are some simple methods to handle these situations.

1. Acknowledge the person’s emotion. Don’t devalue them. If they are angry, say to them “you seem angry.”

2. Ask a question. This allows the person to tell you why they are upset and serves as a way to vent their emotion.
3. Don’t escalate or argue. Your demeanor will create an outcome. Getting upset yourself will never improve the situation.
4. Make a decision. Take a moment to make the best decision for the rider within the rules and policies of your organization.

We exist as a service for one reason only, because we have customers. Your safety and well being is largely based on your ability to deal well with these customers. What does that require?

1. Have a positive attitude. Your attitude toward customers will always show.
2. Enjoy your riders. They make your day interesting and you make their life better.
3. Allow the customers to be on center stage. Treat them like they’re a big deal, because they are.
4. Have a high energy level. This is a difficult job. Take care of yourself. Live a healthy life style.
5. Understand you are in the human relations business. Driving is only part of the job.
6. Allow the customer to be right even sometimes when they are wrong. Value a peaceful relationship more than always being right.
7. Anticipate customer service opportunities. Help them out if they are confused or unsure.

Finally, remember the attitude you take home, your safety, and certainly your ability to enjoy your own relationships and family will be determined by how well you treat your customers.

Is Customer Service safety training? I say yes it is!

Section 5311 transit systems can now submit requests for 2015-2016 safety training, July 1, 2015 thru June 30, 2016, anytime, but at least sixty days prior to the anticipated training. All requests must be submitted on the 2015 WV Training Request form available from the DPT to Rosamary Amiet, [ramiet@rlsandassoc.com](mailto:ramiet@rlsandassoc.com), with a copy to Christina Risk, [christina.a.risk@wv.gov](mailto:christina.a.risk@wv.gov).

# CALENDAR

**April:**

- 4/15/2015—Driver’s Role in System Safety/Emergency Evacuation—Clarksburg
- 4/16/2015—Advanced Mobility Device Securement—Clarksburg
- 4/18/2015—Stress Management/ Avoiding Conflict—Here and There Transit



**May:**

- 5/9/2015—Customer Service/Def. Driving-Bluefield Area Transit
- 5/10/2015—Mothers’ Day
- 5/16/2015—Driver Stress/Fatigue & Sexual Harassment—Wayne X-Press (room for up to 6 addl. students)
- 5/20/2015—Stress Mgmt./Avoiding Conflict/Dealing w/Difficult People
- 5/25/2015—Memorial Day

**June:**

- 6/16/2015—Overview of SPIDER Quick Reference Update - Protocols and How to Use This Guide—Charleston—**ON HOLD**
- 6/17/2015—Overview of SPIDER Quick Reference Update - Protocols and How to Use This Guide—Clarksburg—**ON HOLD**
- 6/18/2015—Driver’s Role in System Safety—Potomac Valley Transit Authority (PVTA)

- 6/19/2015—Driver’s Role in System Safety—Potomac Valley Transit Authority (PVTA)
- 6/21/2015—Fathers’ Day

**July:**

- 7/4/2015—Independence Day

**August:**

**September:**

- 9/7/2015—Labor Day



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 [DOTPublicTransit@wv.gov](mailto:DOTPublicTransit@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 the Division ([DOTPublicTransit@wv.gov](mailto:DOTPublicTransit@wv.gov)). This publication is free.