

**TRANSIT SAFETY AND SECURITY****RISK MANAGEMENT IS KEY TO PROTECTING EMPLOYEES, PASSENGERS**

**SAFETY AND SECURITY** are often viewed through rose-colored glasses. Polling suggests that Americans are more afraid to fly than to get into a car, although statistically we're all far more likely to be killed in a car accident than a plane crash. But that's really a debate about comfort zones.

One place people generally feel safe is on public transportation systems. We rely on bus and rail systems to take us everywhere from the office to the ballpark. And most of us don't think twice about dropping in a token or swiping our fare cards and letting someone else move us from place to place.

Transit systems typically have good safety and security records because they implement best practices to safeguard both customers and employees.

"When it comes to safety and security, there are some steps that every transit system should put in place to protect both passengers and transit employees," says Kenneth Korach, President and CEO of Philadelphia-based TRA, Inc. TRA specializes in advising transit agencies and other corporations on safety and security solutions. Korach defines safety as protecting against unintended consequences such as traffic accidents, while security protects against intended consequences, from graffiti to robberies to bombings.

The underlying strategy for both safety and security is sound risk management.

**The Safety Pyramid**

"Any time you carry people for hire, you have a heightened responsibility," says Korach. "As a result, safety and security have to be the foundation for everything you do. You need to ask about the impact on safety with every employee you hire, every vehicle you purchase and every rule you write. If it isn't safe, you can't do it."

Korach refers to a "food pyramid" analogy for safety based on solid rules and procedures and a business process loop. At its foundation are rules and procedures for every action a transit system takes—and these actions must be repeatable.

"Rules and procedures at transit systems do not lend themselves to individual interpretation," Korach stresses. "You want everyone doing the same thing every time, whether you're talking about inspections, routine maintenance, or the procedures for changing lug nuts."

Korach also advises every transit system to develop a written System Safety Program Plan (SSPP). These are written plans that allow you to check, on a regular basis, whether your rules and procedures are still applicable and valid. If they're not, then you need to adapt them. Good SSPPs also include a provision for independent verification that everyone working for your transit authority is actually following the rules.

**Mitigating Security Threats**

On the security side, Korach explains that there are two key plans that every transit system should have:

- Security and Emergency Preparedness Plan
- Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design Plan

The Security and Emergency Preparedness Plan (SEPP) is an overarching policy document that sets forth what a transit system will do under different scenarios, including deployment strategies. As an example, Korach notes that the New York City SEPP probably addresses the transit system's utilization of random passenger bag inspections.

Korach stresses that a good security strategy should focus on quality-of-life crimes and things that affect what he terms "our perceived sense of security." These include everything from graffiti, to panhandling on buses and trains, to people jumping over fare boxes. "Cutting down on petty crimes sends the message that you have rules and will enforce them," says Korach.

"When you go after quality-of-life crimes, you also tend to cut down on larger crimes as criminals focus attention away from the transit system."

Under federal regulations, each state with a rail transit system must have a Security and Emergency Preparedness Plan Standard—and transit plans must be designed to the state standard. The good news: if you don't have a current emergency preparedness plan, the Department of Transportation offers guidance to states and transit authorities on how to develop a solid SEPP.

"The Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design plan is the second foundational document," says Korach. "It addresses the things you need to think about when building or rebuilding a system. It's really about designing a system that minimizes opportunities for security problems to arise."

Mike Kelly, Operations Manager for Mountain Line Transit in Flagstaff, Arizona, points out that good lighting is critical. "It's very important to have good lighting both on your buses and at bus stops, especially at night," he told Public Domain.

Indeed, a lot of the items that your Crime Prevention plan should address are common sense—but that doesn't mean we always think about them. For example, are there any columns that create blind alleys? Are subway exits well-marked so that passengers aren't trapped at the wrong end of a long train track at 1:00 a.m.? If your bus shelter glass is covered with advertising that blocks sightlines, will it make it unsafe for someone to sit in there?

Once you've put in place both a SEPP and a crime prevention plan, Korach stresses that security then becomes about circumstances both within and

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Kenneth Korach, TRA

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outside your control. A key to mitigating risk is to train your employees and the public to understand their surroundings and flag anything that appears outside the norm. A second key to mitigating risk is for transit systems to develop solid relationships and lines of communication with law enforcement agencies.

Kelly agrees. Mountain Line Transit holds tabletop discussions and other training exercises for employees on how to respond to difficult situations. Every bus driver also has a handheld radio to call for backup, and the transit authority is looking into purchasing cameras to both deter and document incidents.

Mountain Line Transit has also worked hard to build strong relationships with local law enforcement. How? "I called and asked to speak to the chief of police," says Kelly. "We're

operating the transit system for the city of Flagstaff, and they're here to serve and protect citizens. Many of whom are riding our buses." Building strong ties with law enforcement has not only improved incident response times, but it has also given drivers renewed confidence that they're not alone on the roads.

Finally, Kelly stresses that the relationship with first responders works best when it works both ways. He advises transit agencies to "partner with emergency responders and make it known that your agency will go above and beyond." Kelly cites, as an example, putting your buses in service to evacuate people in response to the threat of a wildfire.

While it is clearly impossible to inoculate your transit system against all

accidents or incidents, solid risk management can go a long way toward avoiding problems and mitigating both intended and unintended consequences. ♦

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