

Environment



Transportation is the largest single energy user and contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in Canada. While passenger rail is one of the most environmentally sustainable modes of public transportation, VIA is committed to continually improving its operations to protect Canada's environment and the health of Canadians.

Environmental reporting is an integral part of the Corporation's management and accountability framework. VIA's vice president for Environment reports to the Board of Directors, senior management and employees on the status of all environmental initiatives.

Environmental Management System

VIA's Environmental Management System (EMS) encompasses all environmental policies, procedures and guidelines at VIA. A new EMS manual was developed in 2003, which includes VIA's Environmental Policy, and defines the EMS framework and its environmental requirements. The manual sets out employees' responsibilities and accountability under the EMS, and describes the processes necessary to plan, implement, monitor and improve the system. In 2004, the manual will include work instructions for employees to conform to the Environmental Policy and EMS requirements.

A permanent, cross-functional Environmental Planning Committee has been established to periodically review the application of the EMS, and to act as consultant in its development, implementation and continuous improvement. The Committee also monitors performance, proposes and plans initiatives, promotes environmental awareness, and liaises with outside agencies. Members of the committee represent every department of the Corporation.

In addition, VIA has developed a new Environmental Assessment Program to allow employees to assess the conformance of VIA's facilities and operations to applicable environmental legal requirements and best management practices. Results of assessment surveys undertaken through this program are recorded for departmental review and action.

The Corporation has maintained ISO 14001 certification for its maintenance centres. A separate EMS manual for Maintenance Centres reflects differences in procedures that are required to comply with the ISO standard. This EMS manual includes environmentally approved operating procedures specific to maintenance centres and designed to minimize the environmental impact of their operations.

Locomotive efficiency

VIA purchased 21 new General Electric P-42 locomotives in 2002. These locomotives were built to the US EPA standards and have significantly improved the efficiency of VIA's operations.

VIA continues to operate older General Motors F-40 locomotives. A new system to automatically shut down engines during layover and heating them with wayside power in winter was investigated in 2003. Such a system would reduce fuel consumption by significantly reducing idling time, and thereby reduce emissions as well. This system will be implemented during the remanufacture of these locomotives, scheduled to start in 2005.

A locomotive shut down program, when weather permitted, was implemented in 2003 to reduce fuel consumption, as well as emissions from idling.

Waste management

The EMS and existing procedures provide for the safe and responsible disposal of waste materials at all VIA facilities. VIA continues to refine its practices to ensure adequacy and consistency in waste management activities at maintenance centres, stations and offices. In addition, pilot-tests for recycling and re-use programs were conducted in 2003 by local VIA Green Teams at major stations and on board VIA trains.

All passenger cars used in Corridor services have been modified to include full retention toilets. By the end of 2003, 50 per cent of the fleet used in Western Canada and Eastern Canada long haul services had been modified to include waste retention. Modification of all cars will be completed by 2005.