



Safety

We will provide a safe and secure environment for our customers, ourselves and the general public.

Safety and security have become a primary concern for travellers. Heavy traffic and congestion on highways, especially surrounding urban areas, have heightened concerns about the risks of road travel, and many Canadians are exploring safer alternatives. World events have brought security to the forefront of public attention, as Canadians seek assurances that their personal security – and the transportation system itself – are well protected from the threat of terrorist or criminal activity.

Passenger rail is widely recognized as a very safe mode of public transportation. VIA and all its employees recognize a fundamental obligation to protect the safety and security of every customer and every community served by passenger rail.

WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY

VIA's commitment to safety is present everywhere in the organization.

Management, unions and employees work together to ensure that VIA provides all employees with a safe work environment. Health and Safety committees monitor safety issues and performance at all locations, inspecting facilities, identifying and addressing potential safety hazards, and maintaining a high level of safety awareness.

In 2005, VIA's Eastern Services Equipment Maintenance team marked a safety milestone that sets an example for the entire organization: eight years without a single work-related injury requiring time off from the job. VIA also addresses health concerns through national health initiatives. At the request of employees, VIA conducted an influenza immunization program in the fall of 2005, making flu shots universally available on a voluntary basis, free of charge.

VIA'S SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

VIA developed and implemented a comprehensive Safety Management System in 2001. The System defines specific rules, procedures, and responsibilities for maintaining a safe work environment for employees, and a safe passenger service for customers. Since its inception, it has passed three audits by Transport Canada, confirming that the Corporation and its employees are following good safety management practices.

Employees at all levels were actively involved in reviewing the Safety Management System in 2005, providing essential feedback for continually monitoring and refining safety procedures. Safety targets and performance measures have been aligned with and integrated into VIA's business strategy. Health and Safety committees review annual safety reports and Safety Management System performance data to establish specific objectives for improving workplace safety, and to identify issues that require the attention of senior management.

In addition, VIA's management and unions have established two Safety Policy committees which provide a national safety perspective, reviewing and recommending action on all safety-related activities, national trends and concerns. These committees also help to develop and implement VIA's safety training and awareness programs throughout the Corporation.

As part of the Safety Management System, VIA developed a Hazard Assessment and Risk Control Strategy database, which is consulted by managers to identify, eliminate or mitigate situations involving risk to employees, customers or communities. This database system was thoroughly reviewed and redesigned in 2005. The new version will be launched in 2006 and will provide quality assurance for various risk assessments, better reports and improved information-sharing throughout the Corporation. VIA has also developed a new training program for managers and for Health and Safety committees to support the new database.

PUBLIC SAFETY AWARENESS

VIA works regularly with the railway industry and communities to raise awareness of the need for caution around railway tracks and at level crossings.

In 2005, VIA collaborated with CN police to hold the Officer on Board program, in which a train equipped with track cameras carried new police recruits between Montreal and Quebec City, giving them a direct view of the kinds of situations locomotive engineers deal with and sensitizing these future police officers to rail safety issues. Through the Operation Lifesaver program, VIA's locomotive engineers and managers visited communities across the country, providing information to a wide variety of public interest groups, educational institutions and organizations concerning railway safety.

SECURING THE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

As tragic events in recent years have shown, transportation systems have been targets for terrorist activity in other parts of the world. While no incidents have taken place in Canada, public concern about transportation security remained high during 2005.

In working and coordinating with various law enforcement agencies, VIA has implemented a wide range of new and enhanced security measures since 2001. These include measures to tighten security at train stations, such as the use of closed-circuit television surveillance, more controlled access, and the use of police and canine patrols. Employee security training and awareness received particular emphasis in 2005, with information campaigns, posters and other tools reminding all employees to remain vigilant.

VIA's Keep an Eye Open program provides front line staff with techniques for identifying security risks, while the RCMP's Jetway program, used at Canadian airports, has been adapted with the RCMP's assistance to improve the observation skills and awareness of VIA employees.

VIA introduced regular security announcements warning passengers at stations not to leave baggage unattended, and to alert VIA staff if they should notice unattended baggage. In addition, a baggage inspection program has been implemented at all staffed passenger rail stations, and passengers are informed that their baggage may be inspected at any time.

To further enhance VIA's state of preparedness, a Security Management System review was undertaken in late 2005. Potential improvements were identified and are currently being developed and implemented, including a new Corporate Security Policy.

VIA's security program as a whole will be defined by its Corporate Security Plan. This Plan encompasses the new Corporate Security Policy and identifies the actions, rules and procedures employees need to follow to protect the Corporation and its customers. The Corporate Security Plan is under development. In 2006, VIA will integrate its Security Plan into the Emergency Measures Organization, to ensure that appropriate systems and procedures are in place to respond quickly to security incidents. The Security Plan will then be integrated into the Safety Management System, giving the Corporation a single, consistent framework for maintaining passenger rail safety and security.

VIA also developed and tested a new Business Continuity Plan in 2005, which will ensure that a potential disruption to the rail network and passenger services can be minimized in the event of a security or other disruptive incident.

Ongoing review of all security measures at VIA is carried out by the Strategic Security Planning Committee. Co-chaired by the President and the Chief Operating Officer, with representatives from all departments and all parts of the passenger rail network, the Committee monitors security issues, identifies opportunities to improve security, and works with partners in the transportation industry, law enforcement and intelligence authorities, and government departments.

VIA's president participated in a number of panels, convened by the Minister of Transport and including industry experts, to discuss security measures implemented by each service operator and the need for integrated, industry-wide collaboration in maintaining the security of transportation. Collaboration is particularly important to VIA, since most of its infrastructure, and many station facilities, are shared with others. Following a risk assessment of VIA security by counter-terrorism experts, VIA is discussing shared security issues with CN, GO Transit, Toronto Terminal Railways, and others.