

DEVELOPING A SYSTEM SHUTDOWN PROTOCOL

Planning recommendations for the commercial vehicle operator.

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Provided by:

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Procedures and Protocols for a System-wide, Secure Shutdown of Operations in the Unlikely Event of a Major Threat to Passenger's Safety and/or the Safety of the General Public.

Every bus operation should be prepared to shutdown and secure all operations. This can be a daunting task. Careful and well prepared plans and protocols must be in place to effectively and immediately respond to potential major threats.

The following procedures and protocols might be considered for establishing an effective emergency shutdown of your operations:

- Establish roles and responsibilities for key corporate personnel. Who is the central communication conduit? Who will handle the media? Who should dispatch and attend to the threat or emergency at hand? What roles do the drivers play? These questions and key points need to be addressed to be prepared for major events.

The Daecher Consulting Group Inc. serious accident response manual can be used as a blueprint for developing these protocols.

- In the event of a threat to the safety of passengers or the general public, the following must be considered:
 1. Communication of the potential threat must be delivered to the key communication person as quickly as possible. If and when a driver communicates a potential threat or an actual threat, communication procedures must be in place to contact the appropriate crisis communication coordinator.
 2. The crisis communication coordinator must then determine what the appropriate response to the event should be. Possible responses may be isolation of a particular bus or group of buses; quiet dispatch of police and other emergency personnel; entire bus system shutdown; etc.
 3. At every operation location, a key communication contact must be established so that any corporate decisions are immediately known and appropriately handled. This requires a complete and thorough protocol.
- In the case of system wide shutdown, every operation should know which buses are in operation at any moment in time. This will provide an immediate knowledge, corporate wide, of how many buses are to be contacted and accounted for.
- A critical radius to designated shutdown points should be determined. This radius should allow for the complete shutdown of a system within 2 1/2 to 3 hours. By establishing such a critical radius, this will also require the company to determine where there are gaps for shutdown points throughout the system. Specific and appropriate measures can be taken through this analysis.
- Drivers must be trained to respond to shutdown orders. They must keep passengers calm and understand that they must find routes to these shutdown locations.

Of course, drivers should be aware of such shutdown locations when they are hired.

- Drivers should be required to communicate back to their specific point of contact when they arrive at the shutdown location. The point of contact, in turn, should report back to the corporate crisis communication coordinator, so that a full accounting of all coaches and their locations can be known

on a regular time prescribed basis (e.g. every 30 minutes).

- When a coach arrives at the shutdown location, accommodations for all passengers are important. Appropriate facilities must be available, and company liaison with passengers should be available at the shutdown locations.
- Depending upon circumstances, drivers might be required to “stay with” their buses to maintain security.

A cell/satellite vehicle locator system (GPS) would be worthwhile for any fleet. This would allow for positive tracking of all buses until they arrive at a shutdown location. It also would allow for regular communication between the driver and the communication coordinators.

When a system shutdown can be cancelled, similar protocols to those described above can be used. If drivers have not remained with buses, thorough pre-trips must be performed before passengers are allowed to board and buses continue on their routes.

Each company must remember that hours of service and other applicable regulations must still be upheld throughout such shutdowns. This can cause major operational issues depending upon the length of the shutdown.

Protocols for relief drivers must be considered and in place if a shutdown occurs. An alternate protocol would be to revise all bus schedules, whether line runs or charter/tours, to provide for required hours of service with the same drivers. However, accumulated numbers of hours over eight days must also be considered in this scenario.

After organizational responsibilities are assigned, and protocols and procedures are in place, it is urged that a mock shutdown be conducted. While this does not necessarily mean that buses must proceed to a shutdown point (although that is most desirable) the following can be done:

- Issue a mock shutdown order.
- Carry through with all communication and protocols.
- Have mock media coverage.
- Have all drivers call in once they get to their nearest regular stop in lieu of moving to a designated shutdown location.
- Assume a system shutdown will last for a set number of hours.
- Proceed with rescheduling of routes or itineraries or positioning of relief drivers in a simulated way.
- Review all procedures and protocols to insure their integrity and effectiveness.
- Make any changes as appropriate.