

Protecting Bus and Coach Crews

Contents

A Practical Guide for Bus and Coach Operators and Staff	2
Introduction	3
Who is at risk?	3
Criminal damage	3
Costs of criminal damage.....	4
Who is responsible for tackling bus and coach crime?	4
Advice for staff	5
Information for bus and coach operators	6
Other effective measures bus and coach operators can take	7
Training and information	9
Here are three steps for managers to take:	9
Equipping for safer journeys.....	9
What operators can do to help a member of staff who has been assaulted at work	10
Criminal injuries compensation	10
Other sources of information and help:.....	10
Operators: an action checklist for safer journeys.....	11
Notes for designers, architects and planners	11
What the law requires	13
Further information	14
Further guidance	15

A Practical Guide for Bus and Coach Operators and Staff

Those who serve the travelling public are entitled to perform their work in safety and without abuse.

This guide contains practical advice on how managers and staff can reduce the risk of violence, anti-social behaviour and criminal damage on buses and coaches, at bus stops and at bus and coach stations.

Introduction

If you work in the bus and coach industry, you can't fail to be aware of the problem of violence and anti-social behaviour. If you or your company has ever been on the receiving end, it's not much consolation to know that only a small minority commits acts of violence or criminal damage, and that the vast majority of services run without any trouble.

But there are steps you can take to tackle the problem and minimise the risks. This publication offers guidance based on what bus and coach operators around the country have found to be good practice.

So just what counts as violence at work? The Health and Safety Executive defines it as, "Any incident in which an employee is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work."

Violence and anti-social behaviour can take many forms, including verbal abuse and threats as well as spitting and physical assaults. Even minor cases can cause shock and stress, the effects of which may not appear until several weeks later. Severe cases can require hospital treatment and time off work. This in turn can lead to staff shortages, putting pressure on remaining staff and affecting the reliability of services.

Assaults can cause lasting injury or psychological damage. Employers have legal duties to protect their employees and the public under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. **Page 11 describes the legal framework.**

Who is at risk?

The people most at risk are those on buses and coaches:

- drivers;
- conductors;
- inspectors and other officials; and
- passengers.

Criminal damage

Bus and coach operators may also suffer from criminal damage to vehicles and infrastructure. The most common forms of damage are:

- slashed seats;
- graffiti, including window etching;
- missile throwing; and
- broken windows.

Criminal damage remains a serious and very costly problem, draining money that could otherwise be used for new investment and improvements to services. It means vehicles have to be taken out of service for repair, affecting the reliability of bus services. Increasingly, staff and passengers in buses are suffering injuries from missile attacks.

Furthermore, damaged bus shelters and equipment, and anti-social behaviour at bus stops and around bus stations creates a threatening atmosphere and puts people off travelling by public transport, particularly after dark.

Costs of criminal damage

- Transport for London estimates that criminal damage caused to buses in London costs the industry over £10 million per year.
- In North West England, local authorities in partnership with transport operators assess the costs of vandalism at almost £4 million per year.
- 15 per cent of all the windows in Greater Manchester bus shelters have to be replaced each year. One bus stop provider has put this figure at 3 per cent nationwide.

Newport Transport estimates the annual cost of vandalism as £22,500, of which £10,000 is for broken windows. A total of 14 days worth of evening services were lost because of damage caused by missile throwing.

Who is responsible for tackling bus and coach crime?

There are many practical, simple and cost effective measures to help reduce the risks of violence, abuse and criminal damage.

- Employers should take a zero tolerance approach to violence at work. Bus and coach companies should make it clear to both their staff and passengers that they will press for prosecution of people who assault their staff and damage vehicles. They should make sure that they collect evidence to support prosecutions, for example by providing CCTV and DNA testing kits where appropriate. Some companies already put up signs on their vehicles and at stations, warning that they will press for prosecutions.
- Bus and coach operators have a legal duty to promote safety at work and to train staff in order to minimise risk. **The main legal requirements on operators as employers are summarised at page 11.**
- Employees should not take unnecessary risks and should follow the safety procedures laid down by their employer. They should report all incidents of physical and verbal abuse to their employer.
- Designers and architects should aim to 'design out' the risk of violence and vandalism, and operators should think about minimising risk when buying new vehicles or infrastructure.
- Crime and disorder reduction partnerships (CDRPs) have brought together:
 - the police;
 - local authorities;
 - the probation service;
 - health authorities;
 - the voluntary sector; and
 - local residents and businesses, including transport providers and operators.

They are responsible for developing and implementing local strategies to tackle crime and disorder.

- Local trade union representatives should take part when operators, police, local authorities and others meet to discuss violence and crime issues, so they can represent the views of employees. They can also feed back decisions or plans to combat violence and crime in the workplace to their members.

Advice for staff

It's crucial to acknowledge that a problem exists. Communication between staff, managers and trade union representatives can help to establish how serious and widespread the problem is and can contribute towards finding solutions.

Here are seven practical steps which staff can take to reduce the risk of violence and abuse.

If you are verbally abused, keep calm and try to defuse the situation.

Do not get out of the cab to deal with incidents unless you are absolutely sure that it is safe for you to do so.

If it is not possible to calm the situation, get help, either by panic alarm, two way radio or mobile phone.

Follow company procedures. Take advantage of any training that is offered in how to deal with potentially threatening situations and be familiar with written guidance and instructions.

If a passenger causes trouble, remember that you have the power under the conduct regulations to ask them to leave. But you must use this power sensitively and in line with company policy. It may be better to ask for help by using a two-way radio system or panic alarm.

Always report incidents in writing to management and to your union representative, and do so as soon as you can. This includes both physical and verbal abuse. If you are assaulted you should seek medical attention.

Tell management and union representatives about any general concerns regarding safety, and suggest improvements.

Information for bus and coach operators

Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, employers have a legal duty to assess the risk of workplace violence and introduce measures to reduce it. **See 'What the law requires' at page 11.**

A senior manager or a director should take specific responsibility for developing a strategy to reduce the risk of assaults and criminal damage. Always consult and inform your employees about what steps you are taking.

Here are six steps operators can take

1. *Risk assessment.* Identify the scale of the problem. Establish which groups of staff are at risk, and where and when incidents are most likely to occur. Use past records to estimate the likely risk of an employee or passenger being assaulted, threatened or abused. Which routes carry the highest risk, and why? Drivers, conductors, inspectors and other officials are normally the most vulnerable, as they have face-to-face contact with the public. Is there any risk to other staff - garage staff for example? Operators also have a duty of care to their passengers.
2. *Make sure that all incidents are reported and recorded.* An accurate and simple recording system is vital to any strategy for improving safety. **You could adapt the model reporting forms at the back of this guide.** The first covers incidents on buses, the second covers incidents at bus stations, stops and shelters.

Staff should not be made to feel that reporting an incident will reflect badly on them. They should be encouraged to report less serious incidents such as verbal abuse and threats. These can develop into more serious assaults if problems are allowed to persist.

Staff should also be encouraged to report incidents promptly and fully. This should form part of training and induction. Apart from its value in developing preventive measures, a proper recording system will help to give staff safety and welfare proper priority.

Liaise with other local bodies involved in tackling bus crime, including police, local authorities, Passenger Transport Executives and local crime and disorder reduction partnerships (CDRPs). Talking to the police and other local operators about their experience can help to identify trouble spots.

3. *Take preventive measures* Train staff in how to avoid conflict and how to deal with potentially violent or abusive incidents.

Redesign aspects of the job and change procedures to reduce the risk of conflict. Simplified fare structures mean less opportunity for arguments. More pre-paid travel reduces the amount of cash on the bus, as does staff paying in their cash floats early or mid-shift. These measures make buses less attractive to thieves, but anti-fraud features for pre-paid fare schemes should also be considered.

Liaise with the community, including local schools.

Where you can, install physical measures to protect staff, such as protective screens, CCTV, radios or panic alarms.

If an individual persistently causes trouble, consider seeking an anti-social behaviour order (ASBO) against that person.

An ASBO is made in the magistrates' court and bans a person from behaving in a manner that causes 'harassment, alarm and distress' to other people. They are obtained jointly by the police (including British Transport Police) and local authorities. They can be granted on anyone aged 10 years or over and last for a minimum of two years, but the aim is to stop the anti-social behaviour quickly.

If you wish to pursue an ASBO, the police and local authority must investigate the case thoroughly and the courts must be satisfied that an order is necessary to protect other people. Although it can take four to six weeks from making an application to a full court trial, in certain cases an 'interim ASBO' will prohibit anti-social behaviour in the period leading up to the trial.

4. *Consult your staff.* Consult your staff and their safety and trade union representatives on any measures you plan to take. It may be helpful to do this on a regular and frequent basis, perhaps each month or quarter. Your staff are more likely to be committed to the measures if they help to design and implement them.
5. *Act and monitor.* Put your policy in writing and bring it to the attention of all staff, not just those who deal face to face with the public. Impress upon them the importance of continuing to report all incidents, so that you can monitor the effectiveness of preventive measures. If the problems persist or new ones arise, consider what other measures you need to take.
6. *Follow up incidents with staff.* Keep staff informed of progress in dealing with any incidents they report, so that they remain engaged with the process. Staff are more likely to report further incidents if they know they will be followed through.

Other effective measures bus and coach operators can take

Partnership with the police. A good working relationship with the police and other law enforcement agencies is a key element of dealing with bus and coach crime. The police can support you more effectively if you tell them about serious incidents as soon as possible. Informing the police of any trends is also important. In some instances, work to tackle crime on buses has shown that there are links to wider offences such as burglaries and assaults away from buses - the perpetrators are sometimes the same people.

Liaison with the local authority. An equally good relationship should be built and maintained with the local authority. You may, for example, be able to link the bus CCTV system with the town centre one. Local authorities need to be told where crime hot spots are so they can tackle them, for example by improving the environment around bus stops and stations.

The local authority may be interested in developing a 'safer travel' protocol with operators and the police. This might allow police and traffic wardens to travel free on local buses so that they can enforce parking restrictions at bus stops and improve perceptions of personal security during the journey.

Schools liaison. You can promote a 'safer travel' message by working in partnership with schools. The reality is that schoolchildren and young people are responsible for many crimes on buses, and the victims are often other children. Most incidents occur between 15.30 and 19.00. Operators can engage schools and colleges in several ways:

- offer educational packages and interactive presentations to schools to promote good citizenship;
- provide buses for inspection at school visits;
- organise joint focus groups with pupils, supported by poster campaigns;
- encourage children and drivers to get to know each other; it's easier for children to misbehave if the driver is just a vague authority figure, not someone they know and see every day.

Using the media. Consider using local radio stations or newspapers to draw attention to problems. This approach needs care, though, as over-dramatic reporting might frighten people off public transport or encourage copy-cat incidents.

You might run a local advertising campaign focussing on the effects of physical violence and verbal abuse on public transport workers.

Protecting Bus and Coach Crews

A media strategy could also support any partnership activity. For example, in South London a 'shop-a-yob' campaign in local newspapers has proved especially effective in combating anti-social behaviour.

Codes of conduct for passengers and staff. Codes of conduct may help the public and staff to recognise the standards of behaviour expected of them. Develop these codes with staff.

Training and information

Effective training and providing the right information can help improve safety.

Operators should train employees and their supervisors so that they can spot the early signs of aggression and either avoid it or handle it effectively. Make sure they fully understand any systems set up for their protection.

Here are three steps for managers to take:

1. Develop training for staff on how to handle difficult situations that might lead to an assault, and what to do if an assault occurs. This might form part of general training in customer relations. Also consider adopting the National Vocational Qualification in Road Passenger Transport which involves an element of customer care training.
2. Give staff clear written guidance on relations with passengers. This should include the emergency procedures they should follow if they are assaulted, with brief notes on the law. It should also cover obtaining evidence from witnesses and how the victim of the assault can get help in bringing a prosecution. **Training should also cover the reporting of incidents, perhaps based on the model report forms at the back of the guide.**
3. Regularly monitor and review the effectiveness of the training programme and encourage staff feedback.

The School Run. The Department for Transport has developed a training programme with the help of First Leeds and Crime Concern. Called The School Run, it aims to improve bus drivers' confidence in dealing with schoolchildren. You can order free copies of the full training programme (product code SP/10) and workbook (product code SP/11) from DfT Free Literature, 0870 1226 236, or e-mail: dft@twoten.press.net

Equipping for safer journeys

Installing the right equipment can help to protect staff and passengers from attack. It can also improve services and the company's public image.

Here are some examples:

1. **Two-way radios.** These allow staff to communicate quickly with the control centre and from there with the police. They give greater confidence to the driver and may well act as a deterrent against assaults. Radios can also be used for tracking vehicles, giving the added benefit of improved service quality and reliability. But staff must be properly trained to use them.
2. **Protective screens** for drivers. In some areas vehicles are fitted with screens. Some screens are fixed while others can be closed by the driver. Employers should consult their staff before fitting screens.
3. **Alarms.** There are two types: those fitted to the vehicle, which sound a siren or flash the lights, and pocket-sized, personal alarms which staff can carry.
4. **Video cameras, CCTV.** Video cameras and closed circuit TV can help identify assailants and vandals. They also act as a deterrent. Make sure that the equipment is visible. Display warning notices near the bus entrance to add to the deterrent effect.
5. Display signs. Bus and coach companies should make it clear that they will press for prosecution and maximum sentencing for people who assault their staff.
6. DNA test kits. These can be used to help identify offenders who spit at staff.

What operators can do to help a member of staff who has been assaulted at work

Operators will need to respond quickly when staff are assaulted to avoid any long-term distress. You may want to consider the following points.

- Consider violence at work and the related stress issues when formulating health and safety policy and assessing risk.
- Remember to treat each case individually. People react differently to situations and every incident is unique, so treat it as such. Remember that verbal abuse can sometimes be more distressing than a physical attack.
- People will react differently and may need differing amounts of time to recover. A driver who has been spat at may simply need time to go home and change, while others will need longer to recover from such an incident. Religious beliefs and cultural background can be very influential in these circumstances. Many bus and coach companies already recognise that staff should not be penalised if they need this time, and allow them to take it on full pay.
- Some people may need specialist counselling. Operators will need to consider how to make this part of occupational health provision and also ensure that it is the right sort of counselling.
- Legal help may be appropriate in serious cases. Many trade unions will help their members with claims, including criminal injuries compensation (see below).

Strict time limits apply for all compensation claims. Staff who have been injured should be made aware that they should seek legal advice without delay.

Criminal injuries compensation

If a person is injured as a result of a crime of violence, they may be able to claim compensation from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority (CICA).

The CICA has produced a leaflet outlining the scheme called *Compensation for Victims of Crime*, and a booklet, *Guide to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme*. You can download these from their web site at www.cica.gov.uk or order them direct from the CICA.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority
Tay House
300 Bath Street
Glasgow
G2 4LN
Freephone 0800 358 3601

The CICA covers England, Wales and Scotland. There is a separate scheme for Northern Ireland administered by The Compensation Agency:

The Compensation Agency
Royston House
34 Queen Street
Belfast
BT1 6FD
www.compensationni.gov.uk

Other sources of information and help:

The Home Office leaflet *Victims of Crime* describes what will happen once an assault has been reported to the police. It gives useful advice if an employee suffers an injury, loss or damage from a crime, including how to apply for compensation. It should be available from police stations, libraries,

Citizens' Advice Bureaux and victim support schemes. It can also be downloaded from the Home Office web site at:

www.homeoffice.gov.uk.

The Scottish Executive produces a similar information leaflet Victims of Crime:

www.scotland.gov.uk/library3/justice/vocl.pdf

Victim support schemes operate in many areas and may be able to help. Local police stations can advise people of their nearest one.

The Victim Supportline is open every day. Call 0845 30 30 900 or write to:

Victim Supportline
PO Box 11431
London
SW9 6ZH

Operators: an action checklist for safer journeys

- Have you allocated responsibility for policy on violence and criminal damage to a senior manager or director? Do your staff know who this person is?
- Are you keeping accurate and comprehensive records of all physical and verbal assaults and criminal damage?
- Do you consult and involve your staff effectively? Are they aware of your policy and procedures for reducing the risk of violent incidents, abuse, anti-social behaviour and criminal damage? Does your health and safety manager consult regularly with staff and their representatives?
- Are your staff well trained in customer care and dealing with difficult situations? Do they know the procedures to follow in the event of a physical or verbal assault or an act of vandalism (see page 3) Are your procedural manuals/instructions comprehensive and up to date?
- Do you liaise effectively with other local operators, the police and schools to bring all the community's resources to bear against crime and unruly behaviour? Would a local media campaign help?
- Have you considered installing new equipment to reduce the risk of violent incidents?
- Are you learning from any incidents that do take place? Is there a regular review of safety and security in your company? Are reported incidents used effectively to identify any recurring patterns and trouble spots? Do you monitor the measures you have already taken to see whether they are working?
- Do your staff welfare arrangements deal effectively with the consequences of assault? Do they make victims of assault aware of all the sources of advice and support available to them? (See page 8).

Notes for designers, architects and planners

Those involved in designing or refurbishing buses and coaches or facilities at bus and coach stations or stops can help to 'design in' greater levels of safety for staff and passengers. Liaise with the local police to take into account the risks of violence and criminal damage. Also, ask for staff input.

- Consider fitting CCTV video cameras with 24 hour recording to protect vulnerable areas and help the police identify assailants and vandals. Make them visible to increase their deterrence value and fit notices.

Protecting Bus and Coach Crews

- Consider installing help points at stations and bus stops. Ideally, CCTV cameras should cover the help points.
- A well-lit environment can reduce the risk of trouble and make passengers and staff feel safer. Carefully consider the siting of stops, taking into account the immediate environment, such as proximity to pubs or nightclubs. Well-lit stops can act as a deterrent and reduce public anxiety. Good lighting is equally important in bus stations and passageways.
- When designing new facilities or improving existing ones, avoid dark corners or passageways and open up good, direct sight lines. Avoid finishes that are easily defaced by graffiti or fittings that are obvious targets for vandals.

What the law requires

- **The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (HSWA)**
Employers have a legal duty under the Act to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees.
- **The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999**
Employers must assess the risks to employees and make arrangements for their health and safety by effective planning, organisation, control, monitoring and review. The risks covered should where appropriate include the need to protect employees from reasonably foreseeable violence.
- **The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR)**
Employers must notify their enforcing authority in the event of an accident at work to any employee if it results in death, major injury or incapacity for normal work for three or more days. This includes any act of physical violence done to a person at work.
- **Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977 (a) and the Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations 1996 (b)**
Employers must inform and consult with employees in good time on matters relating to their health and safety. Employee representatives may make representations to their employer on matters affecting the health and safety of those they represent. Employee representatives may be either appointed by recognised trade unions under (a) or elected under (b).
- **Employment Rights Act 1996**
Under this Act, dismissing an employee who takes or proposes to take certain types of action on health and safety grounds could be found by an employment tribunal to be unfair dismissal.
- **The Public Service Vehicles (Conduct of Drivers, Inspectors, Conductors and Passengers) Regulations 1990**
These Regulations give drivers, conductors or inspectors powers to remove, or have removed by a police constable, any passenger whose behaviour contravenes the Regulations. But they must use these powers sensitively and in line with company policy. They must also take care not to expose vulnerable passengers such as women and children to the risk of assault by putting them off a bus, particularly after dark.

Further information

This guide has been produced by the Safer Travel on Buses and Coaches Panel (STOP). STOP was formed to look at ways to combat assaults, anti-social behaviour and criminal damage on vehicles and at stops, stations and property. The panel brings together those involved in dealing with the issue of safety and security, including operators, local authorities, the police, trade unions, passenger groups, Crime Concern, the Health and Safety Executive and Government Departments.

You can order free paper copies of this guide from DfT Free Literature on 0870 1226 236, or e-mail: dft@twoten.press.net

Further guidance

Protecting Bus and Coach Crews - A Quick Reference Guide for Bus and Coach Staff. This leaflet contains practical advice on how staff can reduce the risk of violence and anti-social behaviour on buses and coaches.

Free copies of the leaflet are available from DfT as already mentioned.

Get on Board: An Agenda for Improving Personal Security in Bus Travel (published by DfT in 2002) helps bus infrastructure managers and service operators improve personal security for staff and passengers. Free copies of the guidance (product code SP/15) and good practice case studies (product code SP/16) are available from DfT as above.

Violence at Work - A guide for employers INDG69(rev), produced by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is available at www.hse.gov.uk or call HSE Infoline on 08701 545500.

Crime Reduction Toolkits, produced by the Home Office and available at www.crimereduction.gov.uk/toolkits/index.htm .