

Date: August 13, 2013
To: All Bus Operators and All Rail Operators
From: Shelly Lomax, Executive Director Operations
Subject: Distracted Driving

The recent tragic rail collision in Spain serves as a stark reminder of the dangers of distracted driving. Personal electronic devices, in particular cellular phones, have become a common part of everyday life, and are key distractions that every professional operator must not use when operating a motor vehicle.

During Bus and Rail Operator training classes as well as in memos, training bulletins and other messaging sources, we have reminded employees that electronic devices are required to be turned off and stowed at all times when operating a District vehicle. While the majority of Operators regularly comply, from time to time we still receive reports of individuals violating the policy.

Reports of distracted driving while operating a bus:

For the year 2012, TriMet received a total of 37 complaints from customers:

- 20 for texting
- 13 for cell phone use
- 2 for listening to music
- 1 for the use of a Bluetooth or ear bud
- 1 for the use of a camera

Two of these complaints were verified and resulted in discipline.

For the year 2013, TriMet received a total of 24 complaints:

- 10 for texting
- 8 for cell phone use
- 5 for the use of a Bluetooth or ear bud
- 1 for listening to music

Four of these complaints were verified and resulted in discipline.

Reports of distracted driving while operating an LRV:

No complaints were received in 2012, and one complaint was received in 2013. The complaint was not confirmed, thus no discipline was issued.

TriMet takes reports of distracted driving very seriously and responds accordingly. Reports of this nature from our customers are categorized as Direct Access complaints within our Service Improvement Process (SIP). When TriMet receives a report of distracted driving a field supervisor is deployed, if available, to meet the operator in the field and to discuss the allegation. Transportation managers are also notified and they follow up with the operator to investigate and issue the appropriate response. If the allegation is confirmed, the operator is subject to discipline up to and including suspension or termination.

Managers consider the evidence available to them at the time of the investigation into the complaint. New buses have added camera and audio recording capability, similar to that used at other transit agencies across the nation, which could be used to confirm or exonerate the employee. However, we currently are in dispute with ATU over the use of these important tools as part of investigations.

For your reference, District policies related to this topic are Bus SOP 812; Rail Special Instruction SI017 and HR policy 206. While it is always good to be familiar with the details of the SOP, the bottom line is a simple one: Please, always place safety first and keep all personal cellular phones and personal electronic devices turned off and stowed while operating district vehicles.

Thank you for complying with this very important safety SOP.