



600 Fifth Street NW
Washington, DC 20001
202-962-2891

May 1, 2013

Lynn Bowersox, Assistant General Manager
Customer Service, Communications and Marketing, Metro
600 Fifth Street NW
Washington, DC 20001

Ms Bowersox:

As Metro works to improve its response to emergency situations, the Riders' Advisory Council is encourage that Metro has recognized the urgent need to update its training and response protocols to better ensure rider safety. This includes communicating about incidents clearly and consistently, as well as making sure employees are sufficiently prepared to respond to incidents in the most effective manner possible. Below, the Council has outlined general thoughts and specific suggestions in response to the direct questions you posed both at the recent Board/RAC leadership meeting and at the April 2013 RAC meeting.

We also continue to urge Metro to identify the root and systemic causes of service disruptions that can quickly become emergencies.

1. What is the best communications channel (brochure, video, announcements?) for riders to learn IN ADVANCE about emergency preparedness?

- Brochures: The existing "Metro Safety Brochure" provides good information but needs to be updated for clarity and ease of understanding.
- Wallet-sized cards: Outlining emergency tips and contact information for regular riders.
- Metro website: The Metro website should provide easy access to emergency information as it is often the first "point of contact." The Council would like to reiterate that not all riders have continuous internet access available, so Metro must also utilize other channels to distribute information.
- In-Station Information: Information should be posted in rail stations/on platforms, where riders are likely to be standing with nothing to read.

The Council also notes that different populations of riders will need different materials to reach them.

Tourists: Include safety information on tourist maps and Metro brochures (including the Metro "Pocket Guide" along with any other information that is distributed to hotels, tour operators,

etc. These materials should also include the Metro Transit Police Department's emergency phone number.

Regular Riders: Regular riders need more specific and detailed information. We suggest the following methods:

- YouTube videos that show riders what to do during specific types of incidents
- In-person outreach – through community events, etc. Metro should establish a target number of riders to “touch” quarterly thorough representation at community events and at major bus transfer locations and rail stations.

Additionally, the Council strongly believes that Metro's Twitter account should be staffed and responsive during all hours of Metro operation to aid in pushing out customer service updates, emergency information, routing alternatives and addressing customer questions.

2. What would they, as riders, want to know BEFORE they were caught in an emergency situation?

- More detailed information from Metro about the steps that it will take where there is an incident or other disruption and what customers can expect from Metro *in terms of resolving the incident and/or providing alternative transportation.*
- Progressive disclosure of information – Determine the hierarchy of information people need and only provide them with that information. I.e., if riders shouldn't bother getting on a train, that's as much as they need to know. (Or, maybe include an estimated timeline – “Don't get on the train for at least 30 minutes.”)
- Information about alternate transportation, including station-specific “take-one” alternate route brochures in stations. These should be provided both inside and outside the faregates and show other routes to major destinations. Metro should also evaluate building in an option to see alternative routes using the Trip Planner when delays are posted.
- Information about emergency situations should be provided throughout the entire system, because many riders transfer between lines.

3. I would like their input on the onboard “how to” evacuate signage.

- The signage needs to be clear on its purpose – is it “evacuation” signage or “emergency instruction” Signage? If it's going to cover both, it may be better to differentiate the two (to remind riders that most “emergencies” will not involve an evacuation.)
- Signage should include how to handle other types of incidents – medical, fire and passenger disturbance and should also include the location of emergency equipment within the railcar.
- Revised signage should:
 - Eliminate the Metro map on the main emergency placard and replacing it in one of the full-sized ad spaces at near the middle doors.
 - Include more pictures (in place of text) that address typical types of emergencies – medical, fire and passenger disturbance.

- Provide information on how to assist other passengers during an emergency even (especially passengers with disabilities or those who otherwise might require help).
- Include the Metro Transit Police phone number. The Council also encourages Metro to simplify or shorten this number to make it easier for riders to remember.
- Explain how riders will know that assistance is on the way.
- Show the progressive steps riders should take to respond to an incident – i.e. 1) contact train operator; 2) if in immediate danger, move to another car through end doors; 3) evacuate train following instructions.
- Signage should also be installed at the ends of railcars and at all doors to note that evacuations should only occur from the center doors.

In addition, we'd like to suggest that Metro study the feasibility of training citizen emergency responders. These individuals, who would be regular system riders, could provide assistance to their fellow commuters as well as serve under the direction of professional emergency responders during an emergency.

We also strongly support developing a clear outline of what customers can expect of Metro when they are traveling within the system. This outline should address Metro performance both in emergencies and during normal day-to-day operation.

Finally, we note that repeated safety incidents over the past year have eroded customer confidence in Metro's ability to adequately respond to, and communicate about, an emergency. The Council is encouraged by the renewed emphasis on improving Metro's communication and systemwide safety in order to re-establish Metro's reputation as a safe and reliable mode of transport.

We appreciate the opportunity to be a part of the ongoing dialogue with Metro staff on this and other important topics, and look forward to providing additional feedback during the subsequent phases of this effort.

Sincerely,

Ben Ball, Chair
Riders' Advisory Council