



DEKRA CASE STUDY



TORONTO TRANSIT COMMISSION



TORONTO TRANSIT COMMISSION

On the Road to Safety Excellence

The Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) is one of the largest and most advanced mass transit systems in North America. Every business day, TTC transports approximately 1.6 million passengers in a highly complex and challenging environment. For most people, the system “just works:” trains, buses, and streetcars arrive and depart on time and passengers get safely to their destination. For TTC leaders, however, operating an integrated transportation system efficiently and safely requires continuous improvement to keep up with an ever-changing environment.

TTC’s Bus Operations helps to carry out the agency’s mission of service, safety, and courtesy through an operation that covers more than 123 million operating kilometers annually. Maintaining the safety of passengers and employees alike is a significant undertaking in a system with 4,000 drivers, 1,750 buses, 140+ routes, and supported by 1,500 maintenance employees. Many of the risks TTC leaders must manage are unique to a bus

operation, such as employees who work largely alone, risks that are difficult to control (e.g. other vehicles, assaults from passengers), and high variability in driving conditions and elements.

In 2007, TTC senior leaders and employees recognized that despite considerable efforts to maintain safe and reliable operations, significant incidents continued to occur and safety indicators, such as lost workdays and reported assaults, continued to trend in the wrong direction. Chief Safety Officer John O’Grady says that the problem wasn’t technical know-how but people alignment. “We could change the systems for risk assessment or accident investigation or leadership oversight. But what we really needed was to change the culture.” TTC wanted to become the safest multimodal transit agency of its size in the world. So it set out to do this through a focus on culture, employee engagement and leadership.

Defining the Path to Safer Operations

The Toronto Transit Commission partnered with workplace safety consultancy BST to assess the Commission's safety systems, organizational systems, and culture. Findings showed an organization with a strong focus on safety yet employees perceived a conflict between service and safety. The problem was that the safety and business systems were not always well-integrated and safety performance suffered as a result. Similarly, the culture survey showed an employee group that was proud of their work and the agency, but that also felt unsupported by leadership. Concerns ranged from beliefs that the Commission didn't take assaults on drivers seriously enough to having to navigate work processes that often seemed to conflict with safety. Al Chocorlan, then Deputy General Manager of the Bus Division, said that the problem came down to leadership. "A lot of people didn't trust management or feel like they cared. We had to start dealing with leadership actions and getting employees engaged."

In response to these findings, the TTC adopted a multi-tiered intervention that included employee engagement, system changes, and leadership development. The intervention first identified immediate ways to address security concerns raised in the assessment, including accelerated bus operator barrier installation, cameras on buses and streetcars, and the hiring of court advocates. TTC then launched five employee engagement teams focused on specific issues that caused exposure to injury.

In TTC's Bus Operations, two of the CARE teams as TTC called them (Control Accidents by Reducing Exposure), were behavior-based safety teams charged with systematically identifying and capturing information on the exposures faced by employees. One team was focused on operators,

the other on maintenance staff. Teams used the information to identify barriers to safe work and develop action plans that addressed them. Other teams used a similar employee engagement approach for addressing a broad range of safety issues raised in the assessment. For example, one team focused exclusively on improving the division's route management, which had been identified as a serious problem. This team, led by a supervisor and volunteer operators, spent time assessing actual traffic and field conditions, and reworked the design and timing points of many routes to more closely match these. The new schedules were based on real-time information – and removed time pressures for many drivers. Other teams focused on customer relations, accident prevention, new employee orientation and equipment issues.

Arriving at a Safer Destination

By April of 2011, Toronto Transit had achieved a 31% reduction in Lost Time injuries. Among bus operators the reduction was even greater at 51%. Between 2009 and 2010, the bus division also reduced preventable bus collisions by 16%. A reassessment of TTC's culture in 2010 showed some improvement across the characteristics measured in the 2008 report. In addition, employees reported signs of safety improvement, an increased willingness to report injuries; an increased understanding of accident root causes and drivers and mechanics reported management was asking for their input and taking more action to address their concerns. In particular, employees reported more positive feedback and interactions from their supervisor's increased willingness "to go the extra mile to make sure our guy and the TTC do well." O'Grady says that the employee engagement developed through the effort was a long way from where the culture started. "We've unlocked a lot of potential. It's contagious."

While the TTC is pleased with the results to date, they recognize that the work has just begun. The TTC continues to face new and unique challenges that can lead to a defocusing of the safety effort. However, TTC leadership is compelled to continue to provide a safe workplace, so employees can go home safe, which is in line with their umbrella moniker for culture change, Work Safe-Home Safe.

At a Glance:

- The TTC has been serving Toronto since 1921.
- With more than 1.6 million passengers on a typical weekday, the TTC has one of the highest per capita ridership rates in North America.
- TTC's Bus Operations is comprised of 4,000 drivers, 1,750 buses, 140+ routes, and supported by 1,500 maintenance employees.



1000 Town Center Drive • Suite 600 • Oxnard, CA 93036

Phone: (800) 548-5781 • Fax (805) 646-0328

www.dekra-insight.com • email: americas.info.dekraisight@dekra.com