



Metra boosts C3RS safety report system

Representatives of the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and Metra management and 10 unions last month announced a major expansion of the agency's Confidential Close Call Reporting System (C3RS), giving Metra the most comprehensive safety reporting system of all commuter railroads in the nation.

The voluntary safety reporting system is designed to proactively address safety issues and create a more positive safety culture. It started at Metra last summer with unions that operate Metra trains and is now being expanded to include unions that work in Metra's Mechanical, Engineering and Police Departments. Metra is the first U.S. commuter railroad to have a Confidential Close Call Reporting System that includes every union involved in the railroad's operations.

"This announcement demonstrates Metra's commitment to making safety our number one priority," said Metra Executive Director/CEO Don Orseno. "It is significant that management and all 13 of Metra's labor unions came together on this important

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Metra starts new police unit

Metra has created a new police unit whose primary mission is to patrol trains, providing a visible law enforcement presence and deterring criminal activity on all 11 Metra lines.

The new unit, which now has six full-time officers but should have 12 by the fall, will work on every line but will focus its efforts strategically on areas where

the need is greatest. The officers will travel in uniform and plain clothes and will supplement the efforts of Metra police officers and detectives who are already patrolling trains and platforms. The officers will work to stop criminal behavior on trains, assist conductors and protect customers.

"Our trains are already very

safe, but this unit was created to add another level of security on our trains so our customers feel as safe and secure as possible," said Metra Executive Director/CEO Don Orseno.

Last year, Metra Police conducted onboard patrols on 3,500 trains, up from 3,200 in 2014. The creation of this unit,
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All aboard the new Heritage Corridor early afternoon departure

Dignitaries who worked to increase service on the Metra Heritage Corridor line pose in front of a new early afternoon train after it arrived in Lemont on its first day of service on March 14. The new service came after an agreement between Metra and CN, which owns the tracks over which the Heritage Corridor operates. The new train leaves Union Station at 2:45 p.m. and makes stops in Summit, Willow Springs, Lemont, Lockport and Joliet. Pictured are (left to right) Lockport Mayor Steven Streit, U.S. Rep. Dan Lipinski, Romeoville Mayor John Noak, Metra Executive Director/CEO Don Orseno, Lemont Mayor and Metra Board Member Brian Reaves, Metra Board Member Ken Koehler, Metra Citizens Advisory Board Member Bill Molony, Metra Board Vice Chairman Jack Partelow, Will Country Executive Larry Walsh, Pace Chairman and former Lemont Mayor Rich Kwaseski and CN Director of U.S. Government Affairs Jim Kvedaras.



On the Bi-Level

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the first time Metra has dedicated full-time resources to onboard patrols, will greatly increase those numbers.

"Even with these dedicated patrols, our officers can't be everywhere," said Metra Police Chief Joseph Perez. "That's why we ask our customers to help us by being vigilant when traveling on Metra. If you see something, say something."

Safety

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and groundbreaking initiative. We share the common goal of making Metra the safest possible railroad."

At a ceremony at Metra headquarters, officials signed a memorandum outlining their commitment to the voluntary system. Signees included: Orseno; Pete Zwolfer, Metra Deputy Executive Director for Operations; Jim Derwinski, Metra Chief Mechanical Officer; Bruce Marcheschi, Metra Chief Engineering Officer; Hilary Konczal, Metra Chief Safety and Environmental Officer; Joseph Perez, Metra Police Chief; Robert Lauby, FRA Associate Administrator for Railroad Safety/Chief Safety Officer; and representatives of the American Railway and Airway Supervisors, International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Sheet Metal/Air/Rail/Transportation Union, Brotherhood of Railway Carmen; National Conference of Fire-

A 2015 customer satisfaction survey noted that personal safety onboard the train was ranked the 6th most important service attribute by Metra riders, with 17 percent of respondents indicating that personal safety onboard the train was the most important attribute. More than nine out of 10 respondents said they were satisfied with safety on the train.

Metra embarked on a series of new initiatives last year aimed at making the Metra Police more efficient and responsive to the needs of the agency and

its customers, including reducing overtime costs by assigning manpower based on shift activity level; assigning officers based on geographic area instead of rail line; regular training on criminal and traffic law, accident reconstruction and firearms; the implementation of field reporting using laptop computers and an overhaul of the agency's police dispatch and reporting system.

Metra reminds customers to report any suspicious or criminal activity on Metra property to Metra Police at 312-322-2800.

men and Oilers; Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen; Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees and Metropolitan Alliance of Police.

According to the FRA, the system complements existing safety programs, builds a positive safety culture, creates an early warning system, focuses on problems instead of people, provides an incentive for learning from errors and targets the root cause of an issue, not the symptom.

Under the system, employees can confidentially report "close calls" – such as safety concerns or violations of operating rules – without facing sanctions from Metra or the FRA. The goal is to collect data about close calls that otherwise would have gone unreported or underreported, and to use that data to identify safety hazards and take steps to correct them before an accident occurs. Those corrective steps could include new or better training, physical changes, or changes to safety rules or operating rules.

To maintain confidentiality, the close calls are reported to a third party, the National Aero-

navics and Space Administration (NASA), which removes any information about the incidents that could lead to the identification of the employee. NASA compiles the data and then forwards it for analysis by a peer review team of labor, Metra management and FRA representatives, which recommends corrective action. NASA also monitors trends and shares results.

"Since we implemented C3RS last year, we've seen a reduction in the number of workplace injuries and lost time on the job," Orseno said.

A close call is defined by the FRA as "a situation in which an ongoing sequence of events was stopped from developing further, preventing the occurrence of potentially serious safety-related consequences." Examples of close calls would be trains exceeding speed limits, workers nearly struck by trains, trains running through a switch or a passenger door opened on the wrong side of the train. Personal injuries, serious train accidents and alcohol or drug use are not considered a close call.

Want to avoid a taxing tax day next year? Work with your employer today to enroll in a pre-tax transit benefit program. You can save up to 40 percent on your commute with Metra or other public transit. For complete information about this important pre-tax benefit and referrals to plans, visit www.metrarail.com/transitbenefits.

Do it today, so you'll save throughout 2016!

SOUND OFF

Not smelling sweet

Ugghhh, again the overly cloying, fake stench of cheap “Sugar Cookies” and its equally tear-inducing brethren, “Obnoxious Musk,” staged a full-frontal assault on my nose, eyes and lungs at 7 a.m. on St. Patrick’s Day on the SouthWest Service line at the Palos stops. Ladies & Germs, get a clue: many of us are sensitive or allergic to strong odors like faux bakery goods or entire fields of flowers spritzed inside closed spaces. You don’t need to douse yourself in fragrances, cremes or lotions to get the desired effect. Tip: If you think you can no longer smell it, there’s a good likelihood the entire train car can!

Choking on SWS

Those of you who see (smell?) themselves in this email, take heed.

Why the tap dance?

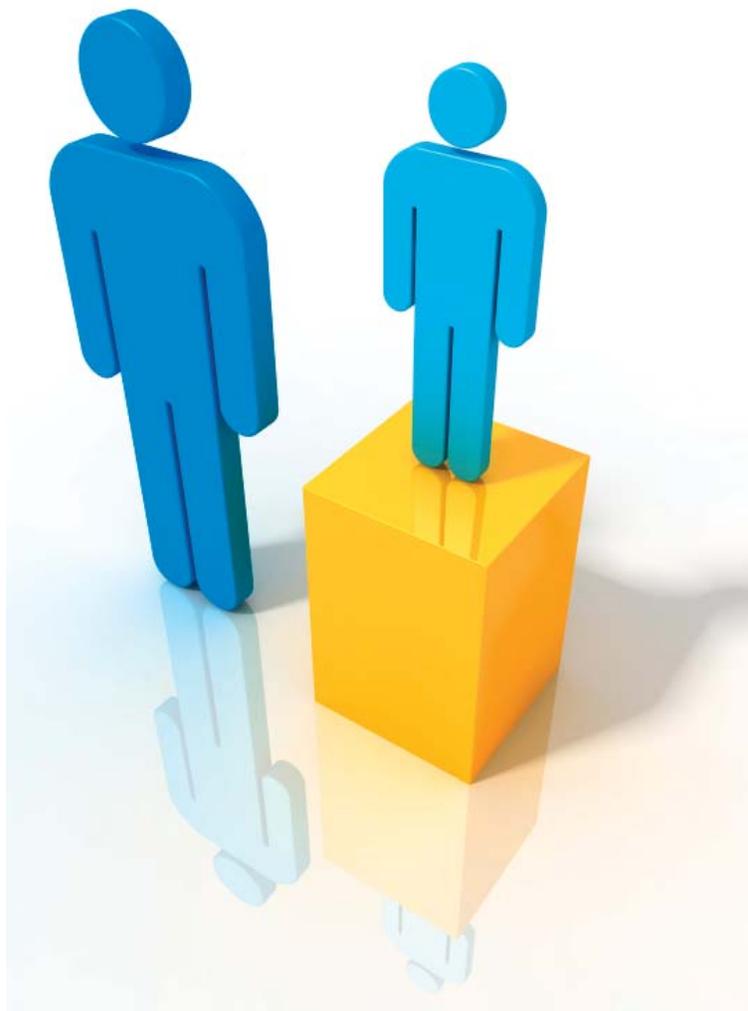
Love the Ventra App. One question it seems a lot of us have is, why do we have to tap the screen? When the month is over, the pass disappears. If the app is open and moving, why isn’t that enough for the conductor to know it is valid?

L.

It’s one more security feature – if it changes color, we know it’s valid and not a reproduction. And we’re glad you like the app. If others haven’t done so, look for it in the App Store or Google Play. You can buy Metra mobile tickets, track Metra trains, CTA buses and trains and Pace buses, and manage your Ventra account. Download it today.

Long and short of it

My morning conductor asks to see tickets from ‘short riders’ just after I board at our stop. He



Short or tall, we like you all.

doesn’t check tickets for the rest of us until much later in the journey. Seems a bit discriminatory...

Tall in Winnetka

Ha! For those who don’t get the joke, folks who aren’t riding all the way downtown in the morning are referred to as “shorts” because they’re not going long. But we love everyone all the same.

Thanks to conductor

I just want to thank the conductor who took swift action to remove a man who physically assaulted a young woman from the train. This man was evidently getting inappropriate with the woman before we even left

Union Station and when she got up to switch seats, he actually kicked her, which was witnessed by the man sitting behind me. The woman then informed the conductor, who escorted the man off the train at Western, where police were waiting. As a woman riding this train multiple times a week, I am glad to know that I can count on the Metra conductors to look out for my safety and do the right thing. Thank you!

Anne

Yes, you can count on us. The victim in this case did exactly the right thing – tell a crew member immediately. We take the safety and security of our customers extremely seriously.

Oops, sorry

To the passengers in the first Quiet Car on the 6:12 a.m. train from Big Timber Road: I want to extend my sincerest apologies. I was listening to music through my headphones (in a quiet tone, or so I thought), not realizing that as the music was coming through my headset to my ears, it was also getting broadcast to everyone in the car. This was a new set of headphones I had bought, and I had no idea that everyone could hear the music. I had (erroneously) thought that if the music came through my headset, the headset was working properly. As someone who always follows the rules of the Quiet Car, I am beyond embarrassed. I will not be using the headphones again, rest assured.

Lady with the Headphones

I’m sure everyone who was affected understands, thank you. This is a good illustration of why it’s important to remember to be polite when asking people to obey the Quiet Car rules.

You’ve been warned

As a child, my mother and grandmother told me stories of boys dipping the girls’ pigtailed into the ink well. I thought, “How rude of the boys.” Of course, I was getting the story from the girls’ side. Now I say, “Bring back inkwells!” After a ride where the woman in front of me constantly flipped her hair over the seat back, I understand the boys’ side of the story. They were only protecting their turf. Yes, I know, inkwells on the train, yada, yada. Also, considering hair styles today, they would probably appreciate the dye job. Problem solved for a few months. Ladies! Stop flipping your hair! Leave it alone!

AM

Spring Travel Notes

Take your kid to work for free on April 28

Metra will allow children up to 18 years old to ride for free when accompanied by their fare-paying parent on April 28, 2016 to mark "Take Our Daughters And Sons To Work Day." "We have been celebrating this worthy event at Metra for the past several years and decided that offering free rides to children that day might make it easier for our customers to participate at their job, too," said Metra Executive Director/CEO Don Orseno. As part of this event, Metra is asking parents who ride to work with their children to take photos of their trip and share them on Facebook and Twitter.

\$64.5 million added to capital program

The Metra Board of Directors last month approved a \$64.5 million addition to the agency's 2016 capital program. Increases in the federal dollars made available to the rail agency as well as the award of a new federal grant, other new capital contributions and the transfer of funds from the 2015 operating budget are responsible for the positive changes to Metra's capital budget. The revised 2016 capital program now totals \$251 million in projected spending. About \$34 million in new funding will go to replace the bridge that carries the Milwaukee West Line over the Fox River near Elgin. Another \$12 million will go to new or rehabbed cars and engines, \$8 million will be set aside for future financing costs and \$5.5 million will go to the rehab of the Calumet Station on the Metra Electric Line.

Metra to conduct 45 safety blitzes

Metra will conduct Operation Lifesaver Safety Blitzes at 45 train stations across the six-county region in 2016 as part of its ongoing efforts to raise awareness of the importance of safe behavior around its trains and tracks. During a safety blitz, Metra safety employees distribute educational materials about train and grade crossing safety, answer questions and listen to safety concerns from commuters at one of the railroad's 241 train stations during the morning commute. Local police and fire officials are also invited to participate. For a full schedule, go to www.metrarail.com.

Metra worker wins safety award

Metra Senior Manager of Train Operations Shamonda Jones has been selected by the National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP) as the recipient of the 2016 Dr. Gary Burch Memorial Safety Award. The award is a national honor recognizing the railroad worker who has done the most in the past year to improve safety for railroad passengers. NARP honored Jones for her initiative in launching an audit and major revision of the agency's train dispatcher and control operator manuals that improved safety by greatly reducing opportunities for miscommunication. "This is a wonderful recognition of someone who works very hard every day to ensure that Metra's riders get to their destinations safely," said Metra Executive Director/CEO Don Orseno.

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