

Safety Culture Change Yields Sustainable Improvements

MTA Metro-North Railroad



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— Bob Shinn
Safety Consultant
DuPont

Challenge

North America's largest transportation network – the Metropolitan Transportation Authority – has long partnered with DuPont to increase employee safety and reduce occasions of injury. One of its operating agencies, MTA Metro-North Railroad (MNR), has become a leader in all business parameters for commuter railroads. Though it was achieving continuous improvements in on-time performance, customer injury rates and ridership, MNR was dissatisfied with its lost time injury rate.

MNR senior leadership searched for methods to not only improve their employee safety record, but also establish a safety system that would change the basic safety culture, enable continuous improvement and substantially reduce injuries. According to Bob Shinn, DuPont Safety Consultant, "MNR wanted a culture change in their business. This meant finding an approach to safety that had people in contact with people, changing the culture of safety. They found it with DuPont."

Solution

DuPont partnered with MNR managers to enhance their existing safety program and implement new safety methods and strategies. By building on MNR safety practices and blending them with DuPont's proven processes, the two companies worked together to implement a complete safety management program focused on safety behavior change. This foundation provided MNR the capability to achieve sustainable, continuous improvement on numerous safety-related measures. Still evolving, the multi-year approach developed by DuPont has focused on several key elements of culture change that have helped produce sustainable improvements in safety, operational performance and productivity.

The overarching program focused on improving and enhancing processes, as well as building skills and understanding throughout the organization. The key areas of this solution were instituted over a period of 5 years, and included:



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Fostering Line Management Support

Without support from management, safety behavior changes are less likely to be sustained over time. That's why DuPont first helped MNR line managers incorporate safety processes into their everyday jobs and learn critical safety leadership skills, such as performing field observations of safety behaviors. During the first four years of the engagement, 2,000 supervisors internalized how to record, understand and share field observations to effect real change with employees. Proactive interactions are now the norm between management and employee groups, increasing to over 30,000 interactions recorded and shared in 2006 alone. Safety is now a line management responsibility and considered just as important as other critical tasks.

Building Safety into How Work is Performed

DuPont and MNR also enhanced the safety processes of each work group, thus equipping MNR employees with a broadened skill set and a strong awareness of the actions they must take in order to build safety into their daily job performance. For example, MNR employees were divided by job into 122 different groups; each group was then charged with identifying the 15 Key Safety Behaviors that would make their jobs safer. DuPont and MNR also conducted a job safety analysis to recognize the individual steps and potential hazards of each job, then established mandatory controls to avoid those hazards. These processes engaged employees at all levels, helping them build safety into their daily job performance.

Teaching the Organization to Receive and Act On Feedback

The more quality feedback an employee receives, the greater the chance that the employee will adjust his/her unsafe behavior. DuPont assisted MNR in developing safety auditing processes for supervision so that these safety observations facilitate meaningful safety discussions. Over 5,000 MNR employees have discovered how to receive and benefit from safety observation feedback. Safety contacts are made with individuals involved in incidents or injuries, making safety a topic that all employees talk about.

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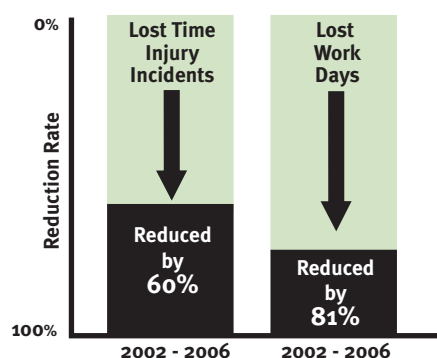


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Results

These areas represent just a portion of the long-term relationship between DuPont and MNR. By enhancing existing processes, implementing new ones and developing skills at every level of the organization, DuPont has helped MNR experience a real change in its safety culture. MNR has achieved improvement in numerous safety and operational performance indicators, including:

- A 60% reduction in Lost Time Injuries from 2002–2006
- An 81% reduction in Lost Work Days from 2002–2006
- Increased On-Time Performance from 96% to 98.7%



In 2005, MNR received the top two New York State's Metropolitan Transportation Authority Chairman's Safety Awards. They were recognized for reducing employee Lost Time Injuries and achieving the most sustained improvement over the past 5 years. MNR customers also benefited from the enhanced safety culture. Rider injuries decreased significantly from 2005 to 2006.

DuPont not only helped MNR improve its safety performance, but impacted how MNR employees think about safety and how they do their work. The enhanced processes and skill sets provide a foundation for sustainable improvement that will continue to grow year after year. As a result of DuPont's involvement, MNR and its employees now have the tools needed to achieve a record setting year in safety — every year.

A subsidiary of New York State's Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), Metro-North Railroad (MNR) was founded in 1983. Today MNR is one of the world's largest commuter railroads with approximately 77,000,000 trips per year. With 384 route miles and 775 miles of track, MNR serves 120 stations in New York State and Connecticut with headquarters in Grand Central Terminal in New York City.