



## TWU LOCAL 100 IN THE NEWS

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# UNION BIG: MTA Training Needs Work

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THE HEAD OF the city's transit union called on the MTA Monday to consider taking a hard look at its training requirements for subway operators — after a group of veteran workers slammed the schooling new hires receive.

“Our train operators are professional and they perform thousands upon thousands of train movements every day, safely and without incident,” Transport Workers Union Local 100 President Tony Utano said in a statement.

“Still you can never have enough training.”

Utano said an aging workforce and retirements has led to an “unprecedented influx of new workers.” He said it might be time for the MTA to evaluate the education newbies receive.

“In the interest of public confidence, the MTA should consider a top-to-bottom review of the training requirements and protocols for becoming a train operator,” Utano said.

The Daily News reported Monday that a group of veteran transit workers was griping trainees don't get the same quality education they had gotten in the past, leading to on-the-job snafus that delay rides and endanger passengers.

The group cited 13 incidents involving operator screw-ups between Feb. 8 and Feb. 22.

Some involved operators overrunning stations or signals. One involved a G train operator opening the wrong side of doors at Court Square station.

Records showed 11 of the incidents involved operators who were trained under the New Train Operator Transition program, which started in 2013. All 11 were hired without transit experience.

Utano said the ideal scenario would be for operators to have worked other transit jobs before driving subways. He said his union recently launched a training initiative to prepare transit workers to move up to the operator position.

A longtime transit employee who worked as a subway car instructor said the New Train Operator Transition program was flawed. The employee — who asked not to be identified — said, before the new program, trainees went to school for six months straight and graduated to the job having continuously used the skills they learned.

Under the new program, trainees spend two months in classrooms and in small groups. Then they work for two months in a rail yard with little feedback and supervision before returning to the classroom for another month or two, the former instructor said.

“The previous program was better,” the ex-instructor said. “We often argued over why we change it.”

The MTA called the veteran workers'

claims way off track.

The agency said trainees receive more instruction now than ever — and their time in the yard enhanced their experience.

“We're proud to have promoted more than 450 transit workers to the position of train operator last year — which accounts for two-thirds of new operators systemwide,” the MTA said.

“To attribute more than a relatively small proportion of all delays to new train operators is divorced from the facts, and unfair to these workers and the vigorous training they go through.”

Transit workers — not just operators but any agency employee — caused 20,385 subway train delays in 2017, records show.

The MTA said that the number accounted for less than 2.16% of all subway delays. It did not say how many of the 20,385 delays newly trained operators caused.

Utano said operator screw-ups should be treated as teaching moments — not as an opportunity to penalize workers.

“If a train operator does make a mistake, management's priority should not be discipline, but evaluation and, if necessary, refresher training,” he said.

