

Health & Safety



NEWSLETTER

May 2013

Union Declares War on Diesel Exhaust

We at TWU are taking on a diesel exhaust health awareness campaign to educate members on the occupational hazards of working in a diesel exhaust work area. The National Institute of Health has published a new study on diesel as a carcinogen, and as well, the International Agency for Research on Cancer has reclassified diesel exhaust as a known carcinogen.

These developments put diesel exhaust in the same category as asbestos and cigarette smoke. Our members for years have suspected the health risks of regular exposure to diesel fumes, always fearing the worst. The worst has now been proven.

The TWU Local 100 Safety and Health Department is taking the position that we need to have a diesel free work environment. We are targeting numerous ways on how to get this done in our barns, depots and tunnels. TWU is also partnering with our contacts in both the communities and the scientific field to lead the fight to have the government agencies both on the federal and state levels to install



The Local 100 Health and Safety Department is recommending that the MTA cease all purchases of indoor diesel-powered vehicles like this sweeper.

real work rules and occupational/ environment regulations that will minimize diesel exhaust in all work places.

The safety of our workers is the most important issue this Union stands on. Together, united we will fight and make the changes to insure that this goal is met.

Harold Boro, S&H Rep



Hazmat Safety Training Class Set for June 13-15, 2013

The Health and Safety Department is sponsoring 3-day HAZMAT training class for members.

Major course topics will cover:

- Intro to hazwaste
- Intro to toxicology
- NYCT spill response policies
- NYCT hazwaste policies
- Overview of regulatory framework
- OSHA/PESH standards and worker rights
- Politics of health and safety laws
- Health and safety as collective bargaining
- Sources of chemical information
- Hands-on PPE, respiratory protection, decon activities.

Interested parties should contact either **Tom Carrano** at: tcarrano@twulocal100.org, or **Frank Austin** at: faustin@twulocal100.org. Space is very limited, so act fast if you want to participate.

Here's the schedule:

June 13 - Thursday evening, 5 or 6 pm to 9 or 10, at TWU 100

June 14 - Friday all day, 8:00am-4:00pm, at Carpenters Union Hall.

June 15 -Saturday, 8:00 am-2:00 pm at TWU 100.

Union Continues Push for More Bus Shields to Protect Operators

Thanks to a persistent union effort on bus safety, every Borough's District Attorney is now engaged in aggressively pursuing assaults on transit workers; Albany has enacted two transit worker anti-violence laws; and most importantly, the MTA has accelerated installation of bus safety shields to protect our Operators.

Thanks to our Bus Operators Action Committee [BOAC], Bus Operators can start to breathe a sigh of stress relief. It wasn't easy. Many members and their families have suffered, especially the family of Edwin Thomas, murdered by a passenger in Brooklyn on December 1, 2008. This violent act spurred action.

But the brutal assaults in the Bronx in 2011 against Maria Hogan and Marlene Bien Aime, as well as



The new bus shields will be installed in about a third of the fleet by the end of 2013.

so many other assaults against our members demonstrate that so much more needs to be done. NYC Transit operates 5,800 buses in daily service. According to NYCT 1,088 buses have safety partitions. Transit projects that 1,656 will be fitted by the end of 2013. Transit officials announced that all new order buses will be factory fitted.

Here is the report of assaults against Bus Operators for the past five years. [Numbers may be higher]

2008 /188
2009/262
2010/255
2011/272
2012/235

Fresh Pond Employee Parking is now a 'Lot' Safer

by Tom McNally, S&H Rep

Shortly after myself and Bobby Keith were appointed to the TWU Safety Department, we were approached by two female bus operators, Burnette Cofer and Diane Monges, who work out of Fresh Pond.

"We are scared to come to work. Can you help us?" they said.

Burnette and Diane explained to us that they arrived every day at work at 4:00am and parked in a TA parking lot, that had no lights and no security.

Weeks before, Diane had been attacked by three men who were hanging out by the lot. She was knocked to the ground, beaten and kicked and her bag was stolen.

A few weeks later, Burnette exited her car and a man came out of

the shadows and tried to take her bag. A tug of war ensued and she was able to hold onto her bag. Two other female bus operators were also attacked.

Thus began a three-year battle to get lights and security at three bus operator employee parking lots. Our first move was to gather facts and evidence and to publicize the issue.

We traveled to the lots at night and saw first hand the danger. The three lots are located under a subway elevated structure and also surrounded

by the yards of buildings on both sides. It was like walking into a coal mine. We inspected the lot and took some pictures. Used hypodermic needles, beer and liquor bottles, and condoms littered the area.

Also, we questioned residents and

they told us that a drug dealer was selling heroin outside the lot and the junkies used the darkened lot as a shooting gallery.

Armed with this evidence we went to the P&E manager for transit thinking she would be sympathetic.

"It costs too much money," was the response.

We needed to put pressure on the TA. We called the NY Post and they interviewed the operators and wrote a story. The next stop was the local police precinct. They promised to patrol the area more frequently. We continued to pressure the TA by going to local officials and documenting the issue at the safety meeting.

A managerial change in the P&E Dept., a drug dealer's car burning outside the lot, and a Bus Operator breaking his leg in the darkness finally tipped the balance in our direction. The TA agreed to put lights in the parking lot. The most satisfying part of the story was having Burnette putting me on the phone with her daughter. "I won't have to worry now when my Mom goes to work," she said.

We are not finished as we now are pushing for security cameras and better security gates.



Area around the depot is dark even in daylight.

New Diesels Have Computer, Ergonomic, Safety Issues

Four shiny new diesel-powered work trains joined the NYCT fleet recently. They even have that “new car” smell. Eight more are on the way.

BUT, TWU members have identified some issues with them, as follows:

Visibility - The nose of the diesel has limited visibility compared with the older ones. Flagging will now be done from the nose instead of the side seat in the operating cab. An emergency trip valve will be added to the location as well.

‘Deadman’ Feature - The ‘deadman’ on the new diesel is a small button roughly the size of a pinky nail and has to be held down at all times when the train takes power. It seems fine at first but after about a minute or so, it becomes highly uncomfortable. The handle itself that it is attached to does not move. This has the Train Operators thumb rubbing and turning on the button itself so when the Operator is taking or releasing power there is a good chance for his thumb to slip off the button causing the train to go into emergency. The union requested modification for the new equipment. One diesel was “modified” with a taller button, but does little to alleviate the problem. Constant operation under these circumstances could no doubt lead to carpal tunnel issues in the future.

Power Design – The design of how the train takes power is similar to the 143 and 160 trains. When taking a point of power (minimal power) or higher the train slowly and steadily builds speed. This is an issue with most worktrain jobs, for instance,

NYCOSH Wants Diesel Labeling

The NY Committee for Occupational Safety and Health [NYCOSH], West Harlem Environmental Action [WEACT] and TWU Local 100 have called for the labeling all engines powered by Diesels as being Diesels, regardless of size. And, that Diesel causes cancer. This is done in the State of California [Prop 65].



Four new diesels are on modified service as TA tries to get the kinks out.

rail or cable pulling, ballast dropping, panel removal or installations. In order to maintain a steady pace the operator has to keep switching between power ‘on’ and ‘off’ modes. This can cause the train to “jump” or jerk forward or backward, which can be a serious issue on any of these types of jobs. A several ton panel being carried through the air for example, could create a serious safety hazard under those conditions. NYCT is looking at modification. For now, the new trains have been pulled off those type of jobs.

Computer Issues - The diesels are having trouble recognizing each other, and in some cases are not seeing each other at all. If more than one diesel is on a total connected train line, one diesel is supposed to take the lead and the others follow. A command from the lead diesel, take power for example, is supposed to be followed by the other diesels as one. This function has not been going too well with the new diesels.

Here’s an example: recently a train line consisting of two diesels (one at the head, one in the back by the block) Because of issues with the computer, NYCT decided to physically man the follower diesel as well. The diesels were not recognizing each other and in order to release

the brakes on the follower diesel the brakes had to be manually released and the deadman held down. This is working fairly well for now because it creates a need for extra people on the same train. But who knows what other computer issues we will be facing. Members have complained of computer-related startup and power failure issues. The current fix is to reboot the computer.

Exhaust Fumes - There are two exhaust fume issues. The first is that fumes were coming into the cab. The problem appears to be that the air intake valve is exposed to

exhaust. A temporary solution was to close off the air intake valve giving the diesel recycled air. Filters and fittings are being looked into as well. Members say this seems to be working well. The second issue is that the diesel creates more smoke and fumes than the old diesels. The union is in the process of evaluating this claim.

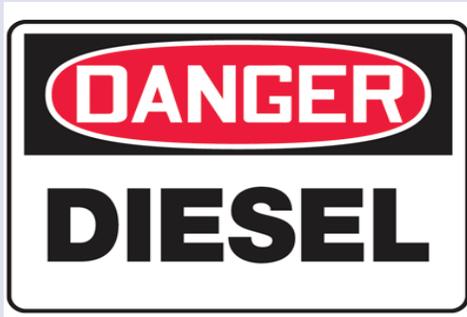
Sand Thrower Pedal - Diesels can throw sand in slippery conditions like snow and rain. The pedal on the new diesel is in a position that is hard to step on for average or larger sized members.

Seat Placement - Members feel the seat placement and controls are uncomfortable. Especially for larger than average members. The trains are currently being monitored As of mid-May they are only being used for transfers and yard moves.

Bus Maintainer’s Widow Decries Diesel Fumes as Killer

Dora Nigro, widow of diseased bus mechanic, Tony Nigro, calls for strict regulation and elimination of diesels. Tony had 23 years on the job and died of Lung Cancer 2 years following his retirement at 55 years old. Mrs. Nigro spoke at the NYCOSH/Central Labor Council Forum on Diesel Fumes and Cancer.

**An important message from the
TWU Local 100 Health
& Safety Department**



From the TENANT product safety manual. Even the sweeper's manufacturer posts diesel warnings.



WARNING: Engine emits toxic gases.
Serious injury or death can result.
Provide adequate ventilation.

TWU has always maintained that diesel fumes and associated particulates are harmful, even though scientific evidence was lacking. We now have proof. **The U.S. National Cancer Institute and other federal agencies recently completed comprehensive studies on diesel emissions. The findings: *exposure to diesel fumes and particulates can cause lung cancer.***

Diesel manufacturers claim that recent technological improvements in diesel fuels [lower sulphur] and motors have minimized cancer risks. But there is little evidence to support that claim.

The utmost caution must be observed with ALL diesel exposures.

We believe we have identified 5 of our members who have died from lung cancer associated with their exposure to diesel fumes/particulates. We have requested that the MTA/NYCT allow independent medical/scientific researchers to conduct studies of all Medical Insurance Claims to determine the extent of this potential health crisis. To date, MTA/NYCT has refused, claiming confidentiality. What are they hiding? The federal government has even offered financial support for the study, but they continue to stonewall. The recent findings of the National Cancer Institute underscores the critical importance of MTA/NYCT cooperation. In the meantime, TWU Local 100 is urging that MTA/NYCT establish a "no diesel" purchase policy for sweepers, forklifts, work train engines and other similar equipment. We recommend substitutes such as electric [battery driven] motors.

Recommendation to Our Members

If you have had long term (more than 10 years) exposure, call the union for advice on a new lung cancer detection test that can save your life. We can stop it before it becomes another asbestos-style crisis for our members.

Remember: the danger of diesel emissions is not what you can see or smell. N-95 Respirators will not protect you.

Questions: Call the Union at 212-873-6000 ext. 2173, and/or speak with your Union representative.
www.twulocal100.org



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