

# Steps to Reduce Conflict

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# Goals For This Training

- ▶ Understanding
  - ▶ Your community
  - ▶ Role of a transit operator
- ▶ Focus on Customer Service Reviewing
- ▶ Learn Techniques To Mitigate Transit Conflicts

**\*This Class Does Not Teach Self-Defense Skills!\***

# The Public Transit Operator's Reality

- ▶ Operator Conflicts or Assaults Are Ever-Increasing
- ▶ Safety of Transit Workers Is a Top Priority



# Types of Conflict

- ▶ Passenger Against Driver
- ▶ Passenger Against Supervisor
- ▶ Passenger Against Passenger



# Three Influencers of Communication

- ▶ Words
    - ▶ What we say
  - ▶ Tone
    - ▶ How we say it
  - ▶ Body Language
    - ▶ How our body says it
- 
- These 3 Join Together To Express The Overall Message



# Working Definition of Conflict

## ▶ Conflict

- ▶ A disagreement in which the people involved see a threat to their needs, interests or concerns

## ▶ Key Thought

- ▶ Work through issues with riders BEFORE verbal/physical violence ensues



# Definition of De-Escalation

- ▶ De-escalation
  - ▶ The effective use of verbal and non-verbal (body language) communication skills to calm an angry or out of control passenger
- ▶ Escalation Phase
  - ▶ When interaction turns into conflict
  - ▶ It is vital to initiate de-escalation strategies during this phase



# Why De-escalation Is Important

- ▶ Increases the Confidence of Operators in Difficult Situations
- ▶ Demonstrates the System's Desire To Meet Passenger Needs
- ▶ Diffusing Tense Situations
  - ▶ Reduces stress
  - ▶ Helps provide greater safety for everyone on the vehicle

# Customer Types Include

- ▶ Families
- ▶ Students
- ▶ Elderly
- ▶ Transient/ Homeless
- ▶ Adults
- ▶ Business Commuters



# Transit Passenger Expectations

- ▶ Treat Others The Way You Want To Be Treated
- ▶ Provide A Service To The Entire Community
- ▶ Be Professional And Polite While Dealing With A Variety of People and Personalities
- ▶ Ensure All Customers Feel Welcomed, Valued And Appreciated

# Six Basic Service Desires

- ▶ Reliability
- ▶ Safety And Security
- ▶ Convenience And Accessibility
- ▶ Cleanliness And Comfort
- ▶ Simplicity
- ▶ Affordable

# Reliability, Safety And Security

- ▶ Consistency With Pickups And Drop Offs Creates Trust
- ▶ Providing Freedom From Harm While in Transit

# Convenience And Accessibility

- ▶ Providing Transit That Is User-friendly And Meets Needs
- ▶ Amenities
  - ▶ Seating
  - ▶ Lighting
  - ▶ Trash Receptacles
- ▶ These Communicate We Appreciate Passengers

# Cleanliness And Comfort

- ▶ Vehicles Free From Garbage and Odors
- ▶ Clean Well-maintained Vehicles and Equipment
- ▶ Show Pride in the Service

# Simplicity And Affordability

- ▶ Help Riders Learn How To Use Your Transit System's Services
- ▶ Keep Costs Down for All Passengers
  - ▶ Fare rates could be lowered for customers with different “abilities to pay,” such as persons with disabilities, senior citizens or students



# Triggers

- ▶ What Is a Trigger?
  - ▶ An incident perceived as a threat by an individual
- ▶ Types of Triggering Events
  - ▶ Fear-based
    - ▶ A person feels threatened and believes they are about to lose something they value
  - ▶ Frustration
    - ▶ A person feels their needs are not being met

# Why Does Transit Conflict Occur?

## ▶ Unmet Expectations

- ▶ Promptness
- ▶ Affordability
- ▶ Friendly and personable
- ▶ Ease of use
- ▶ Accessibility for disabled
- ▶ Ease of scheduling
- ▶ Availability
- ▶ Cleanliness

# Root Causes for Rider Conflict

- ▶ Transit Service Dissatisfaction
- ▶ High Stress Level
- ▶ Resentment Of Authority
- ▶ Mental Health Issues
- ▶ Under the Influence Of Alcohol/Drugs



# Transit Conflict Instigators

- ▶ Unwanted Advances Or Harassment
- ▶ Use Of Profanity
- ▶ Delays In Services
- ▶ Bullying
- ▶ Language Or Cultural Differences
- ▶ Fare Disputes
- ▶ Vandalism Of Vehicle

# Recognizing Signs of Conflict

- ▶ Clinched Fists Or Jaw
- ▶ Sweating, Restlessness Or Pacing
- ▶ Change In Voice Tone, Eye Contact, Stance
- ▶ Verbal Behaviors Like Yelling, Bullying, Refusing
- ▶ Blame, Anger, Frustration
- ▶ Spatial Distancing Lessens

# Recognizing Signs of Conflict

## (Con't)

- ▶ **Disruptive Behaviors**
  - ▶ Yelling, bullying, refusing to comply with rules
- ▶ **Lowering Of Body Posture**
- ▶ **Heavy Breathing**
- ▶ **Raised/Hidden Hands**
  - ▶ Holding hands in air out of frustration
  - ▶ Hiding hands behind back or in pockets

# Types Of Assaults

- ▶ Verbal Assault
- ▶ Spitting (Becoming More Common)
- ▶ Assault With An Object
- ▶ Physical Assault
- ▶ Assault With A Weapon

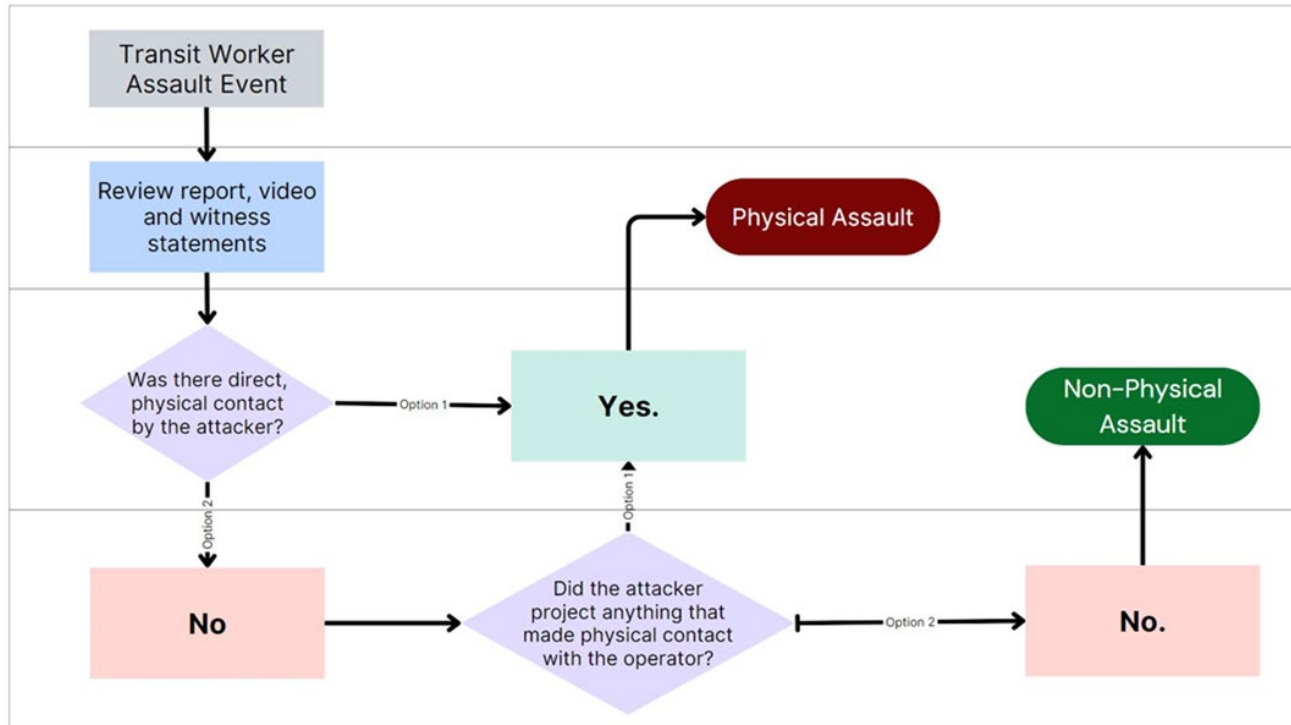
# FTA Definition of Transit Worker Assault

“A circumstance in which an individual knowingly, without lawful authority or permission, and with intent to endanger the safety of any individual, or with a reckless disregard for the safety of human life, interferes with, disables, or incapacitates a transit worker while the transit worker is performing the duties of the transit worker.”

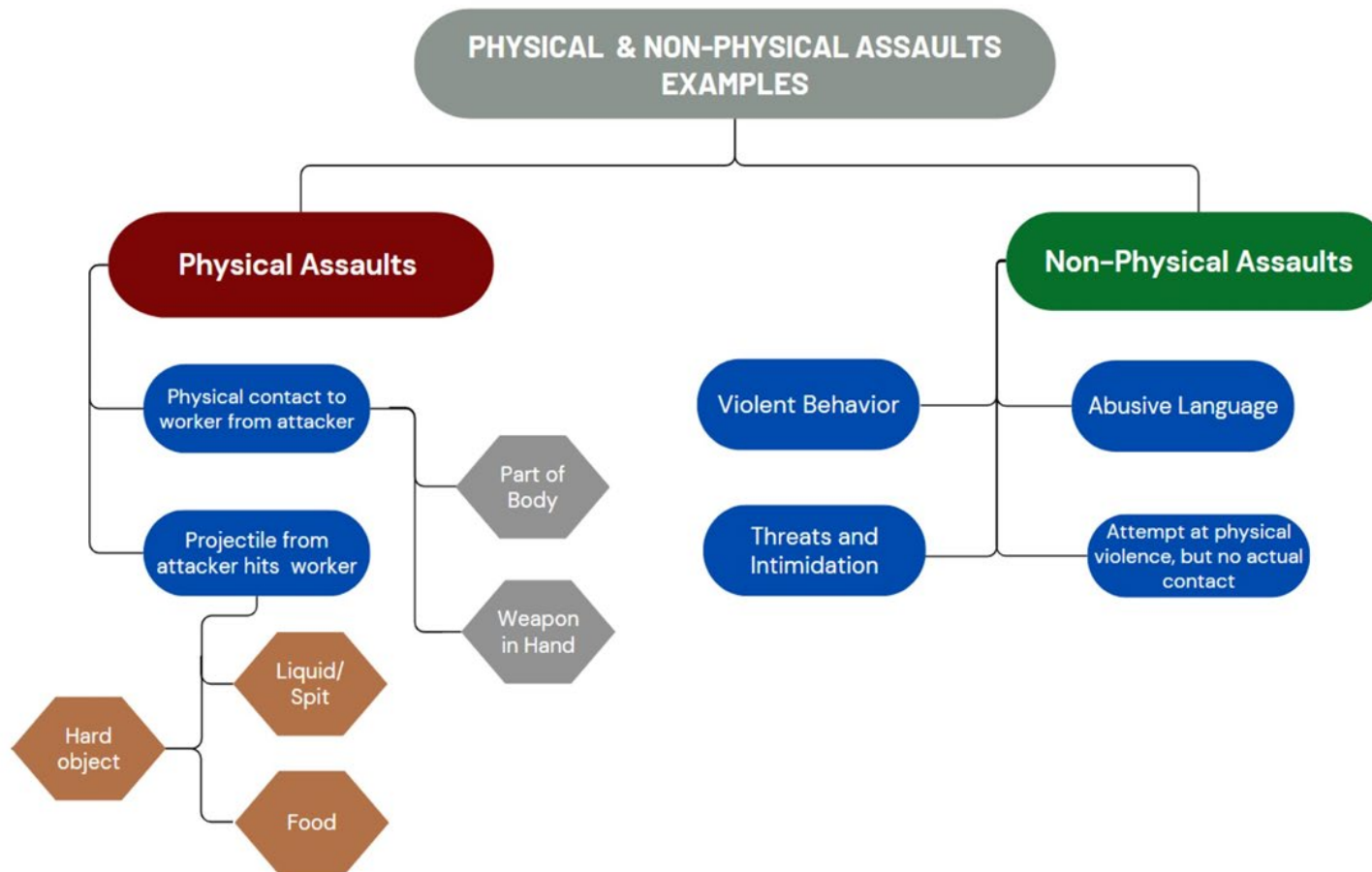


# NTD Reporting

## Physical vs. Non-physical Assault



# Physical vs. Non-Physical Examples



# Strategies To Reduce Transit Conflict

- ▶ Install Protective Barriers
- ▶ Video Surveillance
- ▶ Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL System)
- ▶ Operator De-Escalation Training
- ▶ Consistent Reporting of Assaults
- ▶ Service and Operator Assessments

# Control Strategies (Con't)

- ▶ Meet With Passengers To Discuss Strategies To Mitigate Transit Conflict
- ▶ Involve Operators In Safety Committees
- ▶ Enforce Passenger Codes Of Conduct
- ▶ Suspend Service For Violations
- ▶ Provide Adequate Escape Routes

# De-Escalation Training Is A Must!

- ▶ Training Plays A Critical Role In Reducing Assaults
  - ▶ Provides employees with knowledge about agency expectations to address a variety of common situations related to conflict that could lead to assault
  - ▶ Required for small urban systems for frontline employees including maintenance employees (BIL)

# Training Benefits Everyone

- ▶ Employees Respond To High-risk Scenarios In One Of Three Ways
  - ▶ Taking actions that de-escalate the situation
  - ▶ Retreating into “hostile withdrawal”
  - ▶ Responding aggressively in a way that promotes conflict

# De-Escalate Yourself

- ▶ Act Calm/Remember To Breathe
- ▶ Maintain Non-Threatening Eye Contact
- ▶ Neutral Facial Expressions
- ▶ Relaxed Body
- ▶ Keep Gestures to a Minimum

# Act vs React

- ▶ When We Act
  - ▶ We remain in control
- ▶ When We React,
  - ▶ We can “Respond Impulsively”
  - ▶ Responding impulsively leads to mistakes and regretful decisions



# Use Connecting Questions

- ▶ Don't Tell Passengers To Calm Down
- ▶ Instead
  - ▶ Validate their feelings
  - ▶ Ask “What do you need?”
  - ▶ Ask “How is it going?”
- ▶ Let Them Vent

# Protect Your Reactionary Gap

- ▶ **Avoid The Danger Zone**
  - ▶ Within 1 arm's length
- ▶ **Maintain Safety Zone**
  - ▶ Outside of person's reach
- ▶ **Create A Zone Of Influence**
  - ▶ Within safety zone but close enough for effective communication

# Make A Personal Connection

- ▶ Use The Passenger's Name if Known
- ▶ Ask What The Issue Is
- ▶ Acknowledge Their Emotion
  - ▶ Upset, Frustrated, Angry, Etc.
- ▶ Empathize With Their Feelings
- ▶ Summarize and Seek Common Ground

# Non-Verbal De-Escalation Skills

- ▶ **Maintain Neutral Facial Expression**
  - ▶ Initiate an attentive expression
  - ▶ Helps reduce hostility & expresses that you care
- ▶ **Mirror Behavior You're Seeking**
- ▶ **Avoid Aggressive Body Stances and Posture**
- ▶ **Minimize Excessive Gesturing, Pacing, Fidgeting, or Weight Shifting**

# Verbal De-Escalation Skills

- ▶ Before Moving To Verbal Skills, Allow The Person To Vent
- ▶ Acknowledge Their Concern Or Complaint Before Offering A Response
- ▶ Show Empathy In The Manner And Tone Of Your Response

# Verbal De-Escalation Skills

## (Con't)

### ▶ Three Primary Listening Skills

#### ▶ Attending

- ▶ Remove distractions

#### ▶ Following

- ▶ Engage with attentive eye contact

#### ▶ Reflecting

- ▶ Paraphrase and reflect the feelings of the other person (show empathy)

# Informing Behavior

- ▶ Communicate What's Going On in Neutral Terms Without Using “You Messages”
- ▶ Use “WE” Phrasing With the Irate Rider
  - ▶ WE are moving on now
  - ▶ WE can talk now
  - ▶ WE all want to remain safe
  - ▶ WE do not want to disrespect each other
- ▶ Do Not Order or Command Them To Do Something

# Strategy for Mitigating Escalation

**REMEMBER:** *Aggression breeds aggression, potentially escalating a bad situation into an emergency*

- ▶ Handle the Situation From the Driver's Seat When Possible
- ▶ Avoid Invading the Offender's Personal Space
- ▶ Your Calmness Is Paramount To Enhance De-escalation
- ▶ Project Sense of Control Without Conveying Aggressiveness



# Strategy for Mitigating Escalation (Con't)

- ▶ Strive To Get Them To Say “Yes” in Your Dialogue
  - ▶ If the offender is agreeing with you, it is difficult for them to stay angry at you
- ▶ Treat Every Passenger With Respect
  - ▶ Don't embarrass, humiliate or intimidate passenger
- ▶ Share a Verbal Confirmation of Onboard Cameras, if Equipped
  - ▶ If problem person knows they're being recorded it could help to diffuse the scenario

# Conclusion

- ▶ **Three Influencers of Communication**
  - ▶ Words (What We Say)
  - ▶ Tone (How We Say It)
  - ▶ Body Language (How Our Body Says It)

# Conclusion

- ▶ Conflict Is a Disagreement in Which the People Involved See a Threat to Their Needs, Interests or Concerns
- ▶ De-escalation Is the Effective Use of Verbal and Body Language Communication Skills To Calm an Angry or Out of Control Passenger
- ▶ Work Through Issues With Riders BEFORE Verbal/Physical Violence Ensues

Questions?

Thank you

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