

The Basics for Providing De-escalation Training for Smaller Transit Systems

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MINNESOTA & WISCONSIN PUBLIC TRANSIT CONFERENCE
October 6, 2025



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- General Directive 24-1: Required Actions Regarding Assaults on Transit Workers
- Potential of Transit Worker Assault for Small Urban & Rural Transit Systems
- Transit is Different:
 1. Not the typical customer service industry
 2. Not Emergency Management or Hospital Care Personnel
 3. Not Law Enforcers
- Unfortunate Disconnect between Management & Front-line Transit Worker

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OBJECTIVES

1. Understanding the 'why' – Establish a commitment to do more than just “check the box” by creating a successful De-escalation training program.
2. An analysis of the 'what' - Analyze the tools that are required to implement a De-escalation training program suited for front-line staff in the public transportation industry.
3. Most importantly, is 'how' - Determine the delivery methods for the De-escalation training to engage front-line staff 's commitment to “put in practice” the policies and procedures of the organization to orchestrate a successful De-escalation training program safely.

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Understanding the 'why'

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Defining De-escalation?

1. The term was first credited to an American Physicist, Herman Kahn in the 1960s
2. De: - creates "the opposite of" the original word.
3. Escalate: to cause a situation to become more intense or severe.
4. De-escalate: to reduce the severity or size of the conflict over time

The goal is to create a safe and calm environment.

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Requirements for De-escalation

1. § 673.29 Safety Promotion.

(a) Competencies and training.

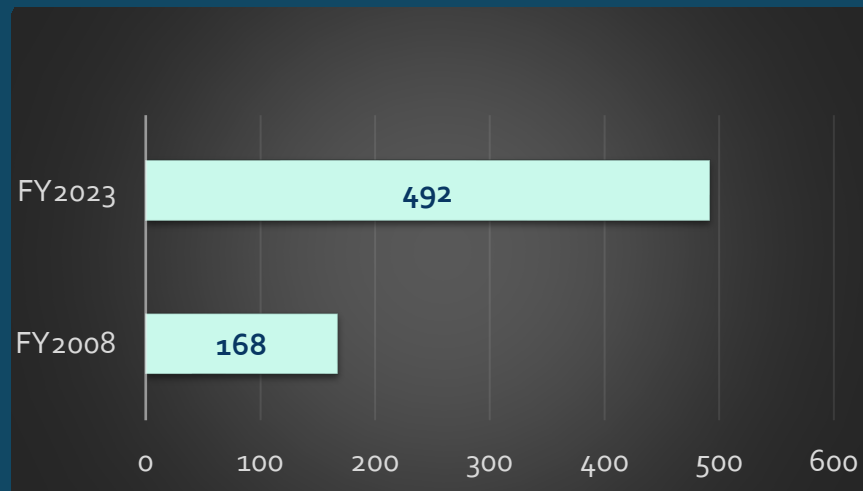
(1) A transit agency must establish and implement a comprehensive safety training program that includes de-escalation training, safety concern identification, reporting training, and refresher training for all transit workers and workers directly responsible for safety in the transit agency's public transportation system. The training program must include refresher training, as necessary.

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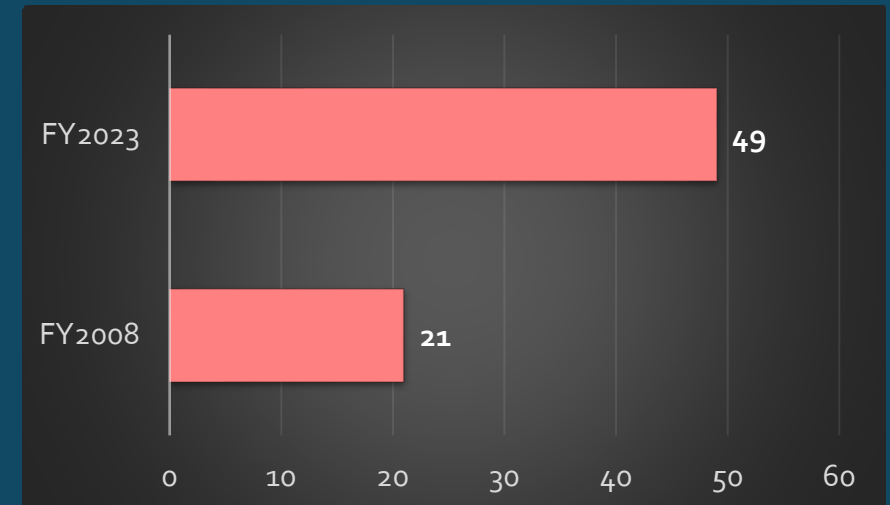
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Rationale for De-escalation

Number of Assaults on Transit Operators



Number of Agencies Reporting Assaults



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What's the benefit of De-escalation?

1. Compliance with the FTA Requirement.
2. Displays patience, empathy, and effective communication.
3. Promotes using communication and other techniques to reduce the intensity of a situation...



Respect is a key component of Effective De-escalation.



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Taking it a Step Further

DE-ESCALATION TRAINING CURRICULUM

DE-ESCALATION
REGULATION.



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The Importance of A Mission, Vision & Value Statements?

A value statement is a declaration that communicates an organization's or an individual's *core beliefs* and *guiding principles*. It conveys the values and *priorities of a company, informing customers and employees* about what principles are *most important* to the business. Essentially, it defines the foundational beliefs that a company stands for and how it operates.

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What are our Values!

Who We Are

Mission:

Vision:

Values:

Values:

Respect, Integrity, Excellence, Equity, Collaboration,
Innovation

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Examples of Values?

Core Values

- **Respect**—We treat others with courtesy and dignity; **we** value their perspectives **and embrace** our differences.
- **Integrity**—We lead by **examples of honesty**, doing the right thing and **displaying** actions that reflect our words.
- **Positive attitude**—We use a positive approach, take initiative, are motivated to perform a good job and take pride in the work we do.
- **Teamwork**—Together, we collaborate on ideas and share information, resources and responsibility for the best possible outcomes.
- **Accountability**—we take responsibility for our actions.

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Examples of Values?

Our values guide how all (Agency Name) employees show up each day on behalf of Minnesotans.

***Safety:** We recognize safety is core to our work and build it into everything we do.*

***Service:** We take pride in our work and hold ourselves to the highest standards.*

***Equity:** We actively remove barriers to create an inclusive transportation system that benefits all.*

***Sustainability:** We act today to contribute to a better transportation system of the future.*

***Innovation:** We search for new ideas and experiment to learn, grow and create value for the public.*

***Collaboration:** We leverage the contributions of our team members and partners, acknowledging the impact we can have together.*

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Key Words of Values?

Respect
Integrity
Equity
Excellence
Innovation
Collaboration

Respect
Integrity
Positive Attitude
Teamwork
Accountability

Safety
Service
Equity
Sustainability
Innovation
Collaboration

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What are your Organization's Values?



Write a list of a minimum of five words that reflect the values of the organization in which you are employed.

Pair/Team with another individual(s) and highlight which values you have listed that reflect the organization's priority for the well-being of front-line staff.

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Summation of Organization's Values?

If the Organization's values reflect the importance of maintaining the well-being of front-line staff, does this promote a strong De-escalation training curriculum?

Let's focus on doing more than checking the boxes! 

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An analysis of the 'what'

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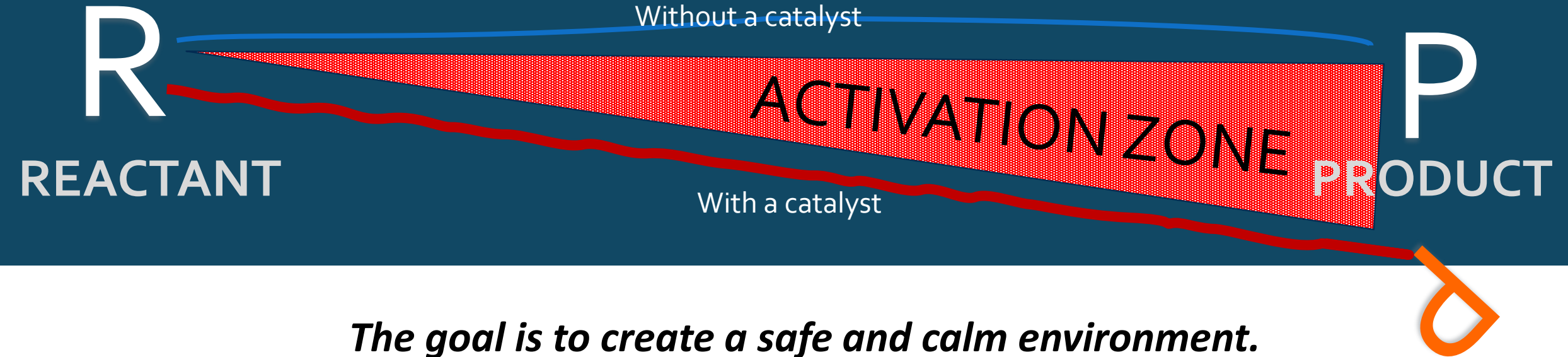
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Responsibilities of a Bus Operator

- ☐ Always comply with company policies and transportation regulations.
- ☐ Operate and drive transit vehicles
- ☐ Ensure the safety of passengers during transit by adhering to traffic laws and regulations
- ☐ Collect fares from passengers
- ☐ Communicate and provide information on routes, schedules, and stops
- ☐ Assist passengers with special needs
- ☐ Handle minor vehicle maintenance and report major mechanical problems
- ☐ Inspect the vehicle before and after each shift
- ☐ Ensure the vehicle is clean and sanitary.

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It's a Chemical Reaction



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What catalyst influence the Activation Zone for Transit Operators?

1. Operator biases.
2. Agency Policies & Procedures.
3. Clarity of Agency Policies & Procedures.
4. Unchecked Practices contrary to the Agency's Policies & Procedures.

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Operator Biases

1. Do we expect staff to comply with our values?
2. What tools and resources do we provide our staff to meet these expectations?
3. Are there consequences for non-compliance?



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Policy and Procedures



1. By default, Policies & Procedures are catalysts that contribute to escalation.
2. Clarification of Policies & Procedures.
3. Are there consequences for non-compliance?

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Let's take a look at Policies.

1. (3) carry or possess any weapon, explosives, acids, other dangerous articles, or live animals, except for a seeing eye dog or a hearing ear dog properly harnessed and accompanied by its owner, small animals properly packaged, or weapons carried by or animals used by a law enforcement official.
2. (6) use profane, indecent, or obscene language or actions on a public transportation vehicle or conduct himself in a boisterous fashion while on a public transportation vehicle.
3. (c) The driver of any public transportation vehicle may refuse to transport any person who insists on boarding the vehicle in a manner that will obviously violate any of the above provisions.

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1. Passenger Conduct: **Let's take a look at Policies.**

It is unlawful on any bus to: Smoke; loiter; eat or drink; spit or litter; play a radio or other instrument except when connected to an earphone; carry any un-caged animals, firearms, weapons, flammable liquids or any other dangerous articles.

2. Strollers:

All strollers must be foldable. Please take your child out of your stroller before boarding the bus. Fold the stroller and carry it on the bus. Unfolded strollers block the aisle for other passengers and endangers your child, who could be hurt if the youngster is seated in the stroller and the bus must make a sudden stop. Strollers should be folded up and placed away from the aisle while you ride.

3. Service Animals:

Per ADA rule Title II section 35.104 and section 35.136, a service animal is a dog that has been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability. The rule states that other animals, whether wild or domestic, do not qualify as service animals.



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Most importantly, is 'how'

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How Do We Implement the Next Steps?

-  1. We have organizational “Values”.
-  2. We have open communication of what the “Values” are and how they are incorporated into the De-escalation training curriculum.
-  3. We have reviewed the Policies and Procedures.
-  4. We have evaluated that Practices are in line with Policies and Procedures.

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Understand Training is not a “one size does not fit all”

1. Adults learn through different methods; you must understand which are most suitable for frontline staff within your organization.
2. Provide multiple options: in-person, virtual, and self-directed online options. etc.
3. Be sure to include refresher and periodic check-up points:
 - A. Safety Meeting Update
 - B. Staff Meeting Presentations
 - C. Bus Side Chats

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Understand The Need for Compliance.

1. Monitor the training program periodically to ensure it is meeting the desired objectives.
2. Conduct periodic reviews of practices that staff are implementing.
3. Accountability – implement consequences for good and bad behavior.
 - A. Incentives/Rewards
 - B. Discipline - include in job responsibilities

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Pursue Excitement – Temper Expectations



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Don't Stop with Training: Make it a campaign

1. Promote public awareness of not tolerating assaults on Front-Line staff.
2. Present your core values.
3. Periodic appreciation notifications.

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Don't Be Afraid to Emulate Others

ATTENTION

*We care about you and
our team members.*

**ABUSIVE BEHAVIOR
WILL NOT BE
TOLERATED**

This includes:

- Physical assault
- Inappropriate conduct
- Abusive or foul language
- Threats

**This behavior may result in
removal from the facility and
prosecution.**



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QUESTIONS



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