



Transportation Security Administration



I-STEP | Intermodal Security Training and Exercise Program

COVID-19 BEST PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED WORKSHOP

SEPTEMBER 15, 2020 | VIRTUAL

PURPOSE

The Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) Surface Operations, Policy, Plans, and Engagement, and the Surface Transportation Security Advisory Committee (STSAC) Emergency Management and Resilience Subcommittee (EM&R) collaborated to host a virtual COVID-19 Best Practices and Lessons Learned Workshop. The purpose of this workshop was to convene a group of surface transportation security partners to share, discuss, and validate COVID-19 best practices and lessons learned related to transportation operators' pandemic planning, logistics, information sharing, and response.

STSAC AND EM&R SUBCOMMITTEE OVERVIEW



The STSAC was established in 2019 in accordance with the TSA Modernization Act of 2018 to advise the TSA Administrator on the development and implementation of surface transportation security policies, programs, and regulations. Together, the TSA Administrator and STSAC identified five initial priority issues for the STSAC: improving cybersecurity information sharing, insider threat, measuring security effectiveness in surface transportation, intelligence and information sharing, and information protection. To address these areas, the STSAC created the following four subcommittees:

- Cybersecurity
- Insider Threat
- Security Risk and Intelligence
- EM&R

The EM&R Subcommittee hosted its first meeting in May 2020 during which members decided to focus on the development of a COVID-19 Pandemic After Action / Lessons Learned Report. The purpose of this report is to assist STSAC members and the surface transportation sector address the COVID-19 pandemic and prepare for future events. This workshop served to validate the group's initial observations and identify gaps. This workshop also supported the committee's ability to produce a lessons learned and best practices document that can be shared with the surface transportation subsector to help support their preparedness and resiliency efforts.

STAKEHOLDERS

Government: Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, Department of Transportation, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Federal Transit Administration, and Transportation Security Administration

Transportation Operators: Amtrak, Bay Area Rapid Transit Police, BNSF Railway, Brightline, Canadian National Railway, Chicago Transit Authority, Delaware River Port Authority Police Department, Devon Energy, Kansas City Southern Railway, King County Metro Transit Department, Los Angeles Metropolitan Transportation Authority, Metro Transit, Metro Transit Police Department, Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County, Metropolitan Transportation Authority, New Jersey Transit Police, Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District, Sound Transit, Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon, Olin Corporation, Public Service Enterprise Group, and Xcel Energy

Transportation Associations: American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, American Public Transportation Association, Association of American Railroads, Interstate Natural Gas Association of America, National Association of Chemical Distributors, National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services, and The Chlorine Institute

WORKSHOP OUTCOMES

The following page provides all **best practices**, **lessons learned**, and **options for improvement** discussed during the COVID-19 Best Practices and Lessons Learned Workshop. Items marked with an asterisk are new additions and/or revisions based on workshop discussion. Some findings were revised for brevity and clarity. Please contact STSAC EM&R Industry Co-Chair Jennifer Gibson and TSA Co-Chair Chris McKay for further details.

AFTER ACTION BRIEF



BEST PRACTICES

LESSONS LEARNED

OPTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

PANDEMIC PLANNING

- Leverage pre-existing influenza/pandemic plans
- Maintain relationships and lines of communication with state/local EOCs
- Apply CDC guidelines
- Coordinate with Federal agencies and operators to establish essential workers guidance
- Invite labor unions to participate in the pandemic planning and decision-making process*

- Existing plans were outdated and/or did not fully address worldwide pandemics
- The Federal government's initial pandemic response was slow and reactionary
- Operators infrequently reviewed communications procedures prior to the pandemic*

- Update pandemic plans from experience
- Implement pandemic response best practices
- Increase training on pandemic plans
- Ensure stockpiles of PPE and other materials for essential operations*
- Continue to use Federal guidelines to identify essential workers
- Coordinate with state/local health officials so plans align with current guidance*
- Develop/review pandemic communications plans*

PANDEMIC LOGISTICS

- Establish working groups with transportation partners to procure/distribute supplies
- Support rapid activation of state/local EOCs
- Permit emergency authorities for critical goods/services contracts
- Adopt and implement CDC recommendations quickly*
- Transition staff who do not need to be on-site to telework

- There was not enough PPE/disinfectant
- Operators experienced difficulty with PPE supply chain integrity
- Operators struggled to coordinate with the Federal government to secure PPE
- PPE did not meet OSHA standards
- The pandemic disrupted the supply chain for mission-critical materials*
- Existing IT systems (e.g., VPNs and timekeeping) did not support telework*
- Newly remote employees were unfamiliar with telework procedures*

- Ensure emergency stockpiles of PPE and disinfectant
- Address surface operators' PPE needs earlier
- Coordinate PPE distribution in a more timely and effective manner
- Adopt face coverings, gloves, and temperature screening earlier
- Adopt increased and earlier COVID testing
- Train staff on remote timekeeping systems*
- Assess and/or increase VPN bandwidth*

PANDEMIC INFO SHARING

- Communicate regularly with transportation partners across industry and government
- Stay up-to-date on CDC information
- Adopt temporary regulatory relief/enforcement discretion for operators
- Exchange best practices and lessons learned with partners in real time
- Provide transportation partners the opportunity to participate in Incident Command*

- Operators sometimes overwhelmed by the frequency of communication
- Operators received inconsistent messaging from partners
- CDC guidance on mask use wavered
- Labor unions sporadically received/shared information
- Inconsistent phased reopening guidance caused disparities in jurisdictions*
- Operators struggled with privacy issues with local health officials in identifying new cases/contact tracing*

- Improve coordination among Federal partners to reduce calls and redundancy
- Determine how to enforce social distancing and mask wearing earlier
- Coordinate a consistent phased approach to reopening, especially with local partners*
- Incorporate procedures for communicating with local health officials into pandemic plans*
- Consolidate Federal pandemic guidance on one website*

PANDEMIC RESPONSE

- Adjust operations to achieve social distancing early
- Grant operators the flexibility to make necessary operational changes
- Continuously engage with the CDC
- Apply for regulatory/enforcement relief early*
- Encourage leadership to provide timely decision-making to address risks to essential staff*
- Use predictive modeling to forecast future pandemic impacts to industry*

- Operators did not have pre-existing pandemic PPE or telework policies
- Operators did not have pandemic-specific training to this scale
- Government(s) had inconsistent and changing policies
- Government(s) were slow to make decisions, especially in the early pandemic stages
- Operators did not immediately ensure essential staff access to mental health resources*

- Adopt standard telework policies
- Provide more training/guidance on effective telework practices
- Ensure essential workers are trained in PPE use/fitting
- Enact temperature screening early
- Prioritize PPE, testing, and vaccinations (when available) for essential workers
- Ensure telework capabilities and capacity can handle influx and continuation of remote staff*