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New Jersey Community Transportation Training Program

Counties Spring into Action During Hurricane Irene

By Saturday, August 27, Hurricane Irene had left North Carolina and was barreling through Maryland, Virginia and Delaware on its way to New Jersey. Although downgraded to a Category 1 hurricane, the storm brought heavy winds, rains and a major storm surge that left flooding up and down the Northeast, from South Carolina to Maine.

The storm was taken very seriously. New York's bus and subway system shut down at noon Saturday, NJ TRANSIT, including buses, trains and the River Line light rail stopped service at 6 p.m., and all area airports including Newark and Teterboro halted all incoming flights as of noon. Amtrak began service reductions on Saturday and had no trains operating in the Northeast on Sunday, August 28. Evacuation

orders were in place and being executed, and everywhere across the state, county transportation systems were assisting in moving residents to safety and providing critical



A driver waits for the National Guard to bring residents to an evacuation point in Bound Brook, NJ.

services.

The Morris Area Para-Transit System (MAPS) scheduled additional personnel to work the weekend of the storm (Saturday and Sunday are not regular workdays for MAPS). MAPS staff worked until midnight on Saturday and 9 p.m. on Sunday, assisting in the efforts of the Red Cross and the Office of Emergency Management (OEM). MAPS drivers delivered meals to the Youth Shelter, OEM center, and evacuation sites. They transported several

Continued on page 4

inside

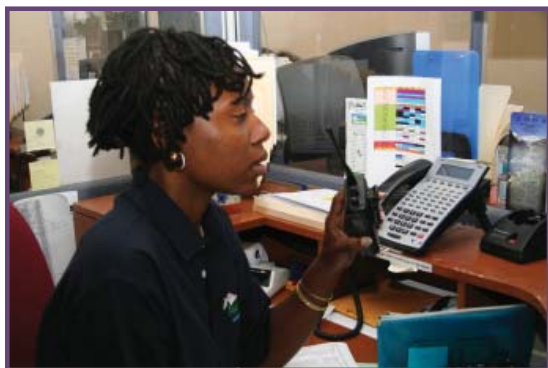
Counties Spring into Action During Hurricane Irene	1
National RTAP Launches Customer Driven Service Module	2
NJ COST Holds 16th Annual Vendor Expo and Honors Recognition Award Recipients	3

The New Jersey Community Transportation Training Program is operated by New Jersey Transit and funded by federal grants and State of New Jersey Casino Revenue funds. The program is administered by the National Transit Institute at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey.

National RTAP Launches Customer Driven Service Module

In recognition of the importance of providing excellent customer service in today's transit business, the National RTAP has launched the newly updated training module, "Customer Driven Service: Your Keys to Providing Exceptional Customer Experiences in Transit."

Based on the latest research and best practices from the transit industry, this module focuses on all facets of customer interaction by transit staff at all levels, highlighting the importance of customer service and providing the tools need-



ed to be aware of the unique needs and expectations of different riders and how to enhance their overall service experience.

The training consists of four core units that can be offered as a traditional instructor-led classroom course as well as a self-paced E-learning version. The module is appropriate for both new and experienced operators and can be given over a single day or a series of days in stand-alone units that will meet a variety of agency requirements. Unit topics include:

- Unit I: The Keys to Customer Service: The Big Picture
- Unit II: Customer Service in Action: Creating a Culture of Customer Service
- Unit III: Taking Care of Your Customers
- Unit IV: Customer Service Breakdowns

Unit I teaches all transit staff how to create a positive experience for customers and foster

an environment where they feel valued. Participants will understand the importance of the customer experience and how to create positive first impressions. They will discuss the relationship between transit operators and dispatchers and learn how about the changing hierarchy of their transit organization where customer service is concerned.

Unit II focuses on creating an excellent experience for transit customers at every level—not just by the transit operator who is often the "face" of the customer's main experience, but through the efforts and commitment of the agency's mechanics, schedulers, call-takers and administrators.

Unit III prompts learners to explore opportunities to excel in customer service, by understanding the basic and differing needs of transit customers including generational issues and communication preferences.



Finally, Unit IV examines the things that can contribute to breakdowns in customer service, including challenging schedules, unrealistic expectations, and job and personal life stress, as well as bad weather and traffic. Participants are provided with innovative ways to counteract the effects of stress and are shown how to diffuse conflict and answer frustrating questions.

The Customer Service training module is available now and is free of charge. To learn more, or to order the training, please visit www.nationalrtap.org

NJ COST Holds 16th Annual Vendor Expo and Honors Recognition Award Recipients

The New Jersey Council on Special Transportation's held its 16th Annual COST Vendor Expo at the PNC Bank Arts Center in Holmdel on Friday, September 23, 2011. Paratransit and community transportation, directors, planners, coordinators and support staff from all over New Jersey visited exhibits from almost 30 vendors and also attended one of two workshops.

James Weinstein, Executive Director of NJ TRANSIT, was the Keynote Speaker. Mr. Weinstein spoke of the important role of community transit in New Jersey and the effect it has on people's lives as well as the well-being of the state. He also discussed community transportation in the overall transit plan for the state.

The first workshop, "Marketing & Advocating for your Transportation System...Thinking Outside the Box" was presented by Peter Schauer, a Management Consultant-Transportation Futurist who has provided planning, evaluation, feasibility training and advisory services all over the country. Mr. Schauer provided his unique perspective and tips to transportation administrators, managers and planners looking for new and different ways to promote their agencies.

The second workshop, "Preparing Vehicle Specifications Designed for Your Transit System" was led by Halsey King, a bus fleet maintenance consultant with decades of experience in public and private transit all over the world. Mr. Halsey provided the information and tools needed to best meet the specific needs of each unique transit agency.

The exhibitors at the Expo displayed their paratransit and community transportation products and services both indoors and outdoors and included: Arcola Bus, American Bus & Coach, Wolfington Bus Company, Mentor Engineering, Q-Straint/Sure-Lok, Trapeze Group, The Braun Corporation, Freedman

Seating, National Transit Institute, New Jersey Transit, Route Match Software, ABT Products & Services, Raphael Bus Sales and NAFI/ALTRO.

The NJ COST Yearly Recognition Awards were also presented at the Expo. President John Adair presented the annual awards to the following recipients:

- **2011 Driver of the Year – Malinda Fulper, Hunterdon County LINK**
- **2011 Dispatcher of the Year – Jenny Ali, Bergen County Community Transportation**
- **2011 Administrative Employee of the Year – Donna Riggi, Bergen County Community Transportation**
- **2011 Outstanding System of the Year – Union County Paratransit System**

Congratulations to everyone!



The New Jersey Council on Special Transportation (COST) presented their yearly recognition awards at their annual COST Vendor Expo held at the PNC Bank Arts Center in Holmdel, New Jersey.

Pictured left to right: James Weinstein, Executive Director, NJ TRANSIT; Kathy Carmello from Union County Paratransit System; Jenny Ali, Bergen County Community Transportation; Donna Riggi, Bergen County Community Transportation; Malinda Fulper, Hunterdone County LINK; and John Adair, President, NJ COST

Hurricane Irene

Continued from Page 1

evacuees to a local hospital for medical supervision, acted as couriers between evacuation centers, and provided general transport for Nursing Home workers and OEM personnel during the storm.

Gloucester County paratransit was on stand-by and ready to spring into action, but were never called by the Emergency Management team as there was ultimately no need for mass evacuations in this area.

Somerset County Transportation was manned starting at midnight on Saturday night August 27th and worked closely with the OEM supplying evacuation assistance to residents of Bound Brook, NJ. The county transportation system provided transportation to the Red Cross center at the Bound Brook High School then transported displaced residents to the shelters at Raritan Valley College and Watchung High School. The county transportation service continued its support by supplying a shuttle between the shelters and the borough of Bound Brook.

On August 26 in Ocean County, Ocean Ride representatives attended a press conference conducted by their Freeholder Director, Joe Vicari and Office of Emergency Management officials to advise the public on the preparations for Hurricane Irene. The press conference was broadcast by News 12. The Ocean Ride office was contacted by OEM and placed on standby orders to assist with evacuation for residents of Point Pleasant Beach to be conducted Saturday morning under the direction of Point Pleasant Police. The standby became a request for evacuation assistance on Saturday as four Ocean Ride drivers transported 140 people and 1 dog to various area shelters. On Sunday one Ocean Ride driver transported 6 people from the shelter at Southern Regional High school to an alternate shelter in Point Pleasant Beach.

In addition to those mentioned above, thanks to all staff of county transportation throughout the state who assisted in helping the residents of New Jersey weather Hurricane Irene.

Special thanks to: Hope Hezel, Morris Area Paratransit System; Rick Decosta, Gloucester County Division of Transportation; John Adair, Somerset County and President of NJ COST; and Kathy Edmund of Ocean County Department of Transportation for contributing to this article.



Among the display tables at the NJCOST Vendor Expo were Ginny Stern (left) and Lori Glickman (right) of the National Transit Institute, Rutgers University. Ms. Stern and Ms. Glickman were representing the NJCTTP training program at the Expo. Ms. Stern serves as the Program Coordinator for the NJCTTP program and can be contacted at vsfern@ejb.rutgers.edu for information about training programs or scheduling courses.



120 Albany Street, Tower Two, Suite 250
New Brunswick, NJ 08901-2130

