

# FirstGroup's Approach to Influencing Behavioural Safety

**Seamus Scallon**

Safety Director, UK Rail

FirstGroup



## SUMMARY

Since the Injury Prevention Programme was introduced across FirstGroup in 2006 there has been a positive change in safety culture. The initiative has delivered the levels of improvements across FirstGroup: -

- 48% reduction in staff injuries;
- 63% reduction in All Lost Time Injuries; and
- 67% reduction 3 Day + Lost Time Injuries

An innovative approach to the challenge of tackling unsafe behaviour and working practices it is now being used on a daily basis by 125,000 employees. An industry leading scheme, it is encouraging people to talk about safety, share concerns and work together to take action and put safety at the top of the agenda. Injury Prevention has helped FirstGroup to change attitudes and behaviours, eradicate injuries, and is integral to the safety strategy.

## INTRODUCTION

FirstGroup plc is the leading transport operator in the UK and North America. With revenues of over £6.5 billion per annum and approximately 124,000 employees and we transport more than 2.5 billion passengers every year.

From the outset the Company has always possessed a strong safety ethos and strongly believed that Injuries or accidents to staff or customers are not acceptable and although a strong safety strategy and good safety reporting systems have always been in place continual analysis is used to identify any opportunities for further improvement.

In early 2006 it became clear that there was a need for a new injury prevention programme to be introduced to re-focus, reinforce and re-shape a change in safety culture. Injury Prevention was implemented alongside existing safety systems and is now an essential part of the overall safety strategy which includes risk assessments, safety inspections, accident and incident investigations, safety standards, training and development. Injury Prevention empowers all employees to take greater responsibility for their own safety and that of their colleagues

For a programme of this magnitude to succeed it needed buy-in from the top from the very beginning. First's Executive Safety Committee and Group Chief Executive led the programme and there was a clear framework and strategy was developed to ensure the delivery of the programme was consistent and time bound, which was achieved using common training tools and a rigorous approach to implementation in all areas of the business. Full delivery was achieved within 12 months.

A bespoke Injury Prevention Database was also created and introduced in 2008 as a tool which would allow us to electronically record and track actions from Injury Prevention conversations. It is a searchable database of information which can highlight safety issues and concerns and training needs, giving us an immediate insight and help promotion of safety communication.

## INJURY PREVENTION

Injury Prevention is rooted in managing individual behaviour through Challenging unsafe behaviour and most importantly recognising employees where good safety performance is observed. Employees are recognised when they are working safely and treated fairly when they make mistakes. It is also based on the sound principle that it is vital to communicate positively and constructively, while developing and educating staff.

A key Injury Prevention component is positive safety contacts – employees and managers, employees and employees, talking to each other about safety at every opportunity. These recognise good safety practices, generate knowledge of risk, and provide the means to coach where unsafe practices are seen.

Safety contacts happen at any time – in meetings, during a safety tour or on a face-to-face basis – and are supported by the Injury Prevention handbook which is issued to all employees and used to record safety activities, including safety conversations and safety tours. Congratulating, Coaching and Challenging - underpin the delivery of Injury Prevention and the emphasis placed on positive communication at all levels within the organisation mean that safety contacts are much more than just talking.



*“Injury Prevention is a useful tool in reminding staff about their safety responsibilities. It is flexible enough to be used as part of a briefing process or a refresher about existing rules and standards. It also gives staff the opportunity to remind their managers and directors about the safety issues which affect them on a day to day basis,” – A First TransPennine Express employee*

## Delivery of Injury Prevention

For a programme of this magnitude to succeed it needed buy-in from the top from the very beginning.

The programme was cascaded throughout the organisation, supported by extensive internal communication including a letter from the Chief Executive, newsletters, employee

magazines, posters, presentations and face-to-face briefings. A toolkit was created to support managers, supervisors and safety representatives.

This included:

- a DVD and CD with a message from First's Chief Executive and all necessary documents
- template presentations for managers and employees on how to implement Injury Prevention and use the handbook
- an Injury Prevention manual
- an Injury Prevention handbook
- the First Safety Principles
- support from the Injury Prevention Project Team

The toolkit also included guidance on effective safety conversations and a briefing pack for all employees on the concept of Injury Prevention.

All directors, managers, supervisors and safety representatives were fully trained so that they understood the concept of Injury Prevention as well as their part in its implementation.

The toolkit is now included in all company induction training to ensure new employees are familiar with Injury Prevention from the very beginning and there are regular poster campaigns with supporting communications so that Injury Prevention is at the forefront of every employee's mind all of the time.

### **Injury Prevention handbook**

The Injury Prevention handbook is at the very core of the programme. It is used to record safety contacts, safety tours and other safety activities. Handbooks were issued to every employee and they carry them with them at all times. Every safety action is recorded in them so that good actions are not forgotten and anything that needs further action can be followed up.

The Injury Prevention handbook is a simple but effective tool. It includes quick reference safety tips, First's safety principles and a record pad. The slip-in renewable record pad is for notes about safety contacts and activities between a manager and an employee.

The process followed across the organisation is:

- An outcome is agreed at the end of a safety conversation and this is recorded on the pad
- Both the manager and employee signs the pad to acknowledge and confirm details of the conversation, as well as any actions which have been taken or recommended
- The top copy is removed and sent to the relevant line manager
- Once actions are complete line managers feed back to the employee detailing what has happened such as amendment of a procedure or elevation to a higher level for further consideration
- Details of all safety conversations are also recorded by the safety team so that they can spot trends and achieve even more safety benefits

Safety conversations are now held frequently across FirstGroup and over 1.6 million contacts have been recorded since the introduction of Injury Prevention.

*"Injury Prevention gets people talking about safety, which can only be a good thing. I like it that we all have our own personal Injury Prevention booklet. It gives the owner an important record of any concerns they have raised, and any actions needed. Because of this, I would like to think that Injury Prevention makes the company and its staff more accountable," – A First train company employee*

## Injury Prevention in Use

Injury Prevention is used throughout all operations – at depots and stations, on trains and in offices. Topics for safety conversations are endless but some examples are as follows:

### At stations

- **Slip hazards** – Congratulating a colleague for promptly cordoning off from the area and erecting warning signs to draw attention to the hazard and asking people to be careful.
- **Trolleys** – Intervening with a colleague to remind them to use the equipment in line with manual handling guidelines.

### At depots

- **Personal Protection Equipment (PPE)** – Following observations by an employee on inconsistencies in the use of PPE, the training brief for a location was revised and led to full compliance being achieved.
- **Welding work** – New Method Of Work arrangements introduced at a location when a colleague witnessed a near miss.

### In offices

- **Storage** – Colleagues taking effective action when areas are observed to be untidy.
- **Layout** – Colleagues intervening to prevent trips and falls through hazard identification and removal.

## Injury Prevention Database

Several companies were invited to demonstrate existing systems to First, e-DBA were selected as the strongest supplier. The database is entirely bespoke which gives First the opportunity to tailor it specifically to the business needs and also provide an example of a working model which can be used as a basis for future systems.

The final version of the system was released for full use across the business from October 2008, the lead up to this release saw the system change and develop after being trialled by each division. Feedback has always been essential and the version we use now is as a result of this continual input from the users. Two of the key functional applications are shown below:

1. Multiple Actions
  - Record and assign multiple actions within contacts and Injury Prevention tours;
  - Each action has its own information, assignee, snooze function, email alert, and email reminders;

- Each action is treated as a separate entity within the one record and can be closed independently;
- When each individual action is closed the submitter and relevant assignee will both receive an email; and
- The system will automatically close down a contact / tour when all the actions have been closed.

## 2. Help / Training tab

- New tab to be available to allow users to submit track able records requesting training and assistance.

Access levels on the system are determined by the role of the user. The difference is made depending on the information they are required to view and whether it be at company, division or business level. This gives a wider view of the information held at an executive level allowing us to pinpoint crucial safety requirements.

The Injury Prevention database allows us to immediately record actions from conversations and tours, assign them directly to an individual, electronically send alerts and reminders, track to completion and provide feedback.

On completion of data entry and actions are raised on an assignee the system will automatically send an alert via email to the assignee indicating they have outstanding actions as a result of an Injury prevention conversation or tour. This record remains as `open ` on the system until the actions are completed and the assignee considers the actions complete and closes the record.

The system then tracks all actions from the creation date, with a 7,14 and 21 day reminder function which will send email alerts at each of these time lapses if the actions are not completed. These emails are sent to the user line management, escalating each time.

We can override this automatic system if the actions noted require longer time to complete.

Open and closed conversations and tours are monitored at local and corporate level and form part of each Businesses safety reporting processes.

The introduction of the database has had a positive effect on safety communication within the Group. All staff can get structured feedback on the conversations they are having, whether supporting safety, reporting incidents, concerns, hazards or commendations.

*"Injury Prevention gets people talking about safety, which can only be a good thing. I like it that we all have our own personal Injury Prevention booklet. It gives the owner an important record of any concerns they have raised, and any actions needed. Because of this, I would like to think that it makes the company and its staff more accountable,"- Station Manager, First TransPennine Express.*

## CONCLUSION

Injury Prevention is now embedded within our safety culture and safety systems. It has made a real difference to the working environment across all of First's transport operations in both the UK and US where it continues to help break bad habits.

There are also some examples where it has had a positive knock-on effect into employees' homes and personal life.

The impact of Injury Prevention on employees across First has been significant: -

- 48% reduction in Staff Injuries;
- 63% reduction in All Lost Time Injuries;
- 67% reduction in 3 Day + Lost Time Injuries;
- Over 1.6 million recorded contacts on the database; and
- Reporting of Near Miss events are consistently going up.

In 2009 the National Safety Council in the US bestowed their highest honour on FirstGroup for demonstrating exemplary leadership in promoting round-the-clock employee safety and health. In their citation they stated *“At FirstGroup safety is a core corporate value and leadership philosophy”*

**APPENDIX 1:**

**APPROVAL TO PUBLISH PAPER**



I Seamus Scallan

.....

of Company (if applicable)

..FirstGroup.....

hereby give permission to the International Railway Safety Conference 2012 (IRSC 2012) to publish the paper titled:

Insert Title .FirstGroup's Approach to Influencing Behavioural Safety.....

To be presented at the IRSC 2012 conference to be held at the St Pancras Renaissance Hotel, London, England on 8 - 12 October 2012.

In the following media (tick as appropriate):

- Copied to memory stick for distribution to conference delegates
  
- Publish on the IRSC 2012 website

Signed: .....

Date: .2 September 2012.....

Please return this form when submitting the final version of the paper.