

## FirstGroup - Brief

# Investing in safety

## Introduction

FirstGroup (First) is the UK's largest bus and rail operator. Health and safety is vital to a group that transports as many people as First does. First therefore always seeks to improve. It has developed a culture of safety. This is based on zero tolerance to unsafe practice. Training staff on safety helps to achieve high standards. Safety issues are also closely monitored. First places customer and staff safety at the heart of its actions.

## Health and safety legislation in the UK

There are several laws that govern health and safety in the UK.

These include the need to provide:

- a written policy on health and safety
- training and safety rules.

The Health and Safety at Work Act (HASAW) 1974 outlines key duties of employers to staff and the public. Employees also have duties to themselves and co-workers. Workplace risks must be assessed and tackled. Staff must work with employers. First's employees use Injury Prevention handbooks to record issues and suggest changes for the better. First makes sure the Act is upheld by making inspections and health and safety audits, and giving advice to employees. First keeps to the Act through training staff. It also has policies and guidance.

## Health and safety – duties of an employer

Health and safety is one of an employer's main duties. Under HASAW a company or individual may be held responsible and prosecuted if there are problems. This can result in fines or even a prison sentence. Since 2006 First has used Injury Prevention as part of its approach to safety. It runs training on issues such as safety planning. Data from Injury Prevention Handbooks is kept. This is used to spot problem areas and take action to put these right. Further training stops problems recurring. First also shares best practice across the group.



## Employee and customer protection

Good employers not only put safety measures in place to meet the requirements of the law but also put in additional measures. First has a reputation for being a good employer. One of the reasons for this is its approach to safety. Its Injury Prevention handbook keeps safety at the front of employees' minds. It includes the need to:

- not put others in danger
- obey all rules and signs
- use correct tools
- wear protective clothing
- keep work areas clean and tidy
- perform safety checks and assess risk.

## Benefits of a safe working environment

First's focus on safety has helped it become the UK's and North America's leading transport operator. It has built key safety measures into its working practices. These include:

- not using mobile phones whilst in charge of a vehicle
- speed limits in depots
- CCTV on vehicles for staff and passenger safety.

These have helped the company to win top safety awards. First also gives out awards within the group. It holds health and safety meetings, Injury Prevention Tours and works with other groups to ensure high levels of safety.

## Conclusion

Businesses are responsible for the health and safety of their people and customers. This is a core value for FirstGroup. By keeping and using records it can improve its safety policy. Its practices are better than the law requires. It shares best practice across the group. This helps to make First competitive in its industry.

