

FirstGroup - Summary

Investing in safety

Introduction

FirstGroup (First) is the UK's largest bus and rail operator. When a transport company carries as many people as First does, a keen focus on health and safety is vital. It is an area in which First always seeks to improve. It has an Injury Prevention culture. This involves training, monitoring and reporting safety procedures. First places safety at the heart of its actions and its culture is based on zero tolerance of unsafe practices.

Health and safety legislation in the UK

There are a number of laws that govern health and safety in the UK. For example, employers must provide a written policy on health and safety, and training in safety procedures for employees. The Health and Safety at Work Act (HASAW) 1974 outlines the responsibilities that employers have towards their staff and the public. Employers must assess workplace risks and deal with them. Employees also have duties to themselves and co-workers. Staff must co-operate with employers. For example, First's employees must use Injury Prevention Handbooks to record safety issues and suggest improvements. Measures such as unannounced inspections, health and safety audits and the provision of advice help to ensure the Act is upheld. To meet the Act's requirements, First influences its employees' behaviour through training, polices and guidance.

Health and safety – duties of an employer

Health and safety is one of an employer's main responsibilities. Under HASAW a company and its managers can be held liable and even prosecuted for injuries to employees and others. Since 2006 First has used Injury Prevention as part of its approach to safety. As part of good leadership, First provides training and development on issues such as safety planning. Data from Injury Prevention Handbooks helps First to identify problem areas and put in place the necessary actions or training to combat these. It also helps identify best practice, which can be shared across the company.

Employee and customer protection

Businesses have responsibilities to their stakeholders. Good employers go beyond legislation. First has a reputation for a great approach to safety. Its Injury Prevention Handbook keeps safety at the forefront of employees' minds. Principles include:

- not endangering others
- obeying all rules, signs and instructions
- using correct tools and equipment
- wearing protective clothing/equipment
- keeping work areas clean and tidy
- performing safety checks and risk assessments.



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. First insists on all employees observing a number of safety practices, such as speed limits in depots, no use of mobile phones whilst in charge of a vehicle and the use of CCTV for passenger safety. These practices have helped it to win safety awards. First also distributes awards within the group and to individuals. The company holds health and safety conferences, Injury Prevention Tours and collaborates with other organisations to ensure customer safety.

Conclusion

Organisations are responsible for the health and safety of staff and customers. This is a core value for FirstGroup. By keeping and analysing records it can improve its safety policy and go beyond legislation. First has identified best practice and shared this across the company, enabling it to remain ahead of competition.

