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Press Release

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LIRR

IMMEDIATE

MTA LIRR Train Crews Receiving Cell Phones As Part Of Ongoing Effort To Improve Customer Communications

As part of an ongoing effort to improve communications with customers during service disruptions, MTA Long Island Rail Road train crews will be receiving cell phones to keep customers better informed.

The LIRR is purchasing more than 1,000 cell phones for members of LIRR train crews (conductors, assistant conductors, and collectors) as part of a multi-pronged effort to keep customers updated on train delays and related travel information.

LIRR President Helena Williams says the cell phones are an important piece of an overall company effort to provide customers with higher quality travel information in a timely fashion. "Our customers expect us to provide them with accurate information about service as soon as we can get it to them," said Williams. "By equipping train crews with cell phones, we are taking a major step toward making sure we can meet that expectation."

Gerard Bringmann, Chairman of the Long Island Rail Road Commuter's Council said, "Ever since I joined the Commuter's Council, our single biggest 'concern' has been communication between the LIRR and its ridership, especially during service disruptions. Giving our train crews cell phones with text capability, is a major step forward in solving this problem, as management's ability to communicate with their conductors will be greatly improved. We applaud the initiative and feel that it's money well spent."

In October 2007, the LIRR established a Public Information Office, modeled in part on a similar office operated by the New York City Fire Department. The office is located in the railroad's Movement Bureau, the nerve center of train operations. The PIO is staffed with employees from both the railroad's Transportation and Public Affairs Departments. This office generates updates on service disruptions that are sent to customers via e-mail, posted on the railroad's website as service alerts, posted on the new Penn Station message boards and communicated to traffic and weather reporting services and to major media outlets. The Public Information Office is currently staffed during morning and evening rush hour periods and plans are underway to staff the PIO on a 24-hour basis.

The train crew cell phone contract is with Verizon Wireless, not to exceed \$1.7 million, for the initial 18-month period. In addition to voice communication, the cell phones will also have text-messaging capability. The LIRR plans to have the cell phones in the field and operational for more than 1,000 train personnel by April. In the meantime, 20 of the phones are being deployed as a test this week.

Williams acknowledged the cooperation the LIRR received from Anthony Simon, General Chairman of the United Transportation Union, that will allow the deployment of cell phones to train crews.

Improving customer communication has been a key focus for Williams since she took over as President of the LIRR in June of 2007. She has instituted a 'PlainSpeak' program to try and eliminate railroad jargon and encourage the use of straight talk between train crews and customers during a service disruption. Also, six new message boards have been installed in Penn Station to provide customers at the Railroad's busiest terminal with real-time information concerning service delays. The establishment of the PIO also has resulted in quicker, more efficient dissemination of critical travel information to customers who receive service alerts via email.

"Our train crews will be able to obtain detailed delay and travel information directly from our Public Information Office (PIO) in our Jamaica Control Center," said Williams. "In addition, train crews will be able to communicate specific information about their train, if needed, to the PIO. This will help to augment the general information already available via our regular on-train radio communications systems."