

SAFETRACK AND YOUR BUSINESS: EMPLOYER GUIDE

Metro's SafeTrack maintenance program will create difficulties because of widespread and ongoing transportation disruptions. This means inconvenience and hassle, but it also presents an opportunity for organizations to be forward-thinking, responsive, and flexible. Businesses that keep offering great service will win new customers. Organizations that ease their employees' hassles will earn goodwill and loyalty and maintain productivity. You may even develop innovative solutions that improve day-to-day operations and improve your company's overall resilience.

So get ahead of the challenges.

This Employer Toolkit is designed to help businesses in the Washington metropolitan area limit SafeTrack's impacts on them. It will walk you through five phases of planning for and implementing ways to deal with SafeTrack:

- Managing the process
- Assessing the impacts
- Developing a framework
- Rolling out solutions
- Communicating with employees and customers

For each phase, you can access step-by-step guidance designed to apply to businesses and organizations of all shapes, sizes, sectors, and locations. And there's a handy summary checklist at the end. How you apply it to your own organization will depend on you.

Business leaders should take time now to understand the potential impacts to their companies and put customized plans in place to support employees and business objectives. Here's how.

MANAGE IT

✓ **Lean Forward**

The first step in managing a challenge is *managing*. Use adversity as an opportunity. Use it to demonstrate your leadership of the organization. Use it to show your dedication to your employees and customers. Use it to gain competitive advantage.

Commit your organization to a proactive posture, starting at the top. The time to plan and implement an effective approach to managing the impacts of SafeTrack is now – before disruptions begin.

✓ **Put Someone in Charge**

Accountability gets everything else rolling. Set up a small, high-level planning team to fully explore the issues and propose potential solutions. (If you are small organization, task a capable and knowledgeable individual with this responsibility.) Provide this group with time, tools, and authority – and expect results. They should provide management with weekly updates on challenges and workarounds. (Good news if you run the organization: the first task you can delegate to this team is reading the rest of this Employer Toolkit!)

✓ **Plan with a Purpose**

The overall goal in weathering SafeTrack is to continue to deliver your firm's goods or services, mitigate disruptions to operations, and reduce the duration and severity of disruptions that do occur. That is to say, the approach here is similar to that for developing a business continuity plan.

To do that, first you need to have all the information: What are the specifics of SafeTrack? What are the expected impacts on employees, customers, and vendors? And therefore, what aspects of your business could be negatively affected: client services, meeting project deadlines, sales, finances, reputation, and others?

Then, you work backwards. Identify and prioritize the key operations or activities that your organization must continue to be successful at its business or mission ("essential functions" or "critical business functions"), and focus on the staff and resources required to perform those. You set up – as needed – alternative strategies for keeping those personnel working. You ensure the capability for back-up staffing and decision-making ("delegation") in case someone cannot make it in.

Companies in the Washington region have a wide variety of sizes, shapes, missions, and locations, so there is no single solution to planning for SafeTrack. One size will not fit all.

So let's examine the continuity-planning process for SafeTrack impacts in more detail...

KNOW THE IMPACTS

✓ **Understand SafeTrack**

The schedule and particulars of SafeTrack work have been published, so its impacts on your business can be predicted. The result may be a significant headache, but it does not have to be catastrophic. (And keep reminding yourself: in the end, the Washington area gets a safer, more reliable Metro system.)

Start by being sure that your company's management fully understands Metro's plan: know when lines, segments, and stations will experience reduced or suspended service. And then consider cascading effects these line interruptions might trigger: slower service across the Metro rail system, spikes in demand for buses and other transit alternatives, increased congestion on some highways, higher demand for parking, and so on.

Think through the variable impacts of rail work in different parts of the region; of a line slow-down versus a line closure; of an interruption that lasts a few days versus one that lasts a few weeks.

Metro's SafeTrack plan is <https://wmata.com/rail/safetrack>. You can sign up for updates at AlertDC via <http://hsema.dc.gov/page/alertdc>.

Next, we'll walk through considering the impacts of SafeTrack on your employees, customers and clients, and vendors.

✓ **Understand How SafeTrack Will Impact Employees – and How that Will Impact Your Organization**

Businesses should work with employees to understand how SafeTrack might impact the workforce's ability get to and from work. This is likely to be SafeTrack's largest disruption.

Utilizing employee working groups or surveys, like this one included in this toolkit can help your organization fully understand challenges its workforce might face, including which phases of SafeTrack will likely have the most impact on the organization.

Details will be crucial. For example, before you formulate a response to SafeTrack, you need to know where your employees come from, and how they get to you. Determine where your workforce leaves from each morning, and how they get to work – car, rail, bus, bike, foot, or some combination of these. If they ride Metro, what station do they leave from (it may be closest to a school, day-care, gym, or park-and-ride – rather than their home), and where do they transfer? What other time-sensitive responsibilities do your staff have (think: school or child-care drop-off and pick-up – this can get expensive after school programs charge for late pick-ups by the minute). Does your company pay for transit? Do any employees have a transit benefit?

You should press employees to make individual plans for dealing with SafeTrack, including contingencies for transportation and childcare. To do this, they will need all the relevant information on SafeTrack. And you'll need to know how best to communicate with them about SafeTrack-related updates, policies, and workarounds. Tools for employees to use in their own planning for SafeTrack can be found in this toolkit.

Companies should also consider which employees fill what needs. What are your organization's time-critical essential services, and who manages or provides them? Who are your single-point-of-failure employees? Who absolutely has to be on-site for you to open (perhaps facility security, or IT)? Who could be cross-trained on someone else's job?

✓ **Understand How SafeTrack Could Impact Your Customers and Clients**

Investigate how SafeTrack might impact your customers. Remember, no matter what challenges you face as a result of SafeTrack, the rest of the region – and the country – will be open for business, and they will be expecting you to provide goods and services just like any other day. Don't let SafeTrack become an opportunity for your competitors to grow at your expense.

You will need to know where your customers come from and how they get to you, and therefore which phases of SafeTrack work might have the greatest impact on your company. Depending on your business sector, your customers may be other companies that could themselves be impacted by SafeTrack, and might respond by temporarily reducing their demand (and therefore your revenues).

Companies also need to consider how “elastic” clients' and customers' demand is. Do you provide a one-of-a-kind service (think: specialized surgery) for which customers will seek you out no matter what, or do you sell goods that can be easily purchased anywhere in the region (think: coffee or clothing)? Will moderate inconveniences like difficulty parking – or even the fear of such moderate inconveniences – result in your customers staying home or buying from someone else? Would your customers respond to a “SafeTrack discount”?

Finally, think about the best ways to communicate to customers and clients, “We are open during SafeTrack!” If you have a steady stream of regular clients or customers, you might reach them from your location or via a mailing list, but if you rely on new customers or walk-ins, you may need to determine where they come from and target your communications there. In some sectors, this will be even more crucial and challenging. For example, a sector like hospitality relies on customers who are not familiar with Metro or DC to begin with and who may have no advance knowledge of SafeTrack.

✓ **Understand How SafeTrack Might Impact Your Vendors**

Vendors represent a third set of vulnerabilities for most firms. Could any of your vendors or suppliers be impacted by SafeTrack? If so, it is important to think through which ones, when, and whether they need to physically get to you. A restaurant may be able to get IT support over the phone with no interruption, and maybe it can order extra CO₂ canisters ahead of time, but late daily linen delivery would be a major problem. And most companies would experience frustration if FedEx or UPS were delayed by SafeTrack-related traffic congestion.

Talk to your vendors and suppliers about the challenges they expect and what they are doing to address them. See if you can work with them to come up with solutions. And if you get the sense that a crucial vendor is not taking things seriously, you might want to think about a contingency contract with a back-up supplier.

DON'T REINVENT THE WHEEL

✓ **Consider Best Practices**

Businesses all over the region are getting creative to solve problems and manage impacts from Metro's SafeTrack maintenance plan. Learn what others are doing and share your company's own story.

✓ **Use the Plans You Already Have**

Does your company have a business continuity plan? Fundamentally, SafeTrack is a continuity challenge – a situation in which events challenge some part of a company's operations, requiring special action to maintain essential business functions. In this sense, SafeTrack is like a blizzard, a hurricane, a labor strike, or a widespread illness – but one that has been considerably pre-scheduled.

If you already have a continuity plan, you can use it as a framework for your response to SafeTrack. But first, be sure it is up-to-date and that your employees have been trained, tested, and exercised on it. Now would also be a good time to do a discussion-based "table-top exercise," to see how well your plan is adapted for managing the scenario presented by SafeTrack.

And if you don't have a business continuity plan – you should. FEMA's Ready.gov website provides some basics, or you can reach out to a professional emergency or continuity planner for assistance.

IDENTIFY SOLUTIONS THAT WORK FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION

✓ **Target the Impacts**

By now you know the impacts – who will be affected and how that will affect your company's ability to do business. And you have also considered which impacts need a timely response, and which you might be able to let ride for a week or two. So fix what needs fixing! Don't put resources into solutions you don't need.

As an employer, it is in your interest to establish things like SafeTrack information, commuting alternatives, workarounds, and other options for employees. You empower them by providing the information and tools, and they use those to get where they need to go.

A list of informational resources on Metro, SafeTrack, and commuting options and resources are included in your packets as well as an Employee Toolkit for SafeTrack planning.

Remember that by demonstrating flexibility and a reasonable willingness to work with employees as they deal with the challenges created by SafeTrack, you will show them that you care. That creates loyalty and goodwill throughout your organization.

✓ **Consider Alternative Ways of Getting People to Work**

The broadest set of solutions for SafeTrack challenges will be in developing and implementing strategies that help employees get to work despite Metrorail delays and closures. A company might support employees in setting up their own van pools, carpools or other ride-sharing system. For short durations, alternatives including taxis, Uber or Lyft, or similar for-hire services might make sense. The employer could provide direct (monetary) support for any such solutions, or it could provide essential information like a list of employees who live in proximity to each other. Surveying your staff may reveal which employees seem likely to take the initiative to organize such alternatives.

Alternatively – or additionally – a large organization might take a more proactive stance and contract to provide its own van or shuttle service (if you plan to use a Metro station as a drop-off or pick-up, be sure to contact Metro about parking). A company could buy seats on VRE, MARC, or Amtrak. Employers with late-night staff – from bars and restaurants to custodial contractors – might also provide such services to their staff, since late-night Metro service will be eliminated during SafeTrack.

Small or medium-sized organizations should work together to pool resources for providing transportation services or parking capacity during SafeTrack.

Finally, employers and employees should know who has transit benefits, how to enroll to get them, and what they can be used for in addition to Metro rail (for example: riding in a half-full seven-passenger vehicle is eligible).

✓ **Explore Alternatives to Commuting in the First Place**

Depending on your business, some employees might not need to arrive and depart at normal times or even be on-site at all during times SafeTrack affects their commutes. Organizations should consider temporary alternatives to their normal way of conducting business.

Managers and HR should identify employees who can work from home or from an alternate location. Keep in mind there may be staff who you don't want to let work remotely on a permanent basis, but for whom you might allow it under exigent circumstances or during targeted timeframes. Of those staff identified, be sure they have what they need to do their work seamlessly: accounts, passwords, security setups, VPNs, hardware, software, connectivity, IT-support access, and so on. Think about how much internal or client-based work can be done via teleconferences, video-conferences, or webinars.

First, though, be sure to check with your IT staff to be sure your infrastructure can handle the increased volume that comes with telecommuting. And finally, be sure that everything and everyone has been trained, tested, and de-bugged before your COO tries to log on from his or her living room.

✓ **Explore Alternatives to Commuting in the First Place (cont'd)**

An alternate facility that is relatively unaffected by a given phase of SafeTrack may also be a viable option. This could be another office within your organization, a continuity space, or a “co-work” shared office location. If this solution seems useful for you, be sure everything an employee will need will be provided or brought along.

In any case, any time employees work from outside the office, it is crucial that managers have correct and up-to-date contact information, addresses, phone numbers, and emails, both for staff and for alternate facilities.

(Of course, employees in some sectors – like consulting – are already highly mobile. For them, telework or work from an alternate facility may already be the status quo.)

Simple schedule flexibility might also resolve many problems. So, a regional chain of print shops might be able to temporarily relocate employees to accommodate SafeTrack closures. Hotel staff might be able to swap shifts. A law firm might decide to open and close two hours late to avoid peak commuting hours. Retail operators might pay overtime to achieve overlapping shifts as a hedge against commuting delays. A fast-food franchise might maintain an on-call staffing list in case employees get indefinitely delayed on Metro.

In any organization, staff and managers who are cross-trained on other jobs represent a valuable resource when flexibility is needed.

Depending on the severity of the impacts your organization predicts from SafeTrack, more aggressive solutions are also possible, including encouraging employees to use vacation/personal time off during high-impact periods or even implementing temporary workforce reductions.

Whatever you plan to do, be sure that your HR policies allow and support the adjustments, and be sure to provide clear communication with employees about your plan and any changes.

✓ **Keep Doing Business**

Knowing that your organization has the people and capability to stay fully operational is great. Now you need to actually reach out and do it. Communicate your SafeTrack continuity plans to clients and customers, and be sure to advise them in advance if they should expect any changes in level or time of service. Be sure project managers and sales reps are plugged into their clients, ready to trouble-shoot and available to help.

Depending on your industry sector, consider whether you can use alternative schedules and transportation methods to get your products out.

Look at your calendar. Were you planning any conferences, meetings, or other major events during SafeTrack interruptions? Now is the time to work with partners to make the best of those or consider rescheduling them.

✓ **Protect Your Bottom Line**

Some businesses will feel the impacts of SafeTrack more keenly than others. If, for example, you are a small business or you expect your customer base to be severely limited for a while, you may want to prepare emergency measures to ensure that you can make payroll and pay the bills. You might set up or tap a rainy-day cash reserve, or talk with your bank about a line of credit.

COMMUNICATE

✓ **Communicate Early**

Now that you have plans and alternatives in place, communicate!

Be sure your employees have the information and resources they need to forecast SafeTrack's impacts on them. Provide them this introduction to SafeTrack and this list of informational resources. Advise your workforce of alternatives. Let them know who lives nearby for carpools or van pools. Provide them the Employee Toolkit for dealing with SafeTrack.

Reach out to your customers, targeting them where their trip to you starts, and let them know you are open for business – before they have a chance to make other plans.

✓ **Communicate Often**

Remember that SafeTrack is scheduled to last until March 2017, and it will impact individuals, businesses, and our region in different ways at different phases. During this time, companies will need to communicate, communicate, communicate. Establish regular (weekly or bi-weekly), open, two-way communications with employees and customers throughout this process and provide updates as SafeTrack continues. You might consider a newsletter or regular all-hands calls.

Finally, be sure to schedule special outreach to customers and clients. Customers understand that disruptions happen, but they are not forgiving of businesses that don't clearly communicate how they might be impacted.

EMPLOYER'S SAFETRACK PLANNING CHECKLIST

Manage the process

- Commit your organization to a proactive posture.
- Set up and authorize a high-level planning team.
- Establish a methodology for developing your SafeTrack continuity plan.

Assess the impacts

- Fully review Metro's SafeTrack plan.
- Know when which lines, segments, and stations that may affect your employees, operations, and clients will experience reduced or suspended service.
- Consider "cascading" effects on Metro rail, buses, road congestion, parking, etc.
- Research employee behaviors and needs using working groups or our survey.
- Determine your workforce's modes of commuting.
- Understand what Metro lines and stations your employees rely on.
- Encourage employees to make their own plans for dealing with SafeTrack, and provide resources for doing so.
- Focus on staff who provide your organization's essential services.
- Investigate how SafeTrack might impact your customers.
- Identify the best ways to communicate to your customers and clients.
- Think through which vendors or suppliers might be affected by SafeTrack and how this will affect your organization.

Develop a framework

- Research best practices.
- Consider area services and resources that can help.
- If you have a business continuity plan, ensure that it is up-to-date and that it has been trained, tested, and exercised.
- Consider holding a discussion-based table-top exercise for staff to test and talk through your continuity capabilities for SafeTrack impacts.
- If you don't have a business continuity plan, consider developing one.

Roll out solutions

- Empower employees by providing them our list of informational resources and Employee Toolkit for SafeTrack planning.
- Consider supporting employees in setting up their own van pools, carpools, or other ride-sharing system.
 - Use the employee survey to identify employees who seem likely to take the initiative to organize such alternatives.*
- Consider supporting use of taxis, Uber or Lyft, or similar for-hire services.
- Consider direct provision of van or shuttle service
 - If you plan to use a Metro station as a drop-off or pick-up, be sure to contact Metro about parking.*
- Consider buying seats on VRE, MARC, or Amtrak.
- Explore supplying transportation support to late-night staff.
- Know who has transit benefits.
- Consider teleworking for some or all employees.
 - Be sure affected staff have necessary IT connectivity and security set up and tested.*
 - Check with your IT staff to be sure your infrastructure can handle the increased volume that comes with telecommuting.*
- Consider allowing staff to work from an alternate location, whether within your organization or separate from it.
 - Check that everything an employee needs will be provided or brought along.*
 - Be sure contact information, addresses, phone numbers, and emails are up-to-date for staff and any alternate facilities.*
- Consider flexibility in schedules or shifts, including: altered hours, shift swaps, overlapping shifts, or on-call staff.
- Compile data on staff and managers who are cross-trained on other jobs
- Consider encouraging employees to use vacation/PTO during high-impact periods or temporary workforce reductions.
- Be sure that your HR policies allow and support any solutions.
- Prepare project managers and sales reps to trouble-shoot client relationships.
- If appropriate, consider using alternative schedules and transportation methods to get your products out.
- Check your calendar for major events during SafeTrack impacts and work with your partners to set up solutions.
- If needed, consider a cash reserve or a line of credit.

Communicate with employees and customers

- Provide initial communication and instructions for employees.
- Conduct initial outreach to customers and clients.
- Establish schedule and methods for regular, ongoing communications with employees, customers, and clients.

Witt O'Brien's is a global leader in emergency preparedness, crisis management, and disaster response and recovery.