

## SUMMARY

### Response to LIRR Service Disruptions, Winter 2007 MTA/OIG Report #08-03

During the first quarter of 2007, LIRR experienced five serious service disruptions caused by accidents (pedestrian fatalities and downed electrical wires) on the railroad's right of way. Two of these incidents delayed train service for approximately four hours and impeded the travel of more than 100,000 commuters. At the request of the MTA Executive Director, the OIG performed a critical analysis of the agency's responses to each of the five events. Our review found that LIRR's ability to address such problems and promptly restore service had been impeded by operational weaknesses in four areas:

- **Customer Communication** – LIRR was unable to provide accurate, timely and consistent information to customers regarding the nature, scope, and estimated duration of the events, thus impeding the commuters' ability to make alternate travel plans.
- **Command Center Operations** – LIRR's Movement Bureau Command Center staff was overwhelmed by the demands of the two most serious incidents and thus unable to manage an efficient response. A lack of formal incident protocols and ambiguity in personnel responsibilities created a chaotic environment at the Movement Bureau where disjointed, ad-hoc decisions delayed the resumption of service.
- **Coordination with Long Island Power Authority (LIPA)** – Major deficiencies in LIPA protocols impeded its coordination with the LIRR and unnecessarily prolonged service delays during three incidents involving downed electrical wires. In one incident, LIRR efforts to restore power were severely hampered by LIPA's slow deployment of repair technicians and a restricted flow of information from LIPA to LIRR.
- **Coordination with the MTA Police Department (MTAPD)** – In one incident involving a pedestrian fatality, resumption of service was delayed because MTAPD responders were slow to arrive at the accident site. Furthermore, MTAPD communication protocols prohibited direct contact with the LIRR site responders and Movement Bureau staff, thus hampering effective management of the incident by LIRR officials.

While LIRR had begun to address these operational issues prior to OIG involvement, our combined efforts yielded a number of improvements in the areas of technology enhancements, staffing changes and procedural revisions. To address command center deficiencies, the LIRR redistributed staff, created a formal response structure for the Movement Bureau and revised its emergency response procedures. In response to communication challenges, a Public Information Office was created within the Bureau to disseminate accurate and timely information to the public. In addition, the customer email notification system was upgraded, new message boards were installed in Penn Station and cellular phones were deployed to train crews.

Both LIPA and the MTAPD have also implemented measures to enhance their ability to respond efficiently to unplanned disruptions. LIPA commenced aerial inspections of its entire system, which identified deficiencies of varying priority. LIPA anticipates that all identified repairs will be completed by the end of 2009. For its part, the MTAPD instituted annual roll-call training for its officers to improve their response to future service disruptions.

By way of response to this Report, the President of LIRR stated:

The review conducted by the Inspector General has served as the catalyst for the LIRR to dramatically improve its response to service disruptions. Encompassing both public communication and emergency response procedures, these improvements will help us to keep our customers and employees safe, restore service as rapidly as possible, while at the same time providing riders with more accurate and timely information on the nature and anticipated duration of incidents. In addition, we have strengthened our relationship with LIPA to make sure our two companies work closely during a crisis to resolve any issues that negatively impact our customers.

OIG will continue to monitor each agency's progress in implementing remaining measures proposed in the report.

## Press

[2/21/2008 - Press Release, "MTA Inspector General Releases Report on LIRR Service Disruption"](#)

[Newsday 2/09/2007, MTA to probe 2 LIRR incidents](#)