

## INTRODUCTION

For over 70 years the national bus network has been an essential and integral part of Ireland's transport infrastructure. The service dates back almost to the foundation of the State. It commenced when the Irish Omnibus Company was established in 1926. In 1987 Bus Éireann was established as Ireland's national bus company. The company provides bus services in all parts of the country except Dublin city. Since its formation, Bus Éireann has continued to build on the long tradition of public service and transport expertise. At the beginning of this new millennium Ireland has a bus and coach system of which it can be justly proud.

## BUS ÉIREANN SERVICES

The Bus Éireann logo is the famous Irish Red Setter, which represents the friendly, reliable and fast way in which the company aims to serve its customers. These customers are offered a wide range of services catering for diverse groups and market sectors. These services include:

- expressway inter-urban coach services
- eurolines coach services to Britain and Europe
- city bus services - in Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford
- commuter bus services radiating from Dublin and other cities
- rural bus services
- school bus services - on behalf of the Department of Education and Science
- ancillary services - coach and bus hire, vehicle testing, contract maintenance, parcels delivery, etc.



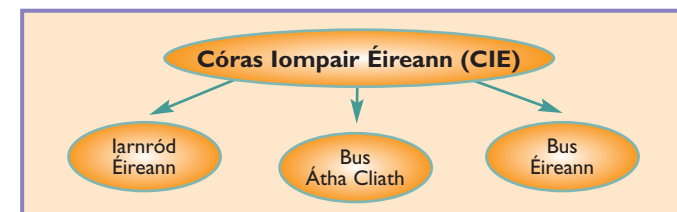
The Expressway network comprises over 50 routes linking cities and major towns throughout the country. Destinations in Northern Ireland are served in conjunction with Ulsterbus. A key feature of the Expressway network is the wide range of connections between routes at major interchange points. In this way customers are offered an extended range of journey opportunities which would be impossible by any other form of public transport.

The Eurolines coach services are integrated with the Expressway network and link over 100 towns in Ireland with 1,500 destinations in Britain and Europe.

### BUS ÉIREANN WITHIN THE CIÉ ORGANISATION STRUCTURE

Córas Iompair Éireann is Ireland's state-owned national transport company. In 1987 the CIÉ Group established three operating companies to provide bus and rail services throughout the Republic of Ireland and to and from Northern Ireland. CIÉ also has a specialised tour company called CIÉ Tours International. The three operating companies are:

- **Iarnród Éireann** - Ireland's railway company providing InterCity, DART and suburban rail services.
- **Bus Átha Cliath** - providing road passenger services in the greater Dublin area.
- **Bus Éireann** - Ireland's National bus company providing nationwide bus services outside of Dublin city.



CIÉ provides some centralised support functions for the three operating companies. These include the management of the Group's property portfolio and providing legal and other professional services to the bus and rail companies.

### THE BUS ÉIREANN ORGANISATION STRUCTURE

Bus Éireann employs a team of 2,500 people. The company provides all its customers with a very high quality of service at value for money prices. The organisation's head office is at Broadstone in Dublin. The

business is divided into nine areas, each based on a major business centre controlled by an area manager. The area managers are located in Dublin, Dundalk, Waterford, Cork, Tralee, Limerick, Galway, Sligo and Athlone.

At many locations throughout the country, the clerical and administrative staff provide a wide range of services. These include front-line customer service in travel centres and bus stations, as well as support services such as payroll administration and revenue control.

The skilled professional drivers drive millions of kilometres every year, over all types of roads and in all kinds of weather conditions. They are the frontline staff without whose skill and commitment Bus Éireann could not succeed.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF SAFETY

Bus Éireann operates a fleet of over 1,300 coaches and buses, of which 600 are allocated to school transport services. The remainder work on Expressway, local and city services.

Each year these buses and coaches travel more than 73 million kilometres. Almost 85 million passengers board and disembark. This type of activity is inevitably exposed to a great many dangers, and Bus Éireann recognises that providing its services in the safest possible manner is essential for many reasons, including:

- first and foremost the *protection from injury* of staff, passengers and other road users.
- a good safety record will encourage customers to travel with Bus Éireann and create a *competitive advantage* for the company.



- *minimising the costs* which arise from accidents, including repair or replacement of buses and coaches, third party damages and compensations, as well as lost days due to staff injuries.

### CUSTOMER CHARTER

Like many companies, Bus Éireann has a Customer Charter. This is a document which sets out the commitments which it makes towards achieving high standards of service for its customers.

Its performance in meeting the commitments set out in the Charter is independently audited twice a year and the findings are published. Not surprisingly, part of the Customer Charter deals with the issue of safety. The Charter states that: "*Customer safety will continue to take precedence over all activities*".

### BUS ÉIREANN'S SAFETY POLICY

Key initiatives are continually implemented by Bus Éireann to ensure that its impressive safety record is not only maintained, but also improved.

It is the policy of Bus Éireann to comply with the Safety, Health & Welfare at Work Act 1989, the General Application Regulations 1993, the Construction Regulations 1995, and all associated legislation.

In addition to complying with these formal pieces of legislation, Bus Éireann needs to protect the safety, health and welfare of its staff, customers and all others who may be affected by its activities. The company recognises that the staff are key to achieving this. For this reason it is company policy to involve the staff in discussions about these matters, and to keep staff informed of any changes in the regulations.

In order to have some measure of the success of its safety initiatives, the company has developed a *Safety Plan*. This includes targets for improvements in the safety performance of the company, and it is reviewed and updated annually. The main targets set out in the Safety Plan are:

- to reduce the number of collisions, and the collision rate by 5% every year. The collision rate is the number of collisions per million kilometres.
- to reduce the number of passenger accidents, and the passenger accident rate by 5% each year. The passenger accident rate is the number of passenger accidents per million kilometres.
- to reduce the number of industrial accidents and resultant lost days due to these accidents by 20% each year.

Achieving these targets will depend on a number of factors, including the suitability of the coaches and buses as well as the skills of the drivers.

### A MODERN, SAFE FLEET OF BUSES

Bus Éireann operates a fleet of over 1,300 coaches and buses. Most passenger accidents are caused by slips, trips and falls, and it is intended that these will be reduced through an ongoing review of the types of floors, doors and steps used on the vehicles.

Since 1995 the company has invested heavily in renewing and upgrading the fleet. The result has been an unprecedented improvement in the quality of service and standards of comfort and safety offered to customers traveling on all categories of services. The average age of the Bus Éireann fleet is now only 6.7 years.

Not only are the buses relatively new, they are also very well maintained. This is carried out by the Bus Éireann team of highly trained maintenance staff based at fifteen depots around the country. The activities of both the drivers and the garage staffs are co-ordinated by a team of supervisors. All these initiatives ensure that the buses and coaches are safer places for passengers and staff.

## DRIVER TRAINING

No matter how modern and well maintained the fleet of coaches and buses may be, Bus Éireann believes that safety is primarily the responsibility of its drivers. In line with its safety policy, the company is emphasising the importance of the ongoing training of drivers.



New activities include:

- on-going assessment of the procedures and standards for the recruitment of drivers.
- even more on-going training for drivers so as to place renewed emphasis on the safety aspects.
- the type of training is continually updated to take account of any new requirements.
- there is a new emphasis on *defensive driving* and passenger safety during the driver training courses. Defensive driving requires the driver to anticipate what other drivers are going to do before they even do it.
- drivers are encouraged to take the advanced driving test of the Institute of Advanced Motorists (IAM).

### TRAINING DRIVERS

With over 1,600 drivers employed throughout the country, Bus Éireann has an extensive in-house training programme covering both induction training and ongoing refresher training in driving techniques and customer care.

Before he or she can sit behind the wheel of a Bus Éireann bus or coach, every driver must have passed the PCV (Passenger Carrying Vehicle) driving test. Newly recruited staff undergo two weeks of comprehensive training before they can take to the road with passengers.

These two weeks are spent learning about the procedures for dealing with passengers and vehicles – the driver must know what fare to charge, how to issue tickets, the timetable, duty rosters, routes and so on. The driver then takes to the road and becomes familiar with the routes, as well as making sure that the highest level of customer service is provided.

All this training is undertaken under the supervision of a qualified instructor.

### INSPECTOR & INSTRUCTOR TRAINING

Ensuring that the highest standard of driver training is provided can only be achieved if those overseeing the process – the instructors – are themselves suitably qualified for the task. Bus Éireann can now boast that it is a leader in this area, as it has become the first fleet operator in Ireland to be accredited by the Institute of Advanced Motorists as a training and assessment company.

The IAM advanced driving instructor certification of Bus Éireann's training inspectors provides independent validation and recognition of their skills in training professional bus and coach drivers. This contributes to an even greater awareness of safe driving practices and defensive driving skills.

All Bus Éireann training inspectors have received IAM advanced driving instructor certificates and also certificates from the Driving Instructor Register of Ireland.

Furthermore, the scheme has benefits for the drivers themselves. On completion of refresher courses, Bus Éireann drivers will now be offered the opportunity to take the IAM advanced driving test and gain membership of the Institute of Advanced Motorists.

As a sign of the commitment of the company to driver safety, a number of its management staff, including managing director Bill Lilley, have already passed the advanced driving test and achieved their IAM membership certificates.

In Waterford, Bus Éireann drivers have passed the advanced driving test under the guidance of local Bus Éireann training inspector Paddy Finn and have set up the first branch of an IAM Group in Ireland.

Gary Owens, managing director of Hibernian General Insurance says:

**"Hibernian is delighted to be involved in setting up the first Irish local groups of the IAM in association with Bus Éireann. The aims of the IAM are very much in line with our corporate philosophy of campaigning for improved driving standards in Ireland. This, we believe, will result in improved road safety awareness and a reduction in the number of road accidents and deaths. With over 50 per cent of road accidents in Ireland attributed to bad driving, it is imperative that we strive to improve driving standards and skills beyond the minimum requirement. The IAM can provide the training and experience to facilitate this".**

### PREVENTING FATIGUE

We have seen how Bus Éireann has been working to ensure that it has well trained drivers in a modern, well maintained fleet of coaches and buses.

The hours which can be worked by the drivers are strictly regulated to prevent drivers becoming tired. In fact, there are both Irish and EU laws governing the working hours of the drivers. While the rules vary depending on the type of work, some examples are that drivers:

- must take breaks of at least 45 minutes for every 4.5 hours that is driven
- must take an 11 hour rest period every day
- cannot drive for more than 90 hours every fortnight
- must have a rest of 45 hours after every period of no more than six working days.

These rest periods ensure that the driver is fresh and ready for the journey ahead when a passenger boards a Bus Éireann service.



## CONCLUSION

We have seen that Bus Éireann is Ireland's national bus service, and that it is part of the CIÉ group of companies. It has its own regional organisational structure and employs 2,500 people, including 1,600 drivers. With 1,300 buses and coaches carrying almost 85 million passengers over more than 73 million kilometres every year, safety is very important to the company. This is apparent from the Customer Charter and from the Safety Policy.

The company adheres to all appropriate legislation in the area of safety. Furthermore, to provide even higher levels of safety, and to continuously improve its safety performance, the company has also implemented a number of key initiatives. These include the modernisation of its fleet as well as improved driver training courses with increased emphasis on defensive driving and passenger safety. The overall quality of its driver training is underwritten by its accreditation as a training and assessment body by the Institute of Advanced Motorists. More and more Bus Éireann drivers and inspectors have now been certified by the IAM.

## TASKS AND ACTIVITIES

1. Define Bus Éireann's position in the CIÉ organisational structure.
2. What are the most important reasons why Bus Éireann should ensure that safety regulations are obeyed?
3. Define Competitive Advantage.
4. What is the significance of the Managing Director of Bus Éireann taking the advanced driving test?
5. Discuss the concept of 'defensive driving'.

