

High-tech training on buses

LISA MUXWORTHY

NEW advanced training for all State Transit bus drivers could have prevented the horror smash on Spit Rd late last year, State Transit chief executive John Lee has said.

About 700 drivers on the northern beaches would be trained with new technology that records driving performance in real time, it was announced yesterday.

The technology, developed by Vigil Systems, included an on-board simulator, or laptop computer, that would act as a driver tracking device.

Four cameras, on the front and sides of the bus, would film the driver and a software program would compile a performance report.

Speaking to the *Daily* yesterday, Mr Lee said the training was a "great preventative tool" for accidents such as the one that occurred on November 14 on Spit Rd last year.

Linda Duke from Seaforth was

trapped for 90 minutes when her black Peugeot was struck by a bus after it crossed the median strip into the southbound lanes.

Spit Hill was also blocked to traffic for several hours as people struggled to reach home after work.

Transport Minister John Watkins, who announced the initiative, said the technology would measure "if a driver breaks too heavily, accelerates too aggressively or corners harshly".

"It records all these events and a detailed analysis of the trip is compiled," he said.

Mr Watkins said each bus driver would complete one day of classroom theory before taking to the road.

"And that's where the technology comes in," he said.

"The driver can then watch their actions on replay - a bit like going to the video referee for a second look - to see what they may have done well or what in hindsight they would do differently next time."



Meerie Barkle and Diane Westaway climbed Mt Elbrus.

Picture: VIRGINIA YOUNG

Mountain climbers at their peak

SUE HOBAN

THE four peninsula women just back from a successful assault on Europe's highest mountain are now determined to take on more of the world's highest peaks.

The four, all mothers ranging in age from late 30s to mid-50s, made it to the summit of Mt Elbrus in Russia, along with a colleague from Melbourne, despite unexpected altitude sickness.

Other members of the team

had to drop out, including expedition leader, Everest veteran Brigitte Muir, who developed pulmonary oedema. She stepped in after the death of original leader Sue Fear.

With three of the seven continent's summits now under their belts the local women, Diane Westaway, Meerie Barkle, Annie Doyle and Amanda Jones, are convinced all seven are a realistic goal. They have already set the date for their next two expeditions. These will take them to Mt

Aconcagua in South America in January 2008 and then to Mt McKinley in Alaska 16 months later.

Diane Westaway said they had gone to Elbrus mentally prepared for a very difficult climb of a mountain where 11 Russians died in May.

"There was definitely more risk on Elbrus than Kilimanjaro," she said. "We felt we had the skills and it ended up we did, but there was one section where, had you tripped and fallen you could have fallen out of control."

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