

## New High-Tech Trucks Will Make Towing Buses Easier, Safer

By ALISHA GOMEZ

(March 25, 2003) New high-tech tow trucks destined for the bus operating divisions promise to make retrieving a disabled bus safer and more efficient for MTA maintenance crews.

Fourteen new hydraulic-lift tow trucks and three flatbed tractor trailers are scheduled to arrive soon at the divisions, according to Pat Astredo, Equipment Maintenance Supervisor at Non-Revenue Division 4.

"The biggest difference between the new and old equipment is safety," he says. "The new equipment is much more reliable. Some of the vehicles we are replacing are 20 years old."

Using the updated equipment will require mechanics to change the way they've been handling a tow job. To recover a disabled bus with a flatbed truck, a mechanic must tilt the bed and winch the coach up onto it.

The hydraulic-lift trucks use a "stinger assembly" that folds down behind the back of the truck and extends underneath the front axle of the disabled bus. A fork or wheel-lift mechanism then picks up the bus by the axle or by the wheels.

"This method is a simpler hook-up, a lot safer and quicker," says Astredo. The Quality Assurance department currently is drafting towing procedures that will be placed in each of the tow trucks and mechanics will be trained to use the new equipment.

PHOTOS BY ALISHA GOMEZ



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### Leery at first

"I was a bit leery about these new trucks when I first saw them, like anything new," says Miguel Enriquez, mechanic "A" at Gateway Division 10. "But once we went to the class and they showed us how they work, I was quite impressed. The new equipment will make a big difference as far as the time it takes to tow buses in."

Astredo says the mechanics were concerned towing buses with such long trucks. However, despite their length, the trucks have proven to be quite maneuverable and even fun to drive.

"Most of the mechanics at the end of the training and workshop sessions gave these trucks a big 'thumbs up' and said they were excited to start using them," says Astredo.

Despite the weight of the buses the trucks will tow, they are designed to keep sufficient weight on the front axles, ensuring that the driver always has firm steering control.

Safety features include video cameras mounted on the back of the trucks with a screen in the cab that provides a better rear view. The trucks also have strobe lights for better visibility and accident prevention.

Keith Nielsen, mechanic "A" in Fleet Management and Support Services, was mainly concerned that the agency purchase the safest piece of equipment possible.

"We want to make it as easy and safe as we can for those who will be using the equipment every day," says Nielsen. "The fact is that, when you are out doing this type of work, you have to know what you are doing and have to have equipment that works."

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