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Mechanic Larry Jones, yardmaster at Carson Division 18, confronts a variety of mechanical problems during his shift.

Division 18 Yardmaster Jones Keeps the Buses Rolling

By RICH MORALLO

(Aug. 20, 2004) It's 6:15 a.m. on a recent morning at Carson Division 18's bus yard entrance. Mechanic Larry Jones is nearing the end of his graveyard shift but he is still as busy as he was when he arrived Wednesday night.

A 40-foot TMC diesel bus rolls to a stop at the wheelchair lift test area and the operator opens her door. "Can you check this red light, please?"

Jones enters the bus, determines that it is a transmission problem that will take additional time to further evaluate and repair. He gets the operator a replacement bus. Another bus drives up. "Where's Larry?" shouts the operator.

PHOTOS: RICH MORALLO



Yardmaster Jones helps a Division 18 Metro Bus operator.

A malfunctioning farebox

Jones walks over and checks the air brake pressure signal. Seconds later a third operator tells Jones about a malfunctioning farebox.

Another job that has to be promptly addressed. "We only have about a couple of minutes per bus to address these last-minute issues," says Jones, who started inspecting the bus fleet for problems eight hours earlier.

Jones is the yardmaster— been doing that at the Metro South Bay division since 1987 when he started assuming the job of launching more than 200 buses into service each morning by 7 a.m. "His is an important job—getting the buses out of the yard and into revenue service," says Assistant Maintenance Manager Tom Whitman. Service for 27 bus lines

The division provides service for 27 bus lines in communities east to Whittier, west to LAX, north to Altadena and south to Long Beach.

"This is challenging, but I like working at Metro—the pay and benefits are good," says Jones, who has 24 1/2 years with the agency and builds computers in his off-time. "I'm mostly checking the buses for safety and that everything is working right."

Jones also ensures that the vehicles are clean of graffiti. "We don't send out dirty buses for the public to ride."

"I need help," shouts out another operator, who is trying to adjust a loose rightside rearview mirror. Jones is at his side in two seconds flat.

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