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## Metrolink Crash in Chatsworth Takes a Violent Toll on Metro Family

- **'Worst Train Accident in Recent Years' claims the life of Metro Storekeeper Donna Remata**
- [See myMetro.net report Sept 24:](#) Metrolink Crash Survivor Says No Horror Movie Could Capture the Scene



Image of friend and co-worker Donna Remata is encased in floral wreath at the stationery store on P-1 where she worked.

Remembering Donna Remata - [Share your memories here.](#)

Also, visit Donna Remata's memorial page at the Los Angeles Times website commemoration of the crash victims:

<http://projects.latimes.com/metrolink-crash/name/donna-remata/>

By GAYLE ANDERSON

(September 15, 2008) Metro employees and friends are mourning the loss of fellow employee Donna Remata, a storekeeper at Metro Headquarters who was among the 25 passengers and train crew members killed in a Metrolink train accident on Friday.

Remata was aboard Ventura County Line 111 in car one. The Metrolink train that had departed Union Station at 3:35 p.m. en route to Moorpark collided with a Union Pacific freight train on the tracks about a mile and a half north of the Chatsworth Metrolink Station. The accident, which occurred at approximately 4:23 p.m., has claimed 25 lives and left 135 injured, 40 critically.

The accident involved an undetermined number of Metro employees, some of whom are

regular passengers on the Ventura County Line 111 Metrolink train. (According to Terree Holman, corporate employee transportation coordinator, some 26 employees take Line 111 and exit at Moorpark, Simi Valley and Oxnard stations.)

### Metro employees among the first responders

Reports of Metro employees involved in the accident include the horrific ordeal of Jim Hugo, a traction power inspector at Wayside Systems. Hugo was on board the second car of the three-car train when the collision occurred. Fully trained as a first responder, Hugo was tossed about by the impact but recovered in the midst of chaos to assist in the rescue efforts and help the injured out of the wreckage. He reportedly was on the scene late into the evening.



Wayside Systems' Jim Hugo, pictured here with niece at recent event, was on board car 3 and helped pull crash victims out of danger.



Co-worker and close friend Marie Tervalon rushed to the Remata family home in Simi Valley.

Customer Information Agent Marie Tervalon missed the 3:35 p.m. train she sometimes takes with her co-worker and close friend Donna Remata. With the tracks blocked by the accident ahead, Tervalon had to exit the train at the Northridge Station, where her husband was waiting for her. Knowing almost certainly that her friend Donna was on the earlier train, Tervalon went directly to the Remata home in Simi Valley to comfort Tiffany Remata, the 17-year-old daughter awaiting news.

[See myMetro.net report: Remembering Donna Remata...](#)

Charlie Fitzsimmons, a Metrolink passenger on Line 111 since moving to Chatsworth a little more than four years ago, boarded the train at Union Station and exited at the Chatsworth Metrolink Station just a few minutes before the collision.

"Just as I was leaving the train station parking lot, I looked up and saw black smoke," said Fitzsimmons, a senior contract administrator. It wasn't until he stopped at the grocery store that he found out the smoke was from the crash of the train he has just exited moments before.

Fitzsimmons, who believes lightening can strike even more that twice, was slightly injured in the Metrolink accident that occurred in Glendale in January 2005. But he's not handing in his transit pass. "Trains are the best way to travel," he said, "safer than driving. What happens is in God's hands," he said.

Among the injured is Gary Katzman, a senior contracts administrator on board the Ventura County Line 111 train. Katzman reportedly suffered cuts and bruises and is recuperating at home after being released from a hospital, co-workers say.

At least 50 Sheriff's Deputies from the Metro Transit Services Bureau responded to the accident, said Lt. John Bayliss. "Deputies Barry Ryan, Bill Lynch, Brad Johnson, and others were among the first to arrive and begin rescue efforts," he said. The TSB crew assisted the Fire Dept. responders in pulling passengers out of the wreckage and working the command post. Sheriff's Deputy John Ebert, returning home from his station at the Van Nuys Courthouse, was riding in the third car when the impact of collision nearly embedded him in the wall. "He was the one who made the initial call to responders and gave an accurate assessment" despite suffering a broken hand, broken ribs and punctured lung in the ordeal, said Lt. Bayliss.



Charlie Fitzsimmons in Contracts survived the 2005 Metrolink crash in Glendale and exited Line 111 just minutes before the Chatsworth crash.



The scene of the crash in Chatsworth shows responders aiding victims amidst scattered wreckage.

### **Bus bridge transports passengers**

With the investigation underway and crews working around the clock to remove the wreckage and repair the damage, Metro joined with four other municipal operators to establish a bus bridge. The bus bridge transports passengers from Moorpark and Simi Valley around the crash site to operating trains at the Chatsworth Station, said Metro San Fernando Valley General Manager Richard Hunt.

The bus bridge began operations at the Moorpark Station Monday morning at 6:24 a.m. and transported an estimated 40 to 50 passengers from Moorpark and another 20 from the Simi Valley Metrolink Station in a somber caravan to Chatsworth. The sector contributed nine buses from West Valley Division 8 in Chatsworth and East Valley Division 15 in Sun Valley, said Hunt. Buses will connect from the Van Nuys Station to the Northridge, Chatsworth, Simi Valley and Moorpark stations for the afternoon transport. "We're prepared to support Metrolink service for as long as we're needed," said Hunt.

According to the Metrolink website, service depends on the circumstances of the ongoing investigation being conducted by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB). The Ventura County Line special schedule is posted at [www.metrolinktrains.com](http://www.metrolinktrains.com): "Outbound evening trains 111, 113, 115, 117 and 119: Metrolink will operate train service between Los Angeles Union Station and Chatsworth Station. Buses will connect to Simi Valley and Moorpark Stations from Chatsworth."

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Full coverage of the Metrolink crash:

[Los Angeles Times](#)  
[Daily News](#)