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**EXPLOSION AND FIRE CAUSED BY RUPTURED ACETYLENE
TANK INJURES THREE METRO RED LINE WORKERS**

Three Metro Red Line subway construction workers were injured Monday when an acetylene tank used by welders in tunnels near the future Wilshire/Vermont station ruptured, causing an explosion and fire that critically burned two of the workers and caused a third to suffer from smoke inhalation.

The two most seriously injured workers were transported to Good Samaritan Hospital and California Hospital in critical condition for treatment; the smoke inhalation victim was treated at Hollywood Presbyterian Hospital. According to the Los Angeles Fire Department, the fire was quickly put out with a fire extinguisher by those present at the scene.

The cause of the 1:43 p.m. incident is under investigation. The Los Angeles police and fire departments, the MTA Transit Police, and Cal OSHA officials responded to the site. The LAFD conducted an end-to-end walkthrough of the two Vermont Avenue tunnels and accounted for all workers. The tunnel contractor, Shea-Kiewit-Kenny, has voluntarily shut down work in two of the four tunnels at the site. The site itself sustained no structural damage.

The incident occurred inside the uppermost of the two tunnels beneath Vermont Avenue. Segment 1 of the Red Line, which has been in operation since January, 1993, to passengers traveling beneath downtown Los Angeles, was not affected by the incident.

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MTA has requested the Los Angeles Fire Department to conduct a full safety investigation into the incident. Cal OSHA will conduct a separate investigation.

"It has been reported to us that the explosion and the small fire that resulted were related to welding equipment that was being used at the site and was not related in any way to methane or other naturally occurring gases," said Sharon Papa, chief of MTA Transit Police.

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