



NEWS

March 7, 2000

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RAISING THE STANDARD OF EXCELLENCE
**45 BUS OPERATORS HONORED BY MTA FOR AMASSING PERFECT
SAFETY RECORD AND FOR PROVIDING SUPERIOR CUSTOMER SERVICE**

Twenty years ago bus operator Gene Freeman came to work for the MTA. Over 500,000 miles later, the equivalent of 84 round-trips driven to New York, Freeman has defied the odds: he hasn't been involved in one work-related accident in all that time or had a passenger complaint lodged against him.

Freeman was one of 45 top operators honored at a gala awards banquet over the weekend by the MTA for compiling a perfect minimum five-year safety and customer service record and remaining injury free on the job.

The new "Best of the Best" awards was launched at a time when bus service performance indicators are at an all-time high, including such categories as the highest number of perfect roll-outs and lowest amount of lost service.

"I guess I'm lucky," says Freeman who drives Line 117 out of South Bay to LAX. The diligence and professionalism required to maintain a perfect driving and safety record "is just part of the job," he says.

To qualify for the "Best of the Best" award, an operator's record must be entirely free of accidents, customer complaints and workplace injuries for the fiscal years 1994 through 1999. Each of 45 honorees received a commemorative plaque and a voucher for a special uniform jacket with the "Best of the Best" slogan embroidered on it.

"You've made my job easy," MTA's Risk Management Director Deborah Guy told the honorees. "When you're on the road, I don't have anything to worry about."

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Guy's thoughts were echoed by MTA Chief Operating Officer Allan Lipsky.

"Five years of performance like this is an incredible accomplishment," said Lipsky. "This level of service has an amazing effect on how we all do our jobs and how the MTA is perceived as a transportation agency."

The person in charge of MTA's operations believes the timing of the new awards program also is perfect.

"The awards illustrate the bus improvement program currently underway," said Tom Conner, executive officer, Transit Operations. "The MTA is on a roll with hundreds of new buses arriving this year, the opening of the Metro Red Line to North Hollywood on June 24, the start-up of the Metro Rapid Bus program and the Metro Blue Line's 10th anniversary later this year."

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MTA-035