

Metrolink Accident Provides Real-Life Test for MTA's Mobile Communications Center



By Bill Heard, Editor
(November 19) The Metrolink train accident in Fullerton, Thursday, provided a real-life test for the MTA's Mobile Emergency Communications Center – a converted bus equipped to coordinate transit service should the Bus Operation Control Center at Headquarters be disabled.

The MTA's Mobile Emergency Communications Center is a bus converted for use if the Bus Operations Control Center is disabled.

Over the course of four hours, the MTA dispatched 15 trips from Union Station to transport 421 stranded rail commuters to stations along Metrolink's Orange County line. The agency used its 10 "Consent Decree buses" and two others from Division 6 for the bus bridge.



"This is the first time we've ever used the MECC for an actual operation," said Tom Jasmin, BOCC manager and incident commander. "It was a godsend. It showed us we can communicate with our buses - even operating outside our service area - without going through the main control center."

TOS Tom Medlock and TOS Carlos Morales directed the Orange County bus bridge from the MECC.

The MTA's response to the Metrolink accident came as Jasmin's group was

attempting to ready the MECC for possible emergency service Dec. 31. "Until yesterday, I wouldn't commit to its being functional," he said. "But this response shows that our people have come together and the MECC will work if needed on New Year's Eve."

John Dover, the acting senior transit operations supervisor who was in charge of the MECC during the bus bridge echoed Jasmin's confidence and noted, "This was the first time ever for a bus bridge on the Orange County line."

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Working in the MECC, TOS Tom Medlock and TOS Carlos Morales communicated with the 10 Consent Decree buses, giving instructions and directions via hand-held radios. When it was necessary to

communicate with the two Division 6 buses, whose operators weren't provided hand-held units, they contacted TOS Francisco Chavez in the BOCC.

TOS Annie Jones at Terminal 31, adjacent to the Regional Rebuild Center, dispatched buses to the Plaza, where they were met by TOS John Escher and TOS Russ Modell. Escher and Modell made sure two buses were always available on the Plaza for Metrolink passengers and provided directions to the operators.

During the emergency response, the MECC team realized that the MTA doesn't have a bus route worked out for Metrolink's Oceanside line. "We'll develop one now," says Dover, "in case we ever have to make that run."

Operators assigned to the Metrolink bus bridge were J.L. Gonzalez and A.T. Craig, Division 1; M. Gonzales and R.R. De La Fuente, Division 2; I.E. Pollack, W.T. Lim and I. Gutierrez, Division 5; K. Lakey, Division 6; D.L. Gresham and K.N. Smith, Division 7; R.M. Fresnedo and D.N. Hickson, Division 10.

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