

Operator Hailed for 'Courageous' Actions in Fiery Truck-Train Crash Dies of Heart Attack



BARBARA NORSIAN
1960-2000

(Feb. 11) Funeral services were conducted, Friday, for Operator Barbara C. Norsian, who was commended for her courageous actions last September for safely evacuating passengers from her Metro Blue Line train following a fiery collision with a trailer truck.

Norsian, 39, suffered a heart attack Sunday night, Feb. 6, and was hospitalized. She died Tuesday of complications. The funeral mass was celebrated at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church in Los Nietos.

Burst into flames

On the evening of Sept. 28, Norsian was operating a southbound Metro Blue Line train near downtown Los Angeles. An eastbound trailer truck attempted a turn onto a freeway ramp, struck the train and burst into flames. Fuel spilled from the truck's tanks.

Norsian managed to escape the burning cab and escorted passengers off the train to safety. No passengers were injured in the accident, but a passenger in the truck was transported to a hospital with minor injuries.

Norsian "acted calm and professional during this tragic ordeal," wrote Duane Martin, Metro Blue Line transportation manager, in an Oct. 1 commendation. "Her first reaction was the safety of her passengers. She immediately, amongst the fire and confusion, evacuated all of her passengers to safety."

Prevented passenger injuries

"She was a very conscientious operator," said Ralph de la Cruz, deputy executive officer, Rail Operations. "She handled the evacuation so smoothly, the fire battalion chief at the accident scene just couldn't say enough about her actions."

Norsian was named Rail Operator of the Month following the truck-train accident. A resident of Whittier, she is survived by a son, Brandon, and a daughter, Kristina, a part-time bus operator at Division 2.

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