

EDITOR'S NOTE: Do you know what to do if you see suspicious activity on Metro Rail? Each rail car has an intercom that will allow you to call the train operator. Each station also has an intercom at either end of the platform that allows passengers to communicate with the Rail Operations Center. Familiarize yourself with the intercoms on the trains and at the stations you use and, if you see suspicious activity, don't hesitate to call.



Division 20 Train Operator Julio Chavez demonstrates use of intercom at Union Station platform.

23 Days After Terrorist Attack, MTA Remains on 'Heightened Alert'

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(Oct. 4, 2001) It's been 23 days since the United States was rocked by the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. In the aftermath, many of the nation's public transportation agencies have remained in a heightened state of alert.

At the MTA, a Security Task Force, whose members include senior executives, operations staff and law enforcement representatives, has been activated and is meeting weekly to assess intelligence reports provided by the U.S. Department of Transportation, the FBI and other national security organizations. It also plans and implements enhanced security measures.

Through their own national intelligence contacts, the LAPD and LASD anti-terrorist units keep abreast of developments and are ready to respond. These units also work closely with the MTA on matters that may impact transit system security.

Agency officials have conducted emergency drills and have developed a variety of response scenarios. LAPD officers and Sheriff's deputies – both uniformed and plainclothes – were deployed immediately following the East Coast attack.

Security tight at facilities

Security also has been tightened at MTA buildings and facilities where officers are maintaining a high level of vigilance, according to Paul Lennon, managing director, System Safety and Security.

Operations managers and security officials have been meeting with Metro Bus and Metro Rail operators to discuss emergency response measures and how to "sweep" a bus or a train for suspicious items.

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The most visible evidence of the extra security ordered by the MTA, for example, came Sept. 26 when a still-unidentified odor made some 25 passengers feel ill and led officials to halt all Metro Red Line service for two hours during the afternoon peak period.

Police officers and firefighters swarmed the Wilshire/Western station in an effort to pinpoint the origin of the mysterious odor and to determine whether it represented an attempt on the subway system. No toxic substance was found.

"We learned some valuable emergency response lessons from that incident," Lennon told MTA senior managers this week. "And, by and large, that negative experience yielded some 'positives' for our fire, police and medical response partners."

[Back to MTA Report](#)