

Crossroads Depot Division Operator Comes to Rescue of Ailing Colleague

By CHRISTINA ESPARZA

(May 9, 2002) When Crossroads Depot Division 2 Operator Carlos Mendizabal stopped behind another MTA bus to pick up passengers, April 25, he noticed something peculiar — the bus wasn't moving and people were waiting to get in.



> Crossroads Depot Division 2 Bus Operator Carlos Mendizabal aided fellow Operator Terrence Coleman when he found Coleman unconscious on the floor of his bus.

While he thought it was most likely a mechanical problem, Mendizabal decided to see what was happening on his leader's bus, instead of just proceeding with his route.

"I knew he was taking too long, so I went to see what was wrong," Mendizabal said. "When I went to the bus, I saw him lying on the floor."

Division 2 Operator Terrence Coleman was sprawled out on the floor of his bus. He wasn't moving. Mendizabal tried to wake him.

"I thought he was asleep," he said. "I tried to wake him up. I started shaking him and I said, 'It's time to go.'"

His hands were cold and pale

But Coleman wouldn't wake up. Mendizabal checked his pulse and noticed Coleman's hands were cold and had turned pale white. His eyelids were twitching rapidly, although they were closed.

"I knew something was wrong," Mendizabal recalled. "I got scared. I didn't know if he was dead or alive."

Although Mendizabal was frightened, he kept his composure and contacted Bus Operations Control to send rescue vehicles immediately. Mendizabal also called Division 2 Transportation Manager Diane Frazier on his cellular phone to let her know what had happened.

Within five minutes, paramedics and emergency medical technicians were on the scene and Coleman regained consciousness. He was hospitalized at Queen of Angels Hospital until May 4.

Apparently, Coleman was not feeling well that day and had pushed the priority button for help. That, apparently, is the last thing he remembers.

It could have gone on and on

"I feel like Operator Mendizabal saved his life," Frazier said. "He could have kept going, and the person after him could have kept going, and it could have gone on and on."

Mendizabal received the Operator of the Month Award in January, and, according to Frazier, on April 25 he proved it was justified.

"He was there, he knew what to do, he didn't panic — and he finished his assignment," Frazier said. "After all that happened, he finished the rest of the day."

Coleman's wife, Regina, thanked Mendizabal for coming to her husband's aid and, according to Crossroads Depot Assistant Transportation Manager Joseph Brown who talked to him Monday, Coleman he is grateful for the outpouring of concern that has come from the division, and thankful that Mendizabal did not assume a mechanical failure slowed his bus down.

"I feel good to have done something for him," Mendizabal said.

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