

Metro Gold Line Operator Training Takes Study, Muscle, Desire

By ADRIENNE FIGUEROA

(May 23, 2003) What does it take to be a rail operator for the Metro Gold Line? It takes a lotta studying, a little bit o' muscle, and great deal o' desire.

Tests of physical and mental strength, as well as discipline, are some of the challenges rail operators must face to complete the eight-week Metro Gold Line training course.

Trainees are required to take a two-hour physical agilities test. This assessment includes such tasks as throwing heavy switches by hand – as much as 50 pounds per square inch – and walking on uneven track beds as well as on guideway structures. Trainees must be able to hoist themselves aboard a train from the track level.

Metro Gold Line operator Michael Brown found that the repetition of climbing onto the train was more difficult than he initially anticipated.

"I used certain muscles I hadn't used before," he said. "It took me about a week to get used to it."

Trainees also must have the strength to open and close emergency exit hatches, something that operators could encounter if they had to evacuate a train in the tunnel portions of the Metro Gold Line.

Captains of the ship

"The operators are the captains of the ship," said Eugene Adams, assistant Rail Division Transportation Manager for the Metro Green Line. "They must be fit enough to pass the agilities test."

The two-month training course includes a written and multiple-choice examination covering the Metro Gold Line rules and procedures. Operators must score a 90 percent or better on the exam to graduate the training class.

PHOTOS BY ADRIENNE FIGUEROA



Metro Gold Line operators, from left, Albert Dominguez, Ruben Ramirez and Michael Brown



Michael Brown gets aboard.



Ruben Ramirez throws a switch in the yard, enabling trains to move onto different tracks.

Michael Lespron, a Metro Gold Line operator, found this phase of the course to be the most demanding. Formerly an operator for the Metro Red, Blue and Green Lines, Lespron had not studied for a test in years.

"In the beginning, it was hard to study every night," he said. "I was OK once I got into the groove, which was about the third or fourth week."

Brown also found that the studying was demanding at times.

"It was like going back to school," he said. "There was a lot of testing all at once and a lot of terminology that I hadn't heard before."

Currently, seven operators are in the training process and 30 have graduated from the course. By rail operation date, the Metro Gold Line team hopes to have acquired 40 full-time and two part-time operators.

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