

MTA to Re-Enforce Safety Along Rail Lines When Strike Ends

By VERONICA TORREJÓN

(Nov. 7, 2003) Poised to hit the streets the moment a contract agreement is reached, MTA employees are ready with an outreach blitz aimed at re-enforcing rail safety precautions that may have fallen by the wayside in the wake of the nearly month-long strike.

"The Gold Line wasn't running that long and now that it's not running, people have forgotten about safe behavior on or near the tracks," said Barbara Burns who is heading the Rail Safety Outreach Team coordinating the campaign.

Before the Metro Gold Line was opened, July 26, tracks were virtually train-free and people were accustomed to not paying attention, she said.

In an effort to refresh memories, a campaign similar to one launched last January during testing of the new line will target school-age children and residents within a two-mile radius of both the Metro Blue and Gold Lines.

Door-to-door effort

A team will go door-to-door along the rail lines re-enforcing safety principles and handing out pamphlets.

Educational materials including posters, flyers and placemats featuring safety figures to illustrate key points, will be distributed at all local schools. A video titled, "Look, Listen and Stay Alive" also will be given to middle and high schools.

The existing Rail Safety, Education and Outreach Program, in effect for more than five years, has emphasized safety precautions on and around the train tracks. The program offers tours to schools and community members, complete with a safety presentation and tour of the Metro Red and Gold Lines.

Additional program features include the award-winning "Metro Experience" mobile theater, which features a 3-D simulated train ride.

No Gold Line mishaps

Since the opening of the Metro Gold Line, there have been no reported safety mishaps, something Burns largely credits to the January safety campaign that trained more than 57,000 children and community members.

In the 12 years the Metro Blue Line has operated, 65 people have died in safety-related accidents or suicides, Burns said. Most

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'Outreach Blitz' - Community Relations interns Christina Granados, left, and Jennifer Mendoza fill boxes with safety education materials, including videos, posters and placemats for schools near the Metro Blue and Gold Lines.

accidents resulted from unsafe behavior primarily by adults, who either tried to beat the trains by circumventing crossing gates or by walking on the tracks. Both violations carry heavy fines.

With trains running approximately every eight minutes, Burns says it is crucial that people stay a safe distance from the tracks.

"You have approximately 45 seconds to be alive or dead," said Burns, referring to the amount of time it takes for a two-car train to pass a stationary landmark. "If someone is on the tracks, there is no time to get out of the way."

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