

EDITOR'S NOTE: Field Equipment Technician George Perez prepared this article about his colleagues in the Fleet Maintenance and Support Department.

"These guys have been working 12-plus hours a day, seven days a week during the strike to keep the buses ready when the strike ends. I'm very proud of these guys and the work they do." --Pat Astredo, Assistant Manager, Fleet Maintenance and Support

Field Techs and Sector Staff Jump into Action During Strike

By **GEORGE PEREZ**

(Nov. 20, 2003) Days before the job action by the mechanics union, MTA Field Equipment Technicians were placed on alert and notified of a special mandatory meeting. Plans were drawn up to provide technical and operational support to all the sectors.

As in past strikes, the Field Techs have provided critical support to keep the fleet ready for rollout when an agreement is reached. Thirteen Field Techs were assigned to all the Bus divisions to assist in making the buses ready for the end of the strike.

The origin of the Field Techs goes back a long way. Prior to 1976, the Metropolitan Transit Authority had a group of exceptional mechanics assigned to do nothing but repair bus breakdowns on the road. These union men were given the name of Mechanical Road Supervisors.

By 1983, the Field Techs had become non-contract employees, the name was changed to Field

Equipment Technicians and more had been added to the department. Since then, they have been called upon to do keep our bus fleet in motion by doing quick troubleshooting and repair on the road.

Water up to their calves

During the "Great El Nino" year, the Field Techs worked in water up to their calves at times while replacing wiper blades or trying to fix a defroster or perhaps a water leak.

Some have been commandeered by law enforcement agencies in time of a social emergency. Two of our units



Field Techs Sean Dunning, pictured above, and Manny Zaragosa were called upon to escort several buses full of firefighters to San Diego and to Hesperia during the fires that plagued California. Below, Zaragosa in rig leads convoy from the Fire Academy staging area.



assisted the Southgate and Bell police departments during the civil unrest after the World Cup soccer match was played in the U.S. On another occasion one of our units escorted the National Guard back to San Diego during the Rodney King episode.

Field Techs also provided support for the Democratic National Convention and conducted training for Sheriff's deputies and LAPD SWAT units on methods of disabling a bus.

Today, Field Techs are being called upon to keep the fleet ready by doing what they do best. Just recently Field Techs Manny Zaragosa and Sean Dunning were called upon to escort several buses full of firefighters to San Diego and to Hesperia during the terrible fires that plagued California.

'Doing what we have to do'

As Field Tech Steve Mendoza put it, "We're doing what we have to do in order to have a safe and reliable bus for our drivers and the public when it's all over."

The sector staff at Division 9, and all the sectors have done a great job working as a team during these trying times. Many employees from Gateway also stepped up to the challenge by working on weekends with sector personnel to clean the interior of the buses.

The ash from the fires really did a job on the buses, but our volunteers did a beautiful job in getting our fleet clean again.

Now that the strike is over, we can look back and feel pride in how everyone responded to keep the ship afloat till we made land.

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