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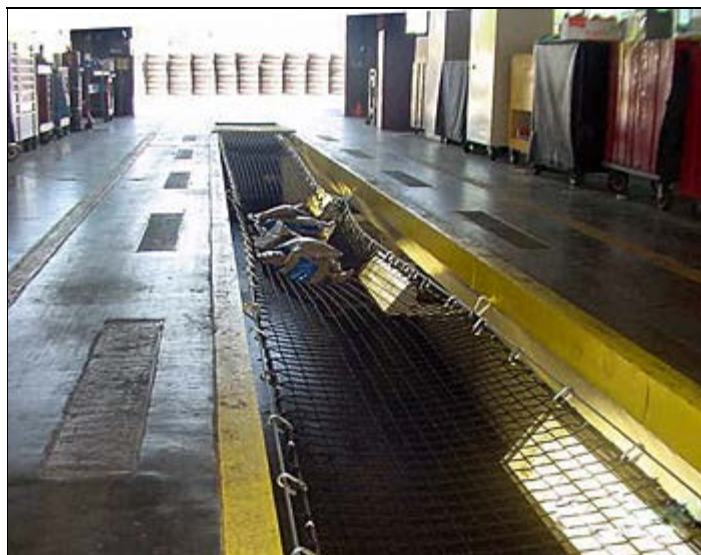
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Safety Nets Installed to Prevent Falls at Division 15 Maintenance



The safety netting covers the maintenance pits at Division 15 and is supported by a steel cable strung through welded eyelets.

- Nets cover five-foot-deep pits where mechanics work on buses ; harness and cable system are used when working overhead

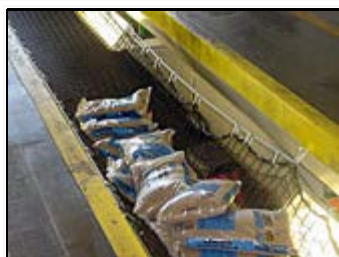
By JESSICA TYERMAN

(Aug. 4, 2004) Many of the service bays where division mechanics work on Metro buses are, literally, holes in the floor. And, a moment's inattention can easily lead to a fall into one of the five-foot-deep pits.

But, at East Valley Division 15, the maintenance team recently installed two safety mechanisms to decrease the risk associated with working near the pits.

The division is the first to permanently put safety netting across the maintenance pits. In addition, a harness and cable support system was installed to protect employees from falling into the pits and sustaining injuries.

Several other divisions have had test nets installed and now await full installation.



- Bags containing 1,000 pounds of sand were used to conduct a weight test on the netting. After two hours, the netting was tested for any deterioration or loss of strength.

Several injuries have resulted

"Our shops each have between two and six service bays with pits," says Maintenance Manager John Roberts. "These pits have resulted in several injuries over the years when personnel have fallen into them."

The netting, which covers the maintenance pits when they're not in use by a mechanic, is supported by a steel cable strung through welded eyelets. Tests using sandbags have shown the netting should support up to 6,000 pounds.

Although the netting will not eliminate injuries entirely, it is expected to significantly reduce the risks.

"Its purpose is to catch anyone who may fall into the pit area," says Michael Lambeth, member of the Division 15 Communications Safety subcommittee.

Cable system supports mechanics

The harness and cable system supports mechanics while they work on top of buses or overhead. The harness, which is strapped around a mechanics' body, is connected to the cable suspended from the ceiling and strung between welded, reinforced steel tubing.

Lambeth says the harness and cable system will "prevent people from falling to the floor if they slip."

Metro staff first began to look into the use of the safety system five years ago. The devices were installed at Division 15 during the week of July 15.

"With just a few days in service," says Roberts. "We were encouraged that the safety of our employees has been enhanced with this easy-to-use system of securing our pits."