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Nurse Karla Becker Takes Pulse of Metro Bus Operation

BY RICH MORALLO

(Nov. 17, 2004) Never in her wildest transit dreams did Case Nurse Karla Becker of the Risk Management Department envision herself driving a Metro bus.

But there she was on a recent morning, turning a huge steering wheel and operating a 40-foot CNG bus around the yard of Carson Division 18.



Nurse Karla Becker of the Risk Management Department operates 40-foot CNG bus around the yard of Carson Division 18.

"I normally drive a small two-door Honda Civic," said Becker, a claims unit case manager. "When I drove that bus for the first time I actually looked for a clutch."

Becker and three other Metro and Long Beach Medical Center employees participated in South Bay Service Sector's annual medical staff transit orientation.

"The three-hour tour shows what takes place at a division from the time a Metro operator signs on to work until he or she pulls the bus out of the yard," said Jackie Anderson, who coordinates Workers' Compensation claims for the sector.

Demonstrate daily environment

Assistant Transportation Manager Craig Smith, who let all of the visitors take a turn at driving the bus, wanted to demonstrate the daily environment of an operator. "We showed the visitors how an operator sits, steers and stops."

On the maintenance side of the yard, Manager Ken Matsuno had a service attendant show the visitors how to hook up the fuel nozzle to a bus, and use cleaning equipment to blow away dirt and dust inside the bus.

Rosie Espinoza, a client services representative with Long Beach Medical Center, appreciated the chance to visit the 15-acre Metro bus yard, located near the 110 and 405 freeways in Carson. "The trip was very informative and I now understand the working environment of bus operators."

Becker, who normally spends her time at Metro Headquarters working on case files on the computer or attending coordination meetings, said after the field trip that she had a better understanding of what operators have to deal with.

"When I was driving the bus I realized that an operator really has to be aware of everything around the bus, even objects that are at a

distance," she said.

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