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A Wayside Story

- Safety's first at Metro's Wayside Systems, where employees top 900 days without lost work due to injuries.

By SHANTAY IOSIA

(Dec. 15, 2004) Wayside Systems has reached almost 950 days with no lost work day injuries this December. No small feat for one of the riskiest jobs at Merto.

Wayside, a group of about 370 employees, is responsible for the maintenance of 20,143,200 square feet of rail and rail facilities.

"Wayside is the fuel, street and traffic signaling all rolled up into one organization and is critical to the success of rail operations," says Rob Chappell, deputy executive officer, Rail Operations. "We're the one-stop shop for rail."

The division is divided into seven departments: communications, custodial, facilities maintenance, traction power, signals and engineering. Together they maintain, repair, install and rebuild rail facilities to inherent to the operation of the rail system.

Wayside employees work in challenging environments.

When repairing a catenary wire last month for Metro Green Line, employees worked in elevated buckets alongside operating tracks. As overnight temperatures dropped to 30 degrees, managers and crews worked 12- and 14-hour shifts to repair the damage.

"We have a pretty dedicated staff who have embraced the safety first program," says Chappell. "Managers and supervisors can preach safety all we want but it's the employees who are the ones who actually do it."