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The Division 15 team focused on reducing Metro Bus accidents are, from left, instructors Joanna Ricci and Robert Filan, Assistant Transportation Manager Ron Reedy, Instructor Michael Johnson, Transportation Manager Gary Spivack and Instructor Ethel Fields.

PHOTO: ERIC RAPP



Rain Couldn't Wash Out Division 15's October Safety Record

By ERIC RAPP

(Jan. 4, 2005) The normally clear skies over Southern California turned gray and rainy in October 2004, but for East Valley Division 15 Assistant Transportation Manager Ron Reedy and the division Instruction team, it turned out to be the best month in a long time.

While other divisions' accident rates went up as the weather turned poor and roads grew slick, the Division 15 team's accident record not only went down from the previous month, it was the best record in the Metro system.

For Reedy and the instruction team, it was the culmination of more than a year's worth of effort to improve ongoing training for operators.

First, the instruction department instituted a policy of accident check rides: Any operator with three or more accidents in a year, even if the accidents are considered unavoidable, has a ride-along from an instructor within three days of the last accident.

A dangerous situation?

"There may be something that the operator didn't even realize they were doing that was causing problems," says Reedy. "Or there may be a dangerous situation that the operator has no control over, that we can identify and work to get fixed."

Sometimes, identifying problems is simplicity itself: Using a map and

pushpins, the instruction team can easily see where most accidents have happened, and come up with strategies to help minimize danger.

Reedy's restructuring of the instruction department also helped to stop duplication of effort and increase timely response to problems.

When he started at Division 15, accident reviews took two-and-a-half months to complete. The instruction team set a goal to finish all accident reviews in two weeks, and met that goal. Now, most instructors are able to be in the field for the majority of their day.

'Couldn't be prouder'

"I couldn't be prouder of this team," says Reedy. "Ethel Fields, Robert Filan, Michael Johnson, Phillip Lockwood, Connie Lussier, and Joanna Ricci have all done a great job of turning this place around."

All the work has paid off. Division 15 has seen a constant reduction in accidents over the past year, leading to October's win.

It's paid off in other ways, too: By having instructors do check-rides with operators who return from long-term sick leave, there have been no Workers' Compensation-related injury relapses in the 13 months since the program began.

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