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Investigating agencies continue rescue operations at site of Metrolink tragedy Thursday morning.



NEWS PHOTO: BRIAN VANDER BURG / LAT

## Metrolink Trains derail at Atwater site near Glendale; 10 die, at least 200 injured

- **On the scene:** Metro provides bus bridge for stranded Metrolink passengers; shuttles continue between Glendale and Burbank stations to transport Metrolink passengers around the accident site.
- **In tomorrow's report:** Donna Blanchard, Metro Commute Services account supervisor, boarded Metrolink train 100 at 6 a.m. Five minutes later, she dived between the seats and braced for the worst.

By GAYLE ANDERSON

(January 26, 2005) - At least 10 people died and nearly 200 were injured this morning when two Metrolink trains collided after one hit a car parked on the tracks at a crossing near San Fernando Road and Chevy Chase Drive in Atwater, just north of the Glendale Metrolink Station.

The southbound Metrolink train 100 was heading to downtown Los Angeles shortly after 6 a.m. when it hit a Jeep Cherokee SUV parked on the tracks. The train then bounced into a Union Pacific freight train before crashing into the northbound Metrolink train 901.

The northbound Metrolink train 901, which originates in Union Station and terminates in downtown Burbank, carries an average of 30 to 50 passengers. The southbound Metrolink train 100, which originates in Moorpark and terminates at Union Station, has an average ridership of 200 to 250.

(News sources report police have since taken a man into custody who is suspected of

leaving his car on the tracks in an aborted suicide attempt. He is expected to be charged with homicide in connection with the chain reaction of crashes that culminated in the fiery derailment that left 10 people dead and caused scores of critical and serious injuries.)

CEO Roger Snoble arrived on the scene shortly before 10 a.m., as city officials gathered for a briefing and news conference attended by Los Angeles Mayor James Hahn, Los Angeles Police Chief William Bratton, Glendale Police Chief Randy Adams, and Los Angeles Fire Department Chief William Bamattre.

### **Metro provides bus bridge**

Snoble said Metro is providing a bus bridge to transport stranded Metrolink passengers to and from Union Station.

The service was responsible for transporting nearly 900 passengers. Some 550 passengers were shuttled from Burbank Metrolink Station to Union Station. Another 270 passengers were shuttled from Union Station past the accident scene to Burbank Station. The shuttle was disbanded at 9:08 a.m. when Metrolink suspended train service.

Shortly after the accident occurred at 6:05 a.m., Bus Operations Control called Metrolink to offer assistance, said Tom Jasmin, Bus Operations director. Even before the numbers stacked up to disastrous proportions, BOC staff began coordinating with divisions to dispatch buses to the Glendale and Burbank Metrolink stations and Union Station.

A new level of assistance was quickly determined as the story developed. Soon after Metro buses began their first runs, Jasmin established a staging area at the abandoned K-Mart parking lot on San Fernando Road and Fletcher Avenue in Glendale.

Ultimately, some 30 Transit Operations personnel and 20 Metro buses were deployed in the operation, said Jasmin.

### **Metrolink to resume service**

Beginning Thursday morning, Metro will provide a bus shuttle between the Metrolink Glendale and Burbank stations every 30 minutes to transport Metrolink passengers around the site of the accident. The bus bridge provided by Metro allows Metrolink trains to resume regularly scheduled service on Thursday.

For today, Metrolink plans to operate two trains departing at 5:10 p.m. and 6:40 p.m. from Union Station traveling to the Glendale Metrolink Station. From there, Metro buses will shuttle passengers to the Burbank Metrolink Station where they can board Metrolink trains bound for Antelope Valley or Ventura County lines destinations.

The Metro shuttle service will continue until further notice, said Jasmin.