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Metro Rail's Wild, Wet Weekend of Lightning, Rain and Mudslides

- Rail system was battered, but fought back
- Crews are bracing for more stormy weather
- [Weather forecast](#)

> Rain that saturated an unstable hill alongside the Metro Gold Line dumped mud, debris and a tree onto the northbound tracks. >



By BILL HEARD, Editor

(Feb. 22, 2005) After a wild, wet holiday weekend spent coping with lightning-sparked electrical outages, rainwater damage and mudslides that affected service on all four Metro Rail lines, controllers and maintenance crews are bracing for another round of storms.

Weather forecasters are predicting scattered thunderstorms, heavy downpours, gusty winds and hail through Tuesday night with isolated thunderstorms likely on Wednesday morning.

When that weather hits, it will find a rail system that was battered, but fought back against great odds to maintain customer service however it could. Service problems were most severe Friday evening and early Saturday morning, when lightning strikes repeatedly interrupted service on the Metro Green and Blue Lines.

On Monday, debris from a small landslide just north of the Arroyo Seco Bridge forced Metro Gold Line trains to single-track between the Mission and Southwest Museum stations, with a stop at Highland Park.

Rainwater burst doors

Also on Monday, rainwater pouring into air vents at the Metro Red Line's Wilshire/Western



Rail Facilities Systems technicians Andy Villa, foreground,

station burst through emergency exit doors on the west end of the station, swept across the passenger platform and flooded electrical rooms, but service was delayed for only 10 minutes or so.

Action at the Rail Operations Center went into high gear, Friday, when an electrical outage reaching from the South Bay to Whittier cut power to the Green Line between the Imperial/Wilmington and Crenshaw stations and, later, affected the line east to Norwalk.

After several hours, power was restored to all but a stretch of Green Line track between the Avalon, Harbor Freeway and Vermont stations. Buses from Carson Division 18 and Arthur Winston Division 5 formed a bus bridge, supplemented by buses and vans driven by Metro Blue Line operators.

and Ignatius Kelly use a sump pump to clear water from the backup battery room at the Wilshire/Western station.



Water pouring into air vents at the Wilshire/Western Metro Rail station burst through this door on the passenger platform.



An air duct damaged during the weekend storm lies in pieces at the Wilshire/Western station.

It was a tense five or six hours in the ROC, which worked on emergency generator power for more than four hours early Saturday as controllers fought against the storm to keep trains running, sometimes dispatching "rescue trains" to restart stalled Green Line cars.

'Hit pretty hard'

"We did fairly well, although we got hit pretty hard Friday night and early Saturday," said ROC Manager Byron England. He complimented employees who worked past their shifts and who set up and operated the bus bridge.

As controllers contended with Green Line problems, street flooding between Washington and Flower in downtown LA slowed Metro Blue Line service for a while just before midnight, Friday.

Early Saturday, Traction Power employees and supervisors worked to restore power during electrical outages on the Green Line and that affected Blue Line service from the Del Amo station south to the Long Beach Transit Mall and intermittently from the Artesia station north.

"Everyone did a bang-up job," said Rob Chappell, deputy executive officer for Wayside Systems. "Communications and facilities

maintenance – it was a busy weekend for us.”

Thick mud cascaded

Storm-related problems continued into Monday on the Gold Line when a section of hillside between the Mission and Highland Park stations gave way and thick mud cascaded onto about 10 yards of tracks.

“Mud was all the way up to the top of the rails on the northbound track and reached onto the southbound track,” said Gold Line Transportation Manager Duane Martin, noting that a five-member Wayside Maintenance crew quickly cleared the tracks. “They worked hard. It was heavy shoveling.”

A Metro Rail engineer was dispatched Tuesday morning to assess the hillside, but the northbound track remained closed to through trains due to concerns about the possibility of more mudslides. Gold Line trains were operating on 20-minute headways, Tuesday, while single-tracking on the southbound tracks through the mudslide area.

“We’re very fortunate to have this Metro Rail team,” said General Manager Gerald Francis. “When adversity hits, they show their stuff. They’re committed to keeping the service going for the customers who depend on us.”

WEATHER FORECAST

Today...Showers with scattered thunderstorms...heavy downpours... gusty winds and small hail. Some thunderstorms may be severe in the afternoon. Highs near 60. Southeast winds 15 to 20 mph.

Tonight...Showers with scattered thunderstorms...heavy downpours... gusty winds and small hail. Some thunderstorms may be severe in the evening. Showers diminishing from the west overnight. Lows in the upper 40s to mid 50s. East winds 15 to 20 mph.

Wednesday...Partly cloudy with isolated thunderstorms. Showers likely in the morning...diminishing afternoon. Highs in the lower to mid 60s. East winds around 15 mph in the morning. Chance of precipitation 60 percent.