

[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

► [Safety](#)

► [Pressroom](#) (web)

► [Ask the CEO](#)

► [CEO Forum](#)

► [Employee Recognition](#)

► [Employee Activities](#)

► [Metro Projects](#)

► [Facts at a Glance](#)
(web)

► [Archives](#)

► [Events Calendar](#)

► [Research Center/ Library](#)

► [Metro Classifieds](#)

► [Bazaar](#)

Metro Info

► [30/10 Initiative](#)

► [Policies](#)

► [Training](#)

► [Help Desk](#)

► [Intranet Policy](#)

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CEO Roger Snoble, center, looks on as Material Supervisor Jon Lyle explains how the Automated Guided Vehicles (AGV) are programmed to transport pallet-loads of parts and supplies throughout the central warehouse. Also on the tour of the Material Division facility were, from left, Jim Montoya, Julie Ellis, Ted Montoya and Lonnie Mitchell.



Photos by Bill Heard

Automated Equipment Keeps Central Warehouse Moving

- CEO cites the system's 'ingenuity and technology'

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(June 2, 2006) Every couple of weeks, more than 32,000 equipment parts orders and supply transactions are routed through Material Division computers in the central warehouse at the Regional Rebuild Center.

That enormous number of requests would overwhelm the 40 or so employees who work in the cavernous warehouse, if it weren't for the automated machines that retrieve, lift and move a vast array of items to and from the storage bins to picking stations and the loading platform for shipment to the operating divisions.

Perhaps the most visible components of the automated system are the new robotic



Material Control Clerk Chuck Hernandez monitors the accuracy of the parts retrieval system. He is one of some 40 employees at the central warehouse.

vehicles – called AGVs (Automated Guided Vehicles) – that recently replaced models dating back to the 1980s. The AGVs are constantly busy whisking pallets loaded with supplies across the warehouse floor.

"There's an incredible amount of ingenuity and technology that we're putting to work for our customers," CEO Roger Snoble said, Tuesday, during a tour of the warehouse. "It's a very impressive operation."

'They really know this equipment'

While Material Control Clerk Chuck Hernandez monitored the accuracy of the parts retrieval system, Snoble said, "The machinery is remarkable, but what I'm really most impressed with is the dedication of the employees who work here. They really know this equipment."

Material Supervisor Jon Lyle explained the various systems to Snoble, noting their labor-saving and safety features.

"I like the emphasis on safety," Snoble said later. "This facility has gone three years without a lost-time accident and that's extremely commendable."

Snoble took the tour of the Material Division along with Chief Procurement Officer Lonnie Mitchell, Procurement DEO Ted Montoya, and material managers Julie Ellis and Jim Montoya.

Metro expects to expand its parts warehousing facilities in the next couple of years with construction of a new warehouse on a 1.39-acre parcel just north of the RRC.

The project, approved by the Board of Directors in July 2005, will provide bulk storage of bus and rail materials, parts and supplies, and will provide shop space for Facilities Maintenance personnel moved in from South Park.