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With exceptional skill, Operator Eric Davis was able to bring the bus safely to a halt at the bottom of the embankment before helping his three passengers back up to the road.



Photos by Bill Heard and Frank Cecere

Operator's Driving Skill Keeps Patrons Safe as Bus Plunges Down Embankment

- Passenger calls Eric Davis a hero following head-on collision in Pico Rivera
- Crash kills one, critically injures two in oncoming car

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(June 29, 2006) One grateful passenger called him a hero. Others praised his skill in keeping his bus upright as it careened down a steep, boulder-strewn embankment moments after an oncoming car struck the coach just before 6 p.m., Wednesday, in Pico Rivera.



Metro Bus Operator Eric Davis

But Eric Davis, 41, a Central Division 1 bus operator with six years' service, told Fox 11 News: "All I can say is, 'Thank God. God is good.'"

Three passengers were onboard the bus as Davis drove south on Rosemead Boulevard in a rural area about a mile south of Route 60. Witnesses said a silver Chevrolet, northbound on Rosemead, suddenly swerved into the southbound lane and hit the bus head-on.

A young male passenger in the Chevrolet was killed in the collision and the male driver and another young man were critically injured and helicoptered to County-USC Hospital.

Two of the three passengers on Davis' bus were slightly injured and transported to a nearby hospital.



Metro field equipment technicians inspect the damaged bus as it sits at the bottom of the embankment off Rosemead Boulevard. It required two large tow trucks to winch the bus back up the embankment and onto Rosemead Boulevard.



Called Davis a hero

The third passenger, Gloria Urbina apparently was unhurt and told Fox News, "The bus go all the way down and I am safe. And I think God, you know, protect me." She called Davis a hero.

After bouncing and scraping over boulders as it hurtled diagonally down the 150-foot embankment, the bus came to rest right-side-up with Davis still at the wheel. He and the passengers were able to get off the bus and climb back up to the road.

"He did an absolutely fantastic job," said Tom Mattocks, Division 1 assistant transportation manager, who went to the scene of the accident. "It takes an incredible amount of skill to keep one of those buses upright while driving over loose boulders. And a lot of good luck."

Tom Jasmin, director of

Operations Control, also was at the scene and was amazed that Davis was able to maintain control of the bus. "Then, to lead those passengers up that rocky hillside. That was heroic."

It took two large tow trucks to winch the bus back up the embankment, an operation that ended about 11 p.m. The accident scene cleared about 20 minutes later.



Firefighters and local media responded to the accident scene.



The Line 265 bus, shown here after it was recovered, was struck on the left front by the oncoming car.