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Division 1 maintenance employees honored by the Board's Operations Committee for their quick action were, center left to right, Assistant Maintenance Manager Tim Williams, Mechanic Adam Barron and Mechanic Fred Hines. Joining them, from left, were General Manager Alex Clifford, Maintenance Manager Hector Rojas, Director Yvonne Burke and, center rear, Director John Fasana.



Photo by Ned Racine

Division 1 Maintenance Team Saves Man from 'Great Bodily Harm'

- Michelin employee Christopher Ball was pinned beneath a bus

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(July 20, 2007) It's not certain how long Christopher Ball lay with his arm pinned under a bus early in the morning of May 7, but the four Central City Division 1 employees who came to his rescue probably saved his arm and may have saved his life.

The Metro employees – Equipment Maintenance Supervisor Tim Williams and mechanics Adam Barron, Fred Hines and Ed Bautista-Gonzalez – were commended for their actions during the Board's Operations Committee meeting on Thursday.

Individual plaques presented to each of the men said their actions on May 7 "...ultimately saved a Michelin employee from great bodily harm."

Ball, the Michelin tire company employee, was changing the two left rear tires of Metro Bus 5465 sometime around 3 a.m. that Monday morning. Somehow, the bus slipped off its jacks and fell on him.

Michelin co-worker Alejandro Ceja discovered the injured Ball at 3:30 a.m. and ran to the Division 1 maintenance office for help. The four Metro employees sprang into action.

Barron ran for a forklift. Williams, Hines and Bautista-Gonzalez grabbed jacks and pry bars and attempted to lift the bus off of Ball. The three also talked to Ball, keeping him calm while they worked around the pinned man.

Lifted the sagging coach

The pry bars lifted the sagging coach just enough to relieve some of the pressure on Ball's arm. Arriving on the forklift, Barron was able to wedge the forks under the rear bumper and raise the bus enough to pull Ball free.

Fire Department paramedics soon arrived and transported Ball to USC Medical Center where he was treated for minor injuries.

"He was really lucky that his co-worker found him, reported it right away and that our guys reacted immediately and got him out of there," says Division Maintenance Manager Hector Rojas.

An investigation by Metro's Quality Assurance Department concluded that the Michelin employees had not properly chocked the front tires of the bus.

Williams, 44, joined Metro in 1999; Hines, 48, joined the agency in 1981; Bautista-Gonzalez, 30, has been with Metro since 2004; and Barron, 26, has been with Metro since 2003. All four men work the third shift at Division 1.

"They do an excellent job," says Rojas. "It goes to show you what kind of employees we have here."