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Metro Rail maintenance had to repair both the north and south tracks near the Gold Line Sierra Madre station on Saturday after a tractor/trailer crashed through the barrier on the 210 freeway and onto the tracks. The accident happened at around 1 a.m. and impaired service until noon.



Photos: Metro Rail

## Tractor/Trailer Smashes Barrier, Damages Gold Line Tracks

- Saturday morning accident near Sierra Madre station occurred prior to start of service

By JIMMY STROUP

(Oct. 16, 2007) Metro Rail repair crews were up and working early Saturday morning following a single-vehicle accident that had a tractor/trailer crashing through the eastbound 210 freeway Jersey barriers and onto the Gold Line tracks just west of the Sierra Madre station.

The accident happened at around 1:15 a.m. The driver of the truck appeared to be unharmed and was released at the scene. Trains don't run on the Gold Line at that hour, so there was no danger to Metro employees or passengers at the time of the accident.

Hector Guerrero, the assistant manager of Metro Rail transportation who oversaw the repairs, said the accident was "pretty bad" in terms of damage to Metro's tracks. The cause of the accident is unknown, but Guerrero said the rain – which had been coming down pretty hard at that point – may have been a factor.



Although the tractor/trailer was badly mangled, the driver walked away and no trains were involved in the accident, which occurred prior to the beginning of morning service.

"The truck actually bent one piece of track and twisted another – one on the north line and one on the south," he said. "The driver had to be going a pretty good speed to do that kind of damage. These are steel rails he managed to bend."

Over the next 10 hours, a crew of 25 was required to clear the demolished truck from the tracks and then repair the damaged rail segments. The truck wasn't hauling a load, which made the work easier than it could have been, Guerrero said.

**Coping with the damage**

Metro established a bus bridge between the Allen and Sierra Madre stations and had Sheriff's deputies on site at both stations to guide would-be passengers to where they needed to go.

"All our trains had to be short lined – turned back at the Allen station. The controllers did a good job of giving the best service possible with both tracks shut down," Guerrero said. "The bus side was excellent with getting us a bus bridge to cope with the damage."

The repair crew worked quickly to fix the damaged track. Single-track service was established at 11:30 a.m. and full service was restored at noon. With the lighter passenger load and fewer trains running on the weekend – as well as the accident occurring at the end of the line – Guerrero said it wasn't the worst of possible situations.

"We were toward the end of the line. It didn't cut our line in half or anything, which could have been a real headache," he said. "It could have been worse, but it was bad enough."

Caltrans won't be able to replace the broken Jersey barriers that separate the 210 freeway and the Gold Line tracks – which run between east- and westbound lanes – until the end of the week at least. Until it is, Metro Rail

operators will run at a reduced speed of 25 mph on the south (eastbound) track along the unprotected section.

**Busy all over**

Meanwhile, the Newhall Pass tunnel accident Friday night that saw 31 vehicles crashed and burned and three people killed had Caltrans working overtime on the other side of the county.

Metro Rail managers and bus divisions in the San Fernando Valley were prepared for the anticipated extra load of commuters riding Metrolink from north LA County to avoid the Newhall Pass accident.

But, Caltrans shored up the tunnel and reopened the I-5 Freeway in time for Monday morning rush hour. Even though larger than normal Metrolink ridership was noted, Metro Rail operated without incident on regular service schedules and extra buses weren't required.

"This whole weekend was kind of crazy," Guerrero said.