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Taking a moment for the camera before the start of Monday's emergency evacuation exercise in San Pedro are, left to right, TOS Michael Morris, Mechanic Larry Pradier, Operators Hugo Lopez, Kenneth Avery, Wisconsin Lim and Silvester Tapia, TOS Jeannette Mayo, Operator Shameka Herod and TOS Luis Alcantar.



'Poison Gas' Drill at Port of LA Evacuates Hundreds

- Metro Liners take prominent role in moving evacuees

By BILL HEARD

(Dec. 11, 2007) A cloud "poison gas" billowed up from tanker cars parked on a rail siding in San Pedro harbor, Monday morning. The gas endangered employees in nearby buildings – City Hall, the Port of Los Angeles headquarters and the LA Maritime Museum.

It was all a drill sponsored by the Port of Los Angeles, but local fire departments and law enforcement and other first responder agencies – a total of about 200 personnel – sprang into action.



Port of Los Angeles police officers and Sheriff's deputies accompanied the San Pedro City Hall employees during the evacuation exercise.

LAFD and Long Beach fire trucks rolled to the scene. Port police, LAPD officers and Sheriff's deputies, Coast Guard officers, emergency response teams and even Animal Control sped to the area.

Firefighters in haz mat "space suits" were deployed to deal with the gas leak. They set up a decontamination tank for those affected by the poisonous gas.



The LAFD haz mat team suits up for the emergency drill. According to the exercise scenario, poisonous gas escaped from tanker cars on an adjacent rail siding. The team was sent in to control the "leak."

Meanwhile, a team of transportation operations supervisors and Metro bus operators drawn from Arthur Winston Division 5 and Gateway Division 10 drove up in five brand new 60-foot Metro Liners.

Shepherded by motorcycle officers, they boarded some 300 evacuees at the affected buildings and transported them to safety at Ports of Call, upwind from the drifting gas cloud.

By a little past noon, firefighters and haz mat teams had the situation under control. It was time for a fresh fish lunch provided by the Port of LA.

"It went really smooth," said Steve Rank, assistant Operations Control

manager, who coordinated Metro's participation in the exercise. "It was a piece of cake. This will lead to many more exercises with law enforcement and Homeland Security."

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