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On the job: Transit Security Officer Clocks in 35 Years

< Transit Security Officer Tom Kraft in his element, the Gateway Tower loading dock.

Photos by Ned Racine

By NED RACINE, Editor

(July 30, 2008). Tom Kraft, who marked his 35th year working for Metro this month, serves as a professional observer, an expert on truck geometry and an interpreter of mechanical sounds, all because of his seven years on the Gateway Tower loading dock.

Kraft, a security officer "I," is a man with a wry sense of humor and a frequently used laugh. He began working for RTD in 1973 and was part of the security team at Metro's former headquarters building at 1060 South Broadway.

For seven years, the Newark, New Jersey native has been the security presence and traffic controller of the loading dock, an expert on fitting a 28-foot-long truck into a frequently crowded space. "I sort of adopted it as a home," the Newhall resident said.

General
Services
Supervisor
Phyllis
Meng,
Tom Kraft
and
Transit
Security
Lt. Jim
Cook at a
ceremony
handing
Kraft his
35-year
Metro
Service
Pin.



Phyllis Meng, General Services Supervisor of Building Services, is very glad he did.

"Kraft is very efficient," Meng said. "He knows everything that goes on down here. He knows every piece of freight that comes in. He knows where all the deliveries are going. When he's not here, it becomes chaos."

To keep shipments moving smoothly, one wall of Kraft's tiny office overlooking the loading dock contains a white board stuffed with department telephone numbers—from Accounting to the Print Shop—so he can notify them when their shipments have arrived.

According to Kraft, the loading dock averages 10 deliveries a day, with the busiest time beginning at 6:30 a.m. When the loading dock is busy, it's noisy, with trucks setting their air brakes on Cesar Chavez Avenue before they enter under the loading dock's overhead door.

These include vault trucks dropping off cash and tokens. Other trucks deliver huge rolls of paper for the Print Shop and bring parts of escalators and elevators. Barrels of lubricants arrive and eventually move to the divisions.

Aramark delivers uniforms and takes rags from the print shop. The most time-consuming deliveries, according to Kraft, are deliveries of drinking water. Those trucks may sit in the loading dock for several hours.

When the Gateway Tower opened 12 years ago, Building Services originally had responsibility for the loading dock. "We quickly realized . . . we needed to have security down here because the loading dock was a place where people could get into the building," Meng said. She and Kraft have worked together, on and off, since 1995.

"I can look at a truck and tell you whether it will fit or not," Kraft said, noting he worries most a vehicle fitting under the 13-foot, 6-inch overhead door. In making his evaluation, he even considers the height of tires.

Besides instantly knowing whether a truck will fit in the loading dock, Kraft has become adept at the sounds the loading dock's overhead gate and cardboard compactor make when they require service, an advantage for Meng's maintenance budget.

According to Meng, Kraft's knowledge also contributes to keeping the

loading dock a secure entrance. "He knows who the truck drivers are, where they are going and what trucks are scheduled to come in."

One believes Kraft, a U.S. Air Force veteran, when he says, "I know everything that belongs down here." His concern stems, in part, because there is little free space in the loading dock: "We are so tight on available space there is no storage down here."

Kraft, who has two daughters, Teresa, a preschool teacher, and Erin, an x-ray technician, spends his free time traveling to visit family and friends.

He plans to stay on the loading dock until he retires, in part because he enjoys seeing the sunlight through the large Cesar Chavez Avenue door.

"It's my world," he explained. "That's all I can say. I know what works down here."