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MTA CONDUCTS RAIL SAFETY DISASTER DRILL

The MTA will conduct a **simulated** rail-school bus accident in Long Beach on Wednesday, May 18 at 10 a.m. to emphasize rail safety and test emergency response procedures.

The simulated accident will be staged on the Metro Blue Line track at Pacific Avenue between 8th and 9th Streets in Long Beach. This is one of five staged accidents to be held throughout California in conjunction with National Transportation Safety Week and National Operation Lifesaver Awareness Day.

"There's no question of our commitment to rail safety," said MTA Chairman and Los Angeles City Councilman Richard Alatorre. "This exercise is part of a continuing public education effort we've undertaken. Since January 1987, MTA has given rail safety presentations to over 1 million school students," he said.

MTA's rail safety effort has three components: education, enforcement and engineering.

"On the enforcement side, we've established a remote camera program at selected intersections which resulted in as much as a 92 percent reduction in grade crossing violations," said MTA CEO Frank White.

"Our engineering effort includes installation of medians and gates to prevent drive around accidents," White added. "We're also installing pedestrian gates, and horns at grade crossings that are remotely activated by the train operator."

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DISASTER DRILL

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The accident scenario provides for a collision between a Metro Blue Line train and a school bus. Thirty-five students from William Logan Stephens Middle School in Long Beach will play the role of accident victims. They will have make-up applied to give the appearance of serious injuries. Adult volunteers will serve as additional victims on the Blue Line train.

Various Long Beach and Los Angeles County police, fire and rescue agencies will respond. Ambulance companies will take the "injured" from the bus and train to four local hospitals, where they will go through admittance procedures.

"Each Blue Line car weighs 97,000 pounds, while the average automobile weighs 3-4,000 pounds," said MTA Director and Long Beach City Councilman Evan Anderson Braude. "The train's stopping distance is 780 feet at 55 miles per hour. It's easy to understand what's at stake," he said.

Nearly half of all train-auto accidents occur at grade crossings with active warning devices.

"People are ignoring gates, lights and bells, and trying to beat the train," said Braude. "We want people to understand that the accidents that result are more severe than highway accidents, and are 30 times more likely to result in death and injury," he reported.

The object of Operation Lifesaver is to educate the public on the importance of rail safety. Since California started its Operation Lifesaver program in 1979, grade crossing accidents have declined almost 50%.

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