PHOTOS BY LISA HUYNH

Howard Novak, left, observes as Ken Kraft uses the new tool to release an air line from its quick-release valve.

No More Broken Air Lines

West Valley 8 Mechanics Design Innovative Tool

By LISA HUYNH

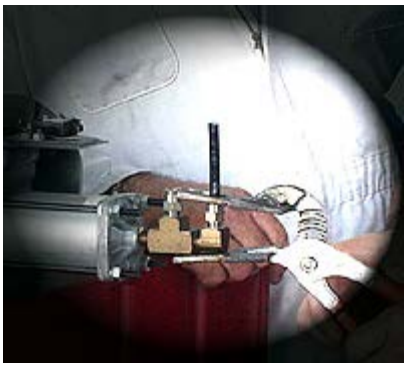
(Sept. 5, 2002) Metro Bus mechanics know how difficult and frustrating it can be to replace a brake application valve without damaging an air line or two.

West Valley Division 8 mechanics Howard Novak and Ken Kraft came up with an innovative way to solve this problem.

After weeks of brainstorming, the mechanics designed a tool that makes disconnecting air lines from the compressed air tank fittings on Metro buses quicker and easier.

“This tool cuts the time in half, giving us more time to work on other repairs,” says Novak.

Before / After



Move your mouse over image to see mechanics demonstrate how to release an air line from its valve.

Compressed air tanks are used to operate the rear brakes, front brakes, doors, driver’s seat and windshield wipers. The air lines are disconnected in order to replace parts such as brake relay valves, brake application valves and air dryers.

Air lines could be damaged

Previously, mechanics would either cut the air lines or use knives or pliers to remove the air lines from the fittings. This was a problem because the air lines could be damaged, requiring more materials and extra time to replace.

Kraft made the tool three months ago by welding two steel plates, which are designed to fit different size quick-release valves, to a channel-lock plier.

This tool allows the mechanics to clamp down on a valve – making a quick and easy release of the air

The tool allows the mechanics to clamp down on a valve – making a quick and easy release of the air line.

line. Kraft is working on another one for Novak.

“We make a lot of our own tools here at Division 8 to make our job easier,” says Lead Mechanic Ike Allison. “We’re known for making a lot of our own tools because we believe in updating our equipment.”

Back to Bulletin Board