

(323) 881-2401

June 24, 2003

TO: THE HONORABLE GLORIA MOLINA
SUPERVISOR, FIRST DISTRICT

FROM: P. MICHAEL FREEMAN 

TRAIN DERAILMENT - CITY OF COMMERCE

On June 20, 2003 at approximately 12:01 p.m., our Department's Communications Center received a call from the East Los Angeles Sheriff's Substation reporting via the PSAP (Public Safety Answering Point) System of a possible train derailment at 6544 Ferguson in the City of Commerce. Our Department did not receive a call from Union Pacific Railroad informing us of the runaway train. At 12:02 p.m., our Communications Center dispatched a first alarm train derailment response to the City of Commerce.

At 12:05 p.m., the first arriving units reported a train derailment with approximately 10 to 15 rail cars involved and several homes being partially or completely destroyed. Given the extent of the damage, a second alarm and specialized rescue units were requested at 12:06 p.m. At the peak of the incident, over 200 fire personnel were at the scene.

Emergency personnel found 11 victims at the scene, and an immediate triage system was established to assess and treat the victims at the scene. Five victims were transported to local emergency room facilities for further evaluation and treatment.

In an effort to mitigate this complex incident, a unified command structure was established by the first arriving chief officers. This unified command consisted of the Fire Department as the lead, Sheriff's Department, City of Commerce, Los Angeles County Building and Safety, Union Pacific Railroad, and Chevron representatives.

Once it was determined that the incident was stabilized and all residents were accounted for, a uniform approach was implemented to secure the area and to evacuate the remaining residents prior to any work on the actual rail line(s) being initiated. Residents were asked to voluntarily evacuate and were transported by the City of Commerce to the Wyndham and Crown Plaza Hotels for the remainder of the evening.

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The primary concern for the Department was the fact that there were three underground pipelines adjacent to the train derailment and one of the rail cars came to rest near their locations. Chevron shut all three lines at the opposite ends of the derailment but could not physically inspect the pipelines until the rail car was removed. The pipelines carried crude oil, diesel fuel, and natural gases.

On June 21, 2003 at approximately 12:30 p.m., Union Pacific Railroad removed the rail car in question. Chevron inspected the pipelines and determined that they were undamaged and proceeded to place them back in operation. Once it was determined that the pipeline threat had abated and the fact that the structures involved had been inspected and evaluated by our Department as well as Building and Safety, the City of Commerce was provided a list of those residents who would be allowed to return and occupy their homes. With the assistance of Southern California Edison and The Gas Company, residents were allowed back into their homes at approximately 4:00 p.m.

The following is an account of the our units assigned to the incident:

First Alarm at 12:02 p.m.

Engine 1	Engine 43	Haz/Mat Coordinator
Foam 1	Engine 50	Battalion 3
Engine 22	Sq 50	Battalion 10
Engine 27	USAR 103	Assistant 4
Quint 27	Engine 103	
Haz/Mat 43	USAR Coordinator	

Second Alarm at 12:06 p.m.

Engine 3	Ch. Deputy 1	Deputy 4
Engine 39	Ch. Deputy 2	Forestry 1
Engine 40	Battalion 13	Forestry 5
Engine 25	Sq 3	Battalion 45
Quint 3	Sq 14	Battalion 49
Quint 4	Sq 39	Battalion 61
Haz/Mat 105	Sq 40	Medical Director
Engine 105	USAR 130	Safety Officer 3
MTB 53	Engine 134	Safety Officer 8
Deluge 87	Haz/Mat 76	Safety Officer 10
Mobile Air 115	Engine 76	Safety Officer 11
Dozer 6	Deputy 3	Safety Officer 12
Fire Chief	Deputy 6	Medic 2

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Info 2	Info 4	Info 10
Info 30	Construction 1	Video 3
Camp 2-2	Camp 9-2	Camp 8-2
Camp 19-5	Copter 12	Copter 17
Copter 18	Superintendent 12	Superintendent 40
Utility 3	Utility 13	Utility 16
Utility 20	Rehab 27	Rehab 165
Rehab 166	Rehab 154	USAR Trailer 161
USAR Trailer 163	USAR Trailer 166	Light Unit 25
Light Unit 165	Health Haz/Mat 111	Health Haz/Mat 112
Engine 216	Foam 10	Deluge 105

Logistics Ordered:

250 - Dinners	\$1,250	TOTAL: \$3,500
250 - Breakfast	\$1,250	
6 Chemical Toilets	\$ 600	
4 Rehab Caches	<u>\$ 400</u>	

As previously stated, at no time prior to the train derailment was this Department ever notified by Union Pacific Railroad of the possibility or potential train derailment in our jurisdiction. The Fire Department is presently coordinating with the Sheriff's Department to provide the Union Pacific Railroad and all railroad companies with a 24-hour phone number for emergency notifications in the future.

This memo is intended as an interim to the follow-up report you have requested. If you have any questions, please contact me or Deputy Chief Jesus Burciaga, Prevention Bureau, at (323) 881-2461.

PMF:JB:kj

c: Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite Burke
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Don Knabe
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich
David E. Janssen, Chief Administrative Officer
Louisa Ollague, Deputy, First Supervisorial District
Randi Tahara, Deputy, Second Supervisorial District
Joseph Charney, Deputy, Third Supervisorial District
Matt Knabe, Deputy, Fourth Supervisorial District
Jennifer Plaisted, Deputy, Fifth Supervisorial District