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Press Release

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LIRR

IMMEDIATE

MTA LIRR Begins Major Effort to Combat "Slip-Slide"; Improving Service Reliability a Key Goal

Today, the MTA Long Island Rail Road announced a comprehensive safety and service reliability plan to combat train wheel "slip-slide" conditions and flat wheels. These conditions are a result of low adhesion between the train wheel and the rail during braking caused by a slippery substance - called pectin - created by wheels crushing fallen or scattered leaves. "Slip-slide" is very similar to a car's wheels skidding on an icy road. During last year's fall leaf season, the LIRR's ability to provide reliable service was severely impacted by the significant number of "slip-slide"-induced flat wheels and the resulting high number of cars out of service to repair those flat wheels. Additionally, flat wheels affect customer comfort and can cause noise, vibration, train and track damage.

Taking a pro-active approach to deal with the issue of train wheel "slip-slide," the LIRR is launching a three-pronged program - reducing low adhesion, modifying brake application procedures, and developing contingent train operation.

LIRR President Helena Williams said: "My goal is to ensure that customers have a safe and reliable ride on the LIRR. This comprehensive program we are launching to combat "slip-slide" is designed to improve both safety and reliability during the fall leaf season."

Improving Low Adhesion

Addressing the number-one culprit of low adhesion, fallen leaves, the LIRR is using licensed and insured tree professionals to trim or remove overgrown trees, shrubs and bushes on its track right-of-way this summer. Outreach is underway to local elected officials, communities and homeowners advising them of the need for this work. LIRR representatives will be available to discuss replacing trees at the Railroad's expense with track-friendly trees such as evergreens. Affected property owners can call the LIRR Public Affairs Department, from 9 AM to 5 PM weekdays, at 718-558-8228 to discuss the tree-trimming and vegetation management program. The goal is to complete the work by the end of October. The affected areas, which were targeted through train service computer records, include the Babylon Branch between Lynbrook and Freeport, along with portions of the Atlantic, Hempstead and Port Washington Branches.

In an effort to further increase adhesion, the LIRR has instituted a pilot program to install "smart" sanders on 50 of its M7 electric train cars. Additionally, the LIRR is refining its practice of applying an anti-slip substance, called "sandite," to the rail by coupling this activity with high power washing of affected track areas.

Modifying Brake Application

The second prong of the LIRR's multi-faceted plan for dealing with low adhesion is the special software modification that is being made to the railroad's M-7 electric trains' brakes to better deal with "slip-slide." The modification adds Wheel Slip Protection to automatic train control initiated emergency brake applications - similar to the use of anti-lock brakes on a car.

Train Operation Modification

Further addressing low adhesion, train engineers will have additional training to report "slip-slide" conditions to a central location to enhance overall program management. And, when conditions warrant, the LIRR will institute operating modifications - such as slower speeds - at select times during the leaf season in areas with very low adhesion.