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Press Release

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LIRR

IMMEDIATE

Normal AM-PM Rush Hour Service Anticipated for Monday on the MTA LIRR

Round-the-Clock Repair Effort by LIRR Forces Returns Vital Jamaica Switching Tower to Service Following Fire

MTA Long Island Rail Road customers can anticipate a return to their regularly scheduled trains for Monday morning's rush hour following successful, round-the-clock repairs of the railroad's switch and signal system in Jamaica that was severely damaged by a fire on August 23rd.

By 4 PM Sunday, LIRR forces will have completed repairs and extensive testing of the switch and signal system in Jamaica, paving the way for full restoration of AM and PM rush hour service come Monday. The LIRR – the nation's busiest commuter railroad – operates more than 700 trains into and out of its Manhattan and Brooklyn terminals on a typical weekday.

"I appreciate the challenges our customers faced during the past week and I thank them for their patience during what has been a difficult time," said LIRR President Helena E. Williams. "I would also like to thank the hundreds of railroad employees who worked around the clock to put the damaged signal and switch system back together while keeping service going and assisting our customers throughout the week. Once again, they demonstrated their dedication and commitment to our customers."

The fire last Monday morning damaged a key signal tower located just east of the Jamaica Station that controls 53 signals and 77 switch points in an area where 10 of 11 LIRR branches converge. Despite the damage, the LIRR was able to restore most of its PM rush hour service the day of the fire by using a manual switching system. During last week, the LIRR ran 75 percent of its morning rush hour service and 66-68 percent of its afternoon rush hour service while repairs to the switching mechanism were underway.

The manual, back-up switching system was used to ensure maximum safety during the emergency.

During repairs more than 200 individual wires had to be assessed or replaced inside the signal tower and more than 300 tests had to be conducted to insure safe operation of the signal system. Testing was conducted throughout the weekend.

The switching and signal system in Jamaica is due for a major upgrade and modernization in late October and early November when a \$56 million computerized control center will go online, replacing three existing signal towers that currently control some 155 switches in the Jamaica station area. The Jamaica upgrade is part of a \$150 million effort to upgrade the LIRR's switch and signal system at key areas of the railroad. Two other key switching areas – one near Bellerose and one in Valley Stream – have already been modernized during the last two years as part of the overall project.

"Safety is always our No. 1 priority for our customers and our employees," Williams said. "These modernization projects will help ensure that we are moving toward the latest technology available to control train traffic safety and efficiently. In the event of a fire like the one that occurred last week, the new systems give us greater redundancy, better surge protection and improved diagnostic ability to isolate and fix problems.

"While the new systems are a big improvement, more needs to be done to replace and update some of our old technology throughout the LIRR. That's why we need a fully funded, five-year capital program."