



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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Press Release

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Gateway Arch Tram Malfunction and Power Outage

On Saturday, July 21 at approximately 8:40PM one of nine cables that hoist the south tram broke. The specific cause of the break is still under investigation. As the loose cable fell, it came into contact with the charged tram rail and other electrical components causing a short circuit. The short circuit ultimately caused a fuse to blow in the main electrical switchgear and power to both trams went out. The St. Louis Fire Department evacuated visitors in the south tram which at the time of the power outage had stopped near the lower loading zone. Approximately 40 visitors were walked down from the observation deck to a service elevator at the 300 foot level and then brought to the south lower load zone. Visitors in the north tram remained stalled above the 300 foot level until power was restored at approximately 11PM at which time they were brought down and unloaded. Empty trams were then sent up to the observation deck to bring the remaining visitors down. All tram safety systems worked as designed and visitors were never in any danger.

On Sunday, July 22 the Gateway Arch Visitor Center opened as normal at 8:00AM. After a thorough safety inspection the north tram was placed in service and ridership was strong all day. At approximately 12:30PM, tram mechanics discovered a broken surge protector and while inspecting the damaged unit frayed wires crossed, causing another power outage which stopped the north tram as happened the night before. The power was restored within fifteen minutes and the north tram continued to operate without incident the remainder of the day. It appears at this time that the damaged surge protector alone or in combination with the cable coming into contact with the charged rail, was the cause of the power outage on Saturday night.

On Monday, July 23 the Gateway Arch Visitor Center opened as normal at 8:00AM again with only the north tram in service. Investigation continues into the cause of the failed south tram cable. An inspector from the St. Louis office of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration arrived today. Because of our utmost commitment to safety, the south tram will remain out of service until all nine cables are replaced. It is expected to take a minimum of 7-9 weeks to manufacture and install new cable.

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July 23, 2007

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