



W-0403– Evacuation for Life Safety Reasons at Forest Glen Station – January 14, 2025

Document Purpose:

This WMSC written report on WMATA Metrorail's safety event investigations and review of Metrorail's findings in accordance with the WMSC Program Standard, in conjunction with the attached Metrorail investigation reports that have undergone WMSC staff review and, if necessary, feedback and revision, describes the investigation activities, identifies factors causing or contributing to the safety events, and sets forth ongoing, additional, or upcoming corrective actions and further oversight work (such as inspections and audits) as necessary or appropriate. The WMSC's ongoing oversight during the investigative process, including safety event reporting and verification, participation in investigative interviews, data review, consistent communication with the Metrorail investigations team, and feedback on Metrorail's reports leads to further improvements prior to consideration of the reports by WMSC Commissioners for adoption. The WMSC's safety event investigation oversight assures the sufficiency and thoroughness of Metrorail's investigations. The WMSC Commissioners are considering these documents (the WMSC review and Metrorail's investigation reports) as a unified item for adoption at the Washington Metrorail Safety Commission meeting on October 21, 2025.

WMSC staff recommend adoption of this investigation.

Safety event summary:

On Tuesday, January 14, 2025, the Communications Section inside Metrorail's Control Center notified Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Services (MCFRS), and Metrorail safety department, rail operations department, communications and Metrorail Transit Police Department (MTPD) of an active fire alarm at Forest Glen Station. The smoke emitted for two minutes, became heavier and then self-dissipated without any visible flames or active fire.

Customers inside the station were evacuated by train or using an elevator with assistance from a Rail Supervisor and authorization from the Control Center. As part of the station's safety protocols to prevent the spread of smoke or fire within the station, all elevators changed to override mode after being used by the Rail Supervisor, and train service was suspended. Smoke dissipated prior to the arrival of MCFRS, who deemed the station clear after conducting an inspection.

An investigative review of closed-circuit television footage revealed light to moderate haze triggered the fire alarm and activated the fire curtains on the platform.

There were no injuries reported due to this event.



Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
Department of Safety
Office of Safety Investigations

FINAL REPORT OF INVESTIGATION A&I E25070

Date of Event:	January 14, 2025
Type of Event:	A-4: Evacuation for Life Safety Reasons
Incident Time:	14:57 Hours
Location:	Forest Glen Station
Time and How received by Safety:	15:03 hours / MICC Notification
Washington Metrorail Safety Commission (WMSC) Notification Time:	16:05 Hours
Responding Safety Officers:	None
Rail Vehicle:	None
Injuries:	None
Damage:	None
Emergency Responders:	Metro Transit Police Department (MTPD), Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Services (MCFRS)
Safety Universal Data System(SUDS) Incident Number:	20250115#122958

Incident Date: 01/14/2025 Time: 14:57 hours
Final Report – Evacuation for Life Safety Rev. 1
E25070

Drafted By: SAFE 705 – 03/10/2025
Reviewed By: SAFE 707 – 03/14/2025
Approved By: SAFE 707 – 03/14/2025

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Forest Glen Station – Evacuation for Life Safety Reasons

January 14, 2025
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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AIMS	Advanced Information Management System
CCTV	Closed-Circuit Television
MICC	Metro Integrated Command and Communications Center
MOR	Metrorail Operating Rulebook
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
SMS	Safety Measurement System
WMATA	Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
WMSC	Washington Metrorail Safety Commission
RTC	Rail Traffic Controller

Executive Summary

**Note that all times listed are approximate and may contain minor variations due to differences between systems of record. **

On Tuesday, January 14, 2025, at 14:57 hours, the Metro Integrated Command and Communications Center (MICC) received an active fire alarm signal from Forest Glen Station. Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) footage revealed light to moderate haze triggered the fire alarm and activated the fire curtains on the platform.

In response, the Communications Section notified Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Services (MCFRS), Emergency Response Team (ERT), Metro Transit Police (MTPD), Safety Primary Responder, Communications, and Rail Operations Supervisors (ROS).

There was no evidence of fire or smoke when MCFRS arrived, so a command post was not established. A bus bridge was implemented between Wheaton Station and Silver Spring Station, bypassing Forest Glen Station. The ventilation fans were activated inside Forest Glen Station. The Radio Rail Traffic Controller (RTC) instructed Rail Vehicle Operators (RVO) to proceed without servicing the station, with the environmental and ventilation systems turned off.

During the event, twelve customers were evacuated from Forest Glen Station by boarding a train or utilizing an elevator, with assistance from ROS and authorization from the MICC. The elevators at the station changed bypass mode to further safeguard passengers. RVOs and ERT performed track inspections on both tracks, but no signs of smoke or fire were found.

The ancillary rooms at the platform level were inspected by MCFRS, who found no signs of smoke or fire. At 16:14 hours, after the station inspection and all-clear from MCFRS, normal service resumed at Forest Glen Station.

The probable cause for the Evacuation for Life Safety Reasons at Forest Glen Station on January 14, 2025, was debris from the track bed lights emitting smoke into the station which triggered the fire alarm.

Incident Site

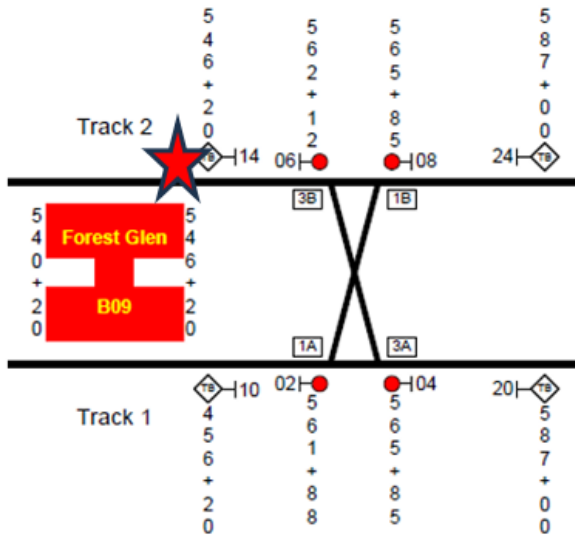
Forest Glen is an indoor station with side platforms. Forest Glen Station is 196 feet underground and only accessible by high-speed elevators. Forest Glen Station has direct fixation tracks with an interlocking on the outbound end of the station.

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Field Sketch/Schematics



The above depiction is not to scale.

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this accident investigation and candid self-evaluation is to collect and analyze available facts, determine the probable cause(s) of the incident, identify contributing factors, and make recommendations to prevent a recurrence.

Investigative Methods

Upon receiving notification of the Evacuation for Life Safety Reasons at the Forest Glen Station on January 14, 2025, Safety dispatched a cross-functional team to assess the scene and conduct the subsequent investigation. Safety team members worked with relevant WMATA subject matter experts to review the incident's facts and data.

The investigative methodologies included the following:

- Site Assessment through video and document review
- Documentation Review – Collection of relevant work history information and process documentation contained in WMATA systems of record. These records include:
 - Metrorail Operating Rulebook (MOR)
 - National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
 - Safety OEP Incident Response Report
 - Maintenance Section Emergency Tunnel Fan Operation Form
- System Data Recording Review – Collection of information contained in Metro Data Recording Systems. This data includes:
 - Audio Recording System (ARS) playback
 - Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV)

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Investigation

On Tuesday, January 14, 2025, the CCTV revealed that at 14:56 hours, smoke began to emit from the track bed lights on track 2 on the Glenmont Station end of Forest Glen Station. The smoke emitted for two minutes and became heavier before self-dissipating without any visible flames or active fire. At 14:57 hours, the smoke traveled to the lower-level kiosk, which triggered the emergency fire door light and caused the fire gate to close automatically. All elevators changed to override mode as part of the station's safety protocols to prevent the spread of smoke or fire within the station.

Train service was suspended at Forest Glen Station and a bus bridge was implemented between Wheaton Station and Silver Spring Station. The ventilation fans were activated inside of Forest Glen Station. When the fire alarm activated, elevators changed to bypass mode and moved to the top of the station. The customers who were inside the station were instructed to board a train to evacuate the station.

At 15:02 hours, the Assistant Operations Manager (Rail 2) contacted MCFRS to respond to Forest Glen Station. MCFRS arrived on-site at 15:15 hours. At 15:20 hours, MCFRS personnel were on the platform with the Emergency Response Team at track 2 to investigate the source of the smoke but were unable to locate any signs of an active fire or residual smoke. CCTV showed that at 15:38 hours, Metro Transit Police (MTPD) arrived at Forest Glen Station. The smoke had dissipated, and MCFRS verified that the station was clear. At 15:39 hours, the station was reopened.

During the event, third-rail power was not de-energized and a command post was not established.

At 15:57 hours, all emergency responders exited the station.

Chronological Event Timeline

A review of ARS playback, i.e., phone and radio communications, revealed the following timeline:

Time	Description
14:56:07 hours	Smoke appeared from the track bed lights on track 2 at Forest Glen Station. [CCTV]
14:57:34 hours	The smoke self-dissipated from the track bed lights. [CCTV]
14:57:50 hours	Track 2 Emergency Fire Door and light activated, and the fire gates began to close. [CCTV]
14:57:53 hours	<u>Button RTC</u> : Contacted Emergency Tunnel Fan Operations to request the tunnel fans on to evacuation at Forest Glen. [Phones Ops 1 Phone]
14:59:36 hours	<u>Assistant Operations Manager (AOM)</u> : Informed the MICC OM of an active fire alarm at Forest Glen Station. [Phone Rail 1]
15:02:44 hours	<u>MICC Communication Section</u> : Contacted the Fire Department. [MICC Reliability Phone]
15:03:40 hours	<u>OM</u> : Informed the Safety Information Official (SIO) of an active fire alarm at Forest Glen Station. [Phone Rail 1]
15:03:46 hours	<u>Assistant Operations Manager (AOM)</u> : Instructed the Button Rail Traffic Control (RTC) to offload Train ID 130 at Wheaton Station and perform a track inspection on Track 2 from Forest Glen Station to Silver Spring Station. [ROCC OPS 1 Phone]

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Time	Description
15:07:49 hours	<u>Button RTC</u> : Dispatched a Rail Operations Supervisor (ROS) from Glenmont Block House to Forest Glen Station.
15:15:46 hours	<u>MCFRS</u> : Arrived at Forest Glen Station. [CCTV]
15:20:16 hours	<u>MCFRS</u> : On track 2 at the Glenmont end attempted to locate the smoke or source of. [CCTV]
15:39:46 hours	Fire gate reopened for normal service. [CCTV]
15:40:34 hours	<u>MTPD</u> : Advised that they were located on the platform with the FD and reported that there was no fire and possibly dust being pushed through the station. [Radio MTPD 1X]
15:47:41 hours	ROS informed the Button RTC that MCFRS found no active fire or smoke and exited Forest Glen Station. [ROCC OPS 1 Phone]
15:52:14 hours	<u>MTPD</u> : Advised that the FD had cleared the smoke and was waiting for the elevators to reset to reopen the station. [Radio MTPD 1X]
15:53:06 hours	<u>MTPD</u> : Advised that the elevators were back in service. [Radio MTPD 1X]

Note: Times above may vary from other systems' timelines based on clock settings.

Weather

On January 14, 2025, at the time of the incident, NOAA recorded the temperature as 37°F, with fair skies, winds 7 mph, and 29% humidity. Forest Glen is an inside station with a side platform. Weather was not a contributing factor in this incident

Related Rules and Procedures

SOP 678 Procedure for Managing Fire and Smoke on the Metrorail System Metrorail Operating Rulebook rules:

- 1.19.1 Indications of fire observed on vehicles or WMATA property must be reported immediately to the Rail Vehicle Operator, the nearest supervisor, or the Rail Section of the MICC.
- 17.28.1 Emergency Maintenance Procedures are invoked to address conditions occurring during revenue hours that can result harm to individuals, fire/smoke events; damage to equipment or property causing a significant service disruption; are significantly impairing a safety critical system, or any combination of these circumstances. These events are of a short duration (typically, 30-minutes or less) and are of a nature that emergency repairs can be accomplished without the use of a Roadway Maintenance Machine.

Evidence of Fatigue

The biomathematical fatigue modeling application (SAFTE-FAST Web SFC) was not applied for this event.

Fatigue Risk

The biomathematical fatigue modeling application (SAFTE-FAST Web SFC) was not applied for this event.

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Post-Incident Toxicology Testing

Post-Incident Toxicology testing was not conducted for this event.

Findings

- Smoke appeared from track bed lights on the outbound end of Forest Glen Station and self-dissipated after Train ID 128 exited.
- Train ID 130 was offload at Forest Glen Station on track 2 and instructed to perform a track inspection from Forest Glen Station to Silver Spring Station.

Immediate Mitigation to Prevent Recurrence

- MCFRS inspected the station for the source of the smoke.
- The station fans were activated.

Probable Cause Statement

The probable cause for the Evacuation for Life Safety Reasons at Forest Glen Station on January 14, 2025, was a debris from the track bed lights emitting smoke into the station which triggered the fire alarm.

Appendices

Appendix A – Scene Photographs

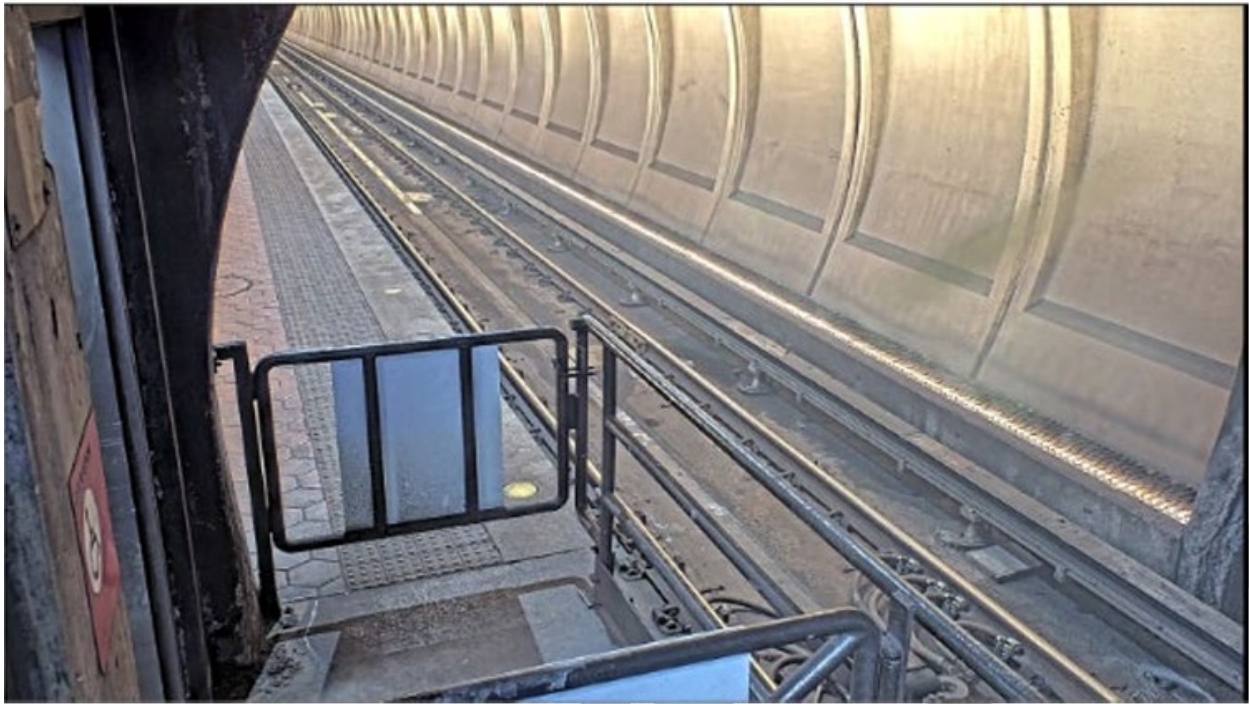


Figure 1 Smoke starting in track bed lights.



Figure 2 Fire date light activated.

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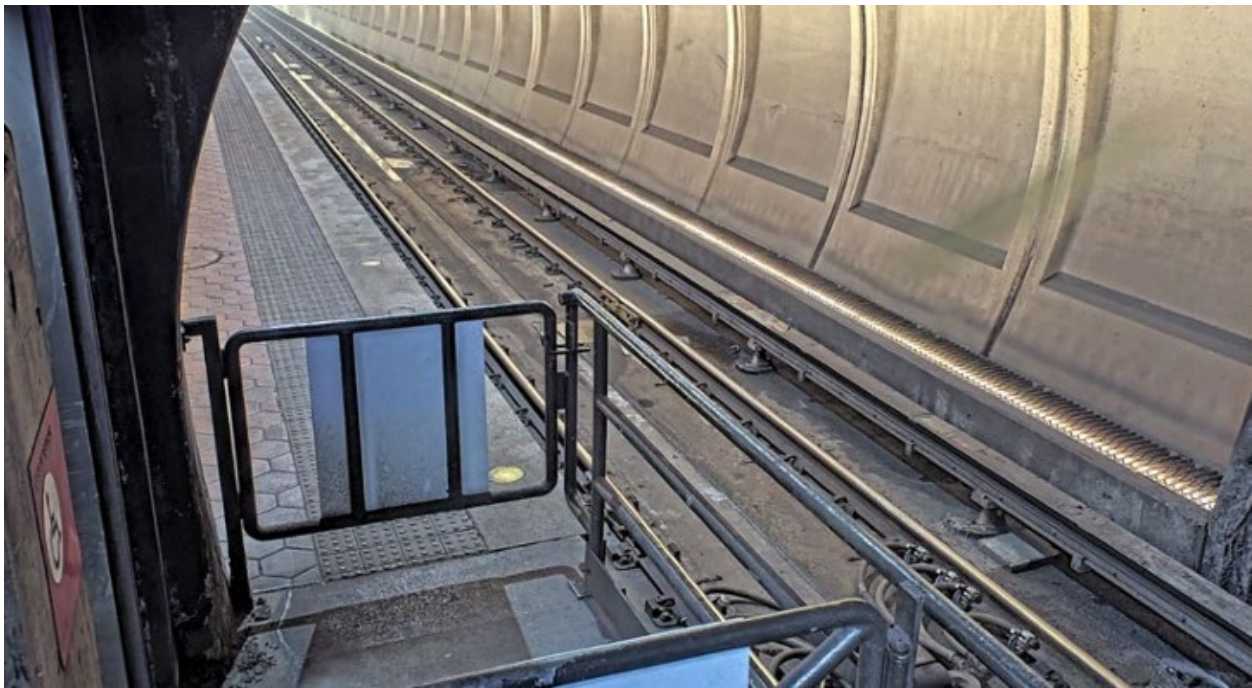


Figure 3 Smoke self dissipates



Figure 4 Fire department arriving to Track 2 Forest Glen Station.

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