MTA worker falls to his death while clearing subway tracks: police

EAST HARLEM, Manhattan — An MTA worker fell to his death while clearing subway tracks in Manhattan, prompting several subway service changes and a chaotic Tuesday morning commute, officials said.

Police said the worker, a 23-year-old man, was clearing debris when he fell onto the tracks in the tunnels near the East 125th Street and Lexington Avenue station around 4:50 a.m. Police earlier said the worker had been struck by a train.

It remains unclear how far the man fell. Police said he fell 20 feet, but MTA President Andy Byford later said the distance was about 9 feet.

The worker was hospitalized with a serious head injury, according to police. He later died.

The Transport Workers Union has released the following statement:

"This is a tragedy, not just for this young man and his family, but for the entire City. While millions of New Yorkers were asleep, this young transit worker was on the job in a tunnel beneath Manhattan, so others could get to work or school or wherever else they need to go in the morning. We will be involved in a full investigation to determine how this tragedy happened. Our entire brotherhood and sisterhood of transit workers extend our condolences to his family."

The incident prompted service changes that caused a chaotic morning commute. Hundreds of people could be seen lined up down Lexington Avenue for hours, scrambling to get on a bus.

A woman told PIX11 she walked from the Bronx, only find out the train she needed was not in service.

"It's communication that's the problem," she said.

When asked what she thought of the MTA, she replied, "Today, it sucks."

Riders who take the Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 trains faced extensive delays for hours. By 11 a.m., delays continued on the Nos. 4, 5 and 6 trains, though service had resumed.