An MTA worker fell to his death today when a wooden safety rail gave way inside an East Harlem subway station, sending him plunging about 20 feet to the lower-level tracks, sources told The Post.

A photo exclusively obtained by The Post shows a broken end of the round rail inside a metal fitting that a source said is attached to a steel column opposite the upper-level, southbound 6 line platform in the 125th Street station.

The photo also shows a screw that secured the rail in place still embedded in the remaining wood.
MTA workers line up together as the victim is removed from the station.

The worker, identified by sources as St. Clair Richards-Stephens, 23, was standing in a niche between two columns about 100 feet south of the station when the rail snapped shortly before 4:50 a.m., sources said.

He fell onto the southbound 4 and 5 tracks below and suffered head trauma, the NYPD said.

There is a void between the upper and lower levels behind the niche from which Stephens fell, sources said.

EMS workers tried in vain to revive him before declaring him dead at the scene.

“The crew that was working with him heard a shout and saw him lying face down on the lower level. So some kind of terrible tragedy has occurred,” MTA president Andy Byford said during a news conference at the station.

Stephens weighed 300 pounds, but it was unclear if that was a factor in the incident, which is under investigation.

The MTA said it was unknown when the wooden rail was installed or if it was designed to support a person’s weight.

Members of Richards-Stephens’ union, Transport Workers Union Local 100, said they were grieving.

“This is a tragedy, not just for this young man and his family, but for the entire city,” said TWU Local 100 President Tony Utano. “While millions of New Yorkers were asleep, this young transit workers 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.”

Utano said the union will get to the bottom of what caused the incident.

“We will be involved in a full investigation to determine how this tragedy happened,” he said. “Our entire brotherhood and sisterhood of transit workers extends our condolences to his family.”

The agency suspended all non-emergency subway work through Tuesday night in the wake of Richards-Stephens’ death.
Richards-Stephens began working for the MTA about six months ago, and was part of a crew removing old rails from the track bed and putting them onto a work train at the time of his death.

Additional reporting by Shawn Cohen and Kevin Fasick


NEW YORK

MTA worker dies after falling on subway tracks in Harlem

The 23-year-old employee was removing rail from the tracks near 125th Street and Lexington Avenue when he fell 9 feet and was knocked unconscious.

By Nikki M. Mascali  Published : March 20, 2018 | Updated : March 20, 2018

An MTA employee died early Tuesday morning after falling while working on the subway tracks in Harlem, agency officials said.

The 23-year-old male was part of a work crew that was removing redundant rail in the tunnels near the 125th Street 4/5/6 station at Lexington Avenue, New York City Transit President Andy Byford said.

We’re sad to report that a New York City Transit employee died this morning after sustaining a fall on the 4, 5 and 6 lines near the 125 St station. Service is suspended on the 6 line from 86 St to 3 Av-138, and southbound on the 5 line from Nereid Av to E 180 St. (1/2)

6:42 AM - Mar 20, 2018

Just before 5 a.m., the worker, who was later identified by a transit union source as St. Clair Ziare Richards-Stephens of the Bronx, fell about 9 feet, “hit the ground and was immediately knocked unconscious,” Byford said, adding that investigators have yet to
determine what prompted his fall. Richards-Stephens had been employed with the MTA for six months.

Byford said that responders tried to resuscitate Richards-Stephens for about 45 minutes, but he was pronounced dead at the scene.

“My top priority is to visit his family,” Byford said. “These are the days you dread.”

"This is a tragedy, not just for this young man and his family, but for the entire city,” the Transport Workers Union said in a statement. “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 investigation into Richards-Stephens’ death suspended service on the 6 train and caused 4 and 5 trains to run local in both directions between 125th Street and Grand Central-42nd Street, causing delays on those green-line trains as well as on 1, 2 and 3 trains throughout the morning on Tuesday.


NATIONAL

New York Subway Worker Falls Onto Track, Dies

BY ALEX PERRY ON 03/20/18 AT 10:13 AM

A New York City subway worker died early Tuesday morning while clearing trash from the track, the New York Daily News reported. The victim, a 23-year-old man whose name has not been identified, died in a tunnel south of the 125 Street and Lexington Ave station in East Harlem.

New York Daily News

✔@NYDailyNews

The MTA worker was 23 years old http://nydn.us/2HOFsVq

6:12 AM - Mar 20, 2018
The worker’s crew was clearing debris from a track servicing the southbound 6 train, which runs from the Bronx to southern Manhattan. The worker leaned against a rail shortly before 5 a.m., causing the rail to break. He then fell 20 feet down to the 4/5 train track below, according to the New York Post.

He sustained a head injury, after which his coworkers pulled him to the train platform. He died shortly after 5:30 a.m.

New York City Transit Authority president Andy Byford said the worker had worked with the MTA for six months.

“We do appreciate this will be very inconvenient for customers, but on days like this, our main thoughts are with our poor deceased colleague,” Byford said in a press conference.

Meanwhile, Transport Workers Union Local 100 president Tony Utano spoke about the tragic death of a fellow transit worker.

“This is a tragedy, not just for this young man and his family, but for the entire city,” Utano said. “While millions of New Yorkers were asleep, this young man was working in a tunnel beneath Manhattan so others could get to work, or school, or wherever else they need to go to in the morning.”

The worker’s death more or less halted the 4, 5 and 6 trains during peak morning commute hours. Riders were frustrated, as they likely did not know the cause of the mass delays on the transit lines.

NYCT Subway

@NYCTSubway

4, 5 and 6 trains are bypassing 125 St in both directions.

Northbound 4 and 5 trains are running local from Grand Central-42 St to 125 St and bypassing 125 St after a fatal injury sustained by NYCT employee this morning.

8:15 AM - Mar 20, 2018
The MTA worker’s death came mere hours after a 57-year-old man committed suicide by jumping in front of an L train heading west in Manhattan on Monday night. A few dozen people die in New York’s subways each year, whether by suicide, accident or malicious acts.

MTA worker takes fatal fall on East Harlem subway tracks when protective railing breaks

An MTA track worker fell to his death on the tracks of an East Harlem subway station when a protective wooden railing broke early Tuesday, authorities said.

St. Clair Zaire Stephens Richards, 23, was only on the job for six months when co-workers heard a scream — and then saw their mortally wounded colleague lying flat on the ground, authorities said.

The weeping father of the 6-foot-3, 270-pound worker fretted that his son’s massive size played a part in the shocking subterranean death.

“He should’ve took care of himself,” said his namesake dad St. Clair Stephens Richards. “I told him always has to be aware. That’s why I wanted him fit, and not too overweight.

“To do that job, you always to have your head on a swivel.”

The father, with tears streaming down his face, said he hadn’t spoken with his oldest child for a year in a dispute over the younger man’s girlfriend.
“Maybe if I had talked to him more, kept talking to him, maybe this wouldn’t have happened,” said the distraught dad, who still shared his home with the victim.

“I was thinking if I would have told him before he left this morning, ‘Be careful’ ... I can’t believe this. I really can’t.”

Tony Utano, president of Transport Workers Union Local 100, confirmed that “the railing did break” before the fatal 4:50 a.m. fall that wreaked havoc on East Side subway service for the morning rush hour.

St. Clair Richards Stephens Sr. mourns as he talks about his son, MTA worker St.Clair Zaire Stephens Richards.

(ANTHONY DELMUNDO/NEW YORK DAILY NEWS)

“All our members are going to be talked to, to see exactly what the hell went wrong here,” said Utano.

Stephens was working on a stretch of a downtown tunnel for the No. 6 train when he tumbled through the railing, landing on his head after a 9-foot plunge onto the express Nos. 4-5 train tracks.

He was pulled alive onto the platform at the E. 125th St. station and died about an hour later.

FDNY members brought Stephens’ body out of the station as MTA workers removed their helmets and hung their heads in respectful silence.
FDNY members brought the slain worker’s body out of the station. (ANTHONY DELMUNDO/NEW YORK DAILY NEWS)

“Even though the emergency services worked really hard, they tried CPR — they really did try valiantly to save him — he unfortunately passed about an hour after that,” Transit Authority President Andy Byford told reporters. “So obviously our first thoughts are with him.”

Byford added, “This is something you dread, working in this line of business.”

In a statement, the TWU extended its condolences to the young man’s family.

“While millions of New Yorkers were asleep, this young transit workers 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,” the statement read.

Subway passengers take MTA busses as an alternate after the 125th St. station closed. (ANTHONY DELMUNDO/NEW YORK DAILY NEWS)

Subway service was disrupted on the East Side after the 4:50 a.m. tragedy until the body was removed around 10:15 a.m., officials said.

Buses after bus loaded with commuters poured down Lexington Ave. to E. 116th St. Long lines of frustrated straphangers waited for yet more buses.

“This is bad, this is crazy,” said Jason Williams, 25. “Every bus that comes everyone packs into it and the rest of us can’t get on.”

“I think for the most part they're doing the best they can," he added of the MTA. “I texted my manager, she understands. She's late too. The whole city will be late for work today.”
Subway workers direct passengers to take alternate transportation after the 125th St. subway station was closed due to an MTA worker’s death early Tuesday morning.

(ANTHONY DELMUNDO/NEW YORK DAILY NEWS)

Not all the straphangers were irked at the MTA.

"The MTA needs a lot of work, there are thousands of people trying to get to work at one time. I don't know what more they can do," said Shayna Grant, 28.

"I told my boss I'm going to be a few hours late today. It's horrible, but it is what it is. We just all have to deal with it."

Hotel worker Christina Haizel, of the Bronx, 46, had to take two shuttle buses from 149th St. to 125th, and from 125th downtown to her workplace at 51st St.

“It's not good,” she said. “There's traffic. Traffic is jammed. I'm stuck.”