

SEPTA knew train locks didn't work

Family, friends protest death of youth in subway



BY Daily News Staff Writer
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Carrying signs that read, "Justice for Kyle's death," dozens of demonstrators massed in front of the agency's Center City headquarters during rush hour yesterday afternoon, protesting the agency's handling of a boy's subway death last week.

In the middle of the crowd, Evette Harris wept for the loss of her 12-year-old son, Kyle, who was found July 11 on SEPTA's train tracks near the Race-Vine station.

Now, a week after his death, Harris is still trying to get SEPTA to explain how and why her son was killed.

Harris, 34, wearing a T-shirt with her son's picture on it, was surrounded by her family, who were joined at 4 p.m. by supporters outside SEPTA's headquarters at 1234 Market St.

"I don't know how Kyle got into that booth," his mother said. "All I know is I don't have a son, and I won't ever get him back."

Police reports said that Kyle had made his way into a vacant driver's booth, stuck his head out the window and was struck by two poles along the tracks. "This is so, so, so sad," said Doreen Harris, Evette's sister, who accused the agency of racism.

"If the dead kid was caucasian, this whole situation would have been handled differently."

Frances Jones, SEPTA's assistant general manager of governmental affairs, denied that race was a factor in how Kyle's death was handled.

"I understand her pain," said Jones, who is black. "But there's still an investigation going on. We don't know all the facts."

SEPTA spokesman Richard Maloney said that since a fatality was involved, the case was handed over to Philadelphia police and the medical examiner's office. Those offices, Maloney said, were responsible for notifying the family.

He said that SEPTA, like city police, was conducting a probe.*