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# Service Awards

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**Congratulations** to these dedicated individuals for their work and continued service with the Department of Roads. They celebrate their service dates in *April* and *May*.

## 40 Years

Dennis Baehr, District 2

## 30 Years

Herbert Fultz, Materials & Research  
James Hertzell, Right-of-Way  
Gene Thomsen, Roadway Design  
Jose Vergil, District 5

## 20 Years

David Bailey, District 1  
David Jochim, Materials & Research  
Ricky Jones, District 4  
Robert Kindschuh, District 3  
Cheryl Pfeiffer, Communication  
Tom Vogt, District 5

## 10 Years

Sharon Brandt, District 1  
Scott Henery, District 3  
Monty Koch, District 3  
Mark Kovar, District 8  
James Moreau, District 6  
Mark Rogers, District 1  
Lynden VanderVeen, Bridge  
Amy Wattier, District 3

## the Roadrunner

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From the Director

# Everyday Heroes on the Work Zone Front Lines

**By John L. Craig**

Director, Nebraska Department of Roads



**John L. Craig**

In recent months, we have focused on our nation's everyday heroes — mentally tough, highly trained, and ready to meet challenges head-on, without hesitation. Here at the Department of Roads, I've witnessed our highway construction and maintenance workers performing the demanding and dangerous duties required of them. Their lives are on the line, each and every day; yet many motorists drive dangerously close to them in work zones, often at high speeds, often oblivious to these guardians of the road. Not only are the workers' lives at risk, but the motorists' lives as well.

National Work Zone Awareness Week, April 8-12, is the perfect time for motorists and highway construction and maintenance workers alike, to pause and consider extra precautions needed to ensure safety in our highway work zones. As another busy construction season is getting under way in Nebraska, with more than 300 projects planned, added patience and caution are imperative when driving in work zones. There is no margin for error.

Nebraska has bucked the national trend regarding work-zone fatalities, with 8 deaths reported in 2000, compared to 12 deaths in 1999. But that is still 8 deaths too many.

Over and over again, we hear that the main cause of most work-zone crashes is improper driving. By slowing down, heeding the posted warning signs and remaining alert

for potential work-zone hazards, most of these senseless accidents can be avoided.

Those who work on the roadways—our contractors, maintenance crews, project managers, surveyors and inspectors—receive ongoing training to do their jobs well, with safety as the top priority. Our recent initiative to certify department and contractor traffic control personnel is an example of this. NDOR worker deaths and injuries in work zones have remained low, with three injuries and no deaths last year. But we must always be vigilant and alert, paying attention to constantly changing surroundings and circumstances.

## Work Zone Research

This year, in conjunction with National Work Zone Awareness Week, the Department of Roads planned a State Work Zone Safety Summit. During this meeting, we will examine the latest research on construction work zones, review work zone safety issues, discuss possible solutions and create an action plan to address these issues. This is an excellent opportunity to bring our thoughts to the table, generate constructive feedback and improve highway work-zone safety for workers and the driving public in Nebraska.

Driving is inherently dangerous. As we work, with our many partners, to promote safety and reliability through work zones, our goal remains constant: to improve safety for motorists and highway workers. By working together to save lives, we can all be everyday heroes.◆

# Drivers' Best Strategy for Increased Highway Work Zones: Slow Down, Stay Alert

The 2002 construction season is underway in Nebraska. With more than 300 state highway construction projects planned, there is an increased potential for traffic congestion and safety hazards. While the dilemma is real, the solution is simple: by slowing down when approaching highway work zones and staying alert, the risk for accidents and injuries can be reduced or prevented.

More than 1,000 people were killed nationwide in construction work zones in 2000, the deadliest year on record. Eight of those deaths were in Nebraska. Sixty-three fatal accidents were recorded in Nebraska work zones from 1996 through 2000, more than double the national average for the five-year period. At least nine of Nebraska's fatal crashes over the past five years occurred in Interstate 80 work zones.

A total of 765 work-zone-related incidents were reported in Nebraska in 2000, resulting in 292 injury accidents and 465 property damage

accidents. Of these incidents, 318 were rear-end collisions.

The key reason for most work-zone crashes continues to be drivers' failure to pay attention, according to law enforcement officers' reports. More than half of the drivers involved in construction zone fatalities contributed to the accidents by speeding, running off the road or crossing into the wrong lane. Eighty-five to 90 percent of the accidents occurred on straight and level sections of roadway.

More motorists are injured in work-zone accidents than highway workers. Therefore, drivers need to stay alert when driving near highway construction sites any time of day. Drivers should observe lower speed limits, heed posted warning signs and be alert for potential work-zone hazards.

Roads Department and contractors' employees are at risk when working near moving traffic. Since 1991, highway work-zone crashes claimed the lives of two Department of Roads

## Safety Tips to Live By

- > **Stay alert.** Dedicate your full attention to the roadway.
- > **Pay close attention.** Signs and work zone flaggers save lives.
- > **Turn on your headlights.** Workers and other motorists must see you.
- > **Don't tailgate.**
- > **Don't speed.** Note the posted speed limits in and around the work zone.
- > **Keep with the traffic flow.**
- > **Don't change lanes in the work zone.**
- > **Minimize distractions.** Avoid changing radio stations and using mobile phones while driving in the work zone.
- > **Expect the unexpected.** Keep an eye out for workers and their equipment.
- > **Be patient.** Remember the work zone crew members are working to improve your future ride.


workers and injured 24. The Roads Department wants to ensure the safety of its employees, contractor's personnel and motorists by increasing awareness of potential safety hazards.

It is important to remember that highway work zones are much more than an inconvenience. Work zones are essential to building safer, smoother roads that will ultimately save lives. **Remember — when you're in the driver's seat, you make the difference. Drive safely in work zones. ♦**

When You're in the Driver's Seat—

***You Make the Difference!***

Drive Smart in Work Zones





This view of the four-lane U.S. 275 Expressway is from the Ida Street bridge looking towards Fremont at the Highway 64 interchange.

# Newly Completed U.S. 275 Expressway Ready for Travelers

**A heavily-traveled segment of U.S. Highway 275 between Omaha and Fremont has been opened to traffic.**

Work on this portion of the expressway, which runs from just south of Fremont to just northwest of Waterloo, began in August 1998. The project was completed in three segments.

The first segment consisted mainly of grading on a new location and construction of six viaducts at key locations. Work was also done on some slab bridges and drainage structures. The roadway required 1,614,182 cubic meters of embankment.

The second phase of the project began May 30, 2000. Plans called for 363,350 square meters of paving. The project was one of the first in Nebraska to be built with the travel

lanes, the median shoulder, and part of the right shoulder paved as a thirty-foot wide section. The extra width provides a stronger and more durable pavement.

The project realigned Hwy. 275. The old highway will be turned over to Douglas County. Nebraska Hwy. 36 and several county roads were also realigned to meet the new expressway alignment, as was the intersection of Nebraska Hwy. 64 with Hwy. 275.

This was the biggest single paving project that the state had let to this point. The project received the 2001 Award of Merit Concrete Pavement Construction in the category of Interstate Highways and Expressways from the Nebraska Concrete Paving Association.

The third phase of this project began last November and is due to be opened to traffic this fall. This phase consists of building two viaducts over

old Hwy. 275 and the Union Pacific Railroad tracks. One viaduct is part of Hwy. 64 west of Valley, and the other is east of Valley and connects commercial, industrial and residential areas to the expressway. All grading on this project is south of the railroad tracks. The unseasonably warm weather this winter allowed work to proceed, and the project is ahead of schedule at this time.

Hawkins Construction Company of Omaha was the prime contractor for all three projects at a total construction cost of \$36,037,814. Kirkham Michael of Omaha was the project designer. John Baker was the NDOR Consultant Coordinator, and Frank Veverka, of Fremont, was the NDOR Project Manager. Other NDOR inspectors on this project were Mike Larsen, Kevin Burris, Brian Becker, Kathy Hansen, Jerry Cherek, and Gary Holeman, all of District 2. ♦

# Paving Awards Presented in Kearney

Several NDOR project managers were honored with awards for both concrete and asphalt pavements at the annual Project Managers Conference held March 5-7 in Kearney. The awards recognized their work on Nebraska highways and municipal streets during 2001.

The Nebraska Department of Roads presented awards for outstanding asphalt pavement smoothness. Awards of excellence for highway construction projects using concrete pavement were presented by the Nebraska Department of Roads and the Nebraska Concrete Paving Association.

## Concrete Pavement

Project representative Tom Farber of the District 4 Kearney Office and subcontractor Blessing Construction Company of Kearney received the award for the excellent concrete pavement constructed on the 56th Street, Kearney Northwest project for Buffalo County. The prime contractor for the project was Hooker Brothers Construction Company of Grand Island. Tom Braun coordinated the project design for the Government Affairs Division.

The award for excellence in Interstate and expressway concrete pavement was presented to Frank Veverka of the District 2 Fremont Office who was the Project Manager

on the US-275 project, Waterloo Northeast. Hawkins Construction Company of Omaha was the contractor. The project design was coordinated by John Baker of Roadway Design Division.

There were two winners in the new category of Concrete Pavement Restoration. District 6 Project Manager Richard Morrell of North Platte and Iowa Erosion Control, Inc., of Victor, Iowa were honored for the concrete patching, dowel bar retrofit, and diamond grinding on the Sutherland West project on I-80.

Project Manager Ray Trujillo of the District 2 Fremont Office and M. E. Collins Contracting Company, Inc., of Wahoo were honored for the concrete pavement patching, concrete pavement widening, and diamond grinding performed on the N-92 project east of Snyder. Roger Grant coordinated the roadway design aspects of the Snyder East project and the Materials & Research Pavement Design Section coordinated the restoration design on both projects.

Pavement smoothness, quality control, innovation, and complexity of the project were considered in determining these awards.

## Asphalt Smoothness

The 2001 Asphalt Smoothness Award of Merit for the smoothest individual project went to Project

Manager Joe Applegate of the District 5 Scottsbluff office and Werner Construction Inc. of Hastings for the East Kimball to Brownson project on I-80 and the tied Potter South project on L17B.

The Award of Merit for the best average of all projects constructed with the smoothness specification in the 2001 season went to Brower Construction Company of Sioux City, Iowa for 44.4 miles of work on three projects.◆

Certificates of Merit were presented to these project managers and contractors for excellent individual project smoothness at the listed locations:

Jerrold Gardner  
District 5, Scottsbluff  
I-80, Brownson-Sidney  
Brower Construction Company

Tom Anderson & Dan Necas  
District 4, York Construction Office  
US-81, Fairmont-McCool Junction  
Werner Construction Company

Richard Kwiatkowski  
District 4, St. Paul  
N-92, Saint Paul West  
Paulsen, Inc., Cozad

Joe Applegate  
District 5, Scottsbluff  
L17C, Brownson South  
Werner Construction, Inc.

Lyle Kohmetscher  
District 4, Hastings  
N-8, Superior East  
Werner Construction, Inc.

## District Construction Safety Awards Presented

The 2001 District Construction "Safe Working" and "Safe Driving" Awards were presented at the NDOR Project Manager's Conference in Kearney on March 6. District Construction Engineers accepting the awards on behalf of their respective districts included, 1 to 1, Keith Meyer, District 4; Mark Kovar, District 8; and Craig Lind, District 5.

District 8 received the "Most Improved Safe Working Award" and the "Safe Working Award." District 8 also received the "Most Improved Safe Driving Award."

Districts 4, 5 and 8 received the "Safe Driving Awards." None of the three districts had a preventable vehicle accident involving district construction employees in the year 2001.◆



# England Named Project Manager of the Year

Jim England was honored by the Nebraska Chapter of the Associated General Contractors of America (AGC) as Nebraska Department of Roads' Project Manager of the Year. England received a traveling trophy and a plaque at the Project Manager's Conference in Kearney on March 6.

England has worked at NDOR for almost 30 years and has been a project manager at the District 1 construction office in Lincoln since February 1992. One of his more prominent projects was the Interstate overlay project, Northwest 48th Street to 56th Street/U.S. Hwy. 77 exit, a 10-mile project that cost over \$7.2 million to build. According to District 1 Construction Engineer Mike Sklenar, England took an active role in partnering efforts with contractors, the State Patrol, businesses and the traveling public. These efforts proved successful in keeping the job running smoothly.

Steve Bartos, Assistant Construction Engineer, noted that during the late 1970s and 1980s, when Bartos was a project manager, England was his primary assistant. Bartos remembers England as a very dedicated worker who demanded the highest quality work from others. Contractors respected him for his ability to schedule the work and communicate

effectively with others in accomplishing the task at hand.

The award is presented annually by the AGC to a NDOR project manager who has upheld the standards of conducting business within the highway construction industry with the highest level of ethics and integrity. The trophy is called the Lyle Leader Memorial Award in

tribute to Mr. Leader, who was a project manager at NDOR for 34 years. He was active in the District 3 Hartington office at the time of his death in August 1991 and was highly respected by his peers within the department and by the contractor members of AGC.

All contractor members submitted a nomination for this award and the nominees were voted upon by the members of the AGC. For the year 2002, England received the high honor. ♦



Jim England, Project Manager in District 1, second from right, accepts the AGC Lyle Leader Memorial Award as Project Manager of the Year. Pictured with him, from l to r, are Dick Ludwig, President of the Nebraska Chapter of Associated General Contractors (AGC), John Chicoine, President of Garcia-Chicoine Enterprises, Inc., and Terry King, Executive Director, AGC.

## Employees Eye Efficiency, Enhancements

By Alice Karas  
Human Resources Division

On October 23, 2001, twenty-five employees representing NDOR Districts and Divisions gathered in Lincoln for the Director's Employee Summit on Efficiency. The Summit provided a forum for employees to discuss ideas for enhancing the quality of the services NDOR provides, ways to promote efficiency and savings, and ways to generate additional revenue.

Many viable ideas and suggestions were discussed at the Summit. Some of the suggestions that are currently being piloted or implemented are:

► **Using video conferencing rather than traveling for meetings.** This

idea is currently being piloted in one of the Districts and at the Central Headquarters. The use of video conferencing will be evaluated for implementation in other areas throughout NDOR.

► **More leadership development to ensure supervisors have proper training to teach and lead.** The department is developing this as part of Workforce Development.

► **Cross train employees and/or publish reference books so that more than one person knows a specific job and duties required.** District Two has a team that is exploring the use of cross training and is developing training assessments and programs.

► **Provide an 800 number for Central Headquarters and the Districts.** This is being piloted in one of the divisions and will be evaluated for use throughout NDOR.

► **Use of postage meters rather than stamps for the Districts.** The Communication Division's Office Services is researching the cost and benefits of purchasing postage meters for the districts.

As these ideas are explored and implemented, resulting efficiencies and savings will be analyzed for the long term. Roads Director John Craig believes employee involvement in the decision-making can create a positive atmosphere for change. ♦

# Status Report Focuses on Werner Trucking Survey

Last year, Team 21 (a group of Department of Roads employees with a focus on the future) surveyed over 3,000 big rig drivers working for Werner Enterprises Inc. The purpose was to find out what this large group of highway users thought of several issues involving Nebraska's roadways. Werner, a transportation company with its home office in Omaha, is engaged primarily in hauling truckload shipments throughout the 48 contiguous states.

An article in the August/September 2001 *Roadrunner* outlined some of the survey recommendations. Recently, a status report of these recommendations was released. Twenty-six recommendations were identified by general categories, including Smooth Roadways, Communications, Parking, Pavement Markings and Roadway Signing, and Driver Knowledge. For each item, a designated "champion" was identified who was responsible for galvanizing efforts to accomplish the recommendation. For an idea of the kinds of issues covered, here is the status of four key items from the survey.

## Smooth Roadways

**Recommendation** – Continue use of dowel bars in our highway joints and bridge abutments. This recently adopted standard, that had been dropped for a time, will do a lot to "get the thump out" of our roadways. This was a commonly mentioned issue by those responding to our survey.

**Designated Champion** – Moe Jamshidi, Materials and Research Engineer.

**Status** – Done.

## Communications

**Recommendation** – Expand the use of message boards, radio communication, signs, kiosks and phones to keep the traveling public informed of issues concerning their safe travel throughout our state.

**Designated Champion** – Paul Cammack, Transportation Technology Section Engineer.

**Status** – Nine Dynamic Message Signs (DMS) were recently installed in Omaha and another nine are planned for the rural I-80 corridor. In addition, 511, the national Traveler Information number, was implemented on October 1, 2001. Kiosks at all Interstate rest areas provide weather, road condition and construction maps.

## Parking

**Recommendation** – Explore the use of Economic Development funds in cooperation with communities located in close proximity to our Interstate to develop truck parking; use this project to spur development of support businesses that could serve this clientele group.

**Designated Champion** – Randy Peters, Traffic Engineer.

**Status** – Recommendations are pending. They are on the agenda for a Truck Parking Task Force that met in December and will meet quarterly to address commercial vehicle parking issues.

## Pavement Markings & Roadway Signing

**Recommendation** – Make removal of trees and brush in front of signs a priority.

**Designated Champion** – Randy Peters, Traffic Engineer.

**Status** – Removal of brush in front of signs is a priority maintenance activity.

*Work on the other 22 recommendations in the status report is either ongoing or already completed. As NDOR utilizes the survey results to continually improve, we will come closer to achieving our goal: to be the best state transportation agency in the country. Additional information on the survey recommendations may be obtained by contacting Chuck Sondag, Measurement Coordinator, 479-4623. ♦*

# Survey Queries Drivers' Habits

The Nebraska Department of Roads has initiated a long- and short-term public survey and input program designed to collect real-time information from volunteers about their driving habits, and their desires and expectations for programs that assist them in making travel plans.

MODIS, a provider of Information Technology Resource Management services and solutions, prepared the survey, which will be available on the department's website for 45 days, from early April to mid-May. At the end of that period, the responses will be used to categorize and quantify driving habits and respondents' needs, according to Bob Slone, Solutions Development Manager, of MODIS.

From survey results, NDOR hopes to gain a better idea of how motorists might choose to interface with NDOR's web-based information programs and how those programs might be designed to be more focused and individualized for drivers. NDOR's technology programs, such as T-Weather and the new 511 Nebraska traveler information line, are leading-edge examples of technology applied to customer-focused needs.

Slone said they would like to hear from all types of highway drivers, not just professional drivers. This will provide a broader base for survey results.

Drivers wishing to provide input through the surveys will have two categories of responses to choose from: (1) One-time responder to the initial survey; and (2) Multi-survey responder: group of survey respondents willing to help with a short series of topical surveys covering more in-depth transportation issues. Approximately once a month, multi-responders will be sent an e-mail notification letting them know a new survey is ready to be taken. The survey would be taken and submitted on-line. The survey series would last approximately three months, with a new survey response needed once each month. Survey results will be placed on NDOR's website and will also be e-mailed to participants.

To access the survey, go to [www.nebraskatransportation.org](http://www.nebraskatransportation.org) and click on "Survey" at the top of the page.

# Rewards and Recognition 2001 Survey

## “The Glass is Half Full”

The Rewards and Recognition Survey conducted several months ago resulted in a 47% response rate from NDOR employees. This provided statistical information reliable enough to determine what NDOR employees think about the Rewards and Recognition program. Utilizing the survey results, including 61 pages of comments, a comprehensive report has been completed. Here are some highlights of the survey results, with comments from the R&R Survey Committee.

**Q: What are some reasons you decided to conduct a survey?**

**A:** After more than five years of serving employees, the Rewards and Recognition program is no longer a “new” program. Employees who serve on Satellite Panels wanted to know how the program has evolved by measuring its impact, obtaining feedback on successful areas and areas requiring improvement, and gaining a benchmark to use for future measurements.

**Q: What did the survey tell you?**

**A:** The survey revealed areas to target for improvement so we can continue to make a positive impact on those with whom we work. According to the survey, 24% of survey respondents agreed that R&R has impacted their attitude positively. It takes a lot of work to maintain our program, and R&R panelists will continue their efforts with optimism.

**Q: What are the top motivators to use the program?**

**A:** “Seeing someone recognized” (68%) outdistanced all other factors. People enjoy seeing recognition go to someone they appreciate. This tells us that for NDOR employees, it is truly better to give than to receive. However, we also realized that the methods for “recognizing” someone are significantly important.

**Q: What are some positives?**

**A:** There is an overall satisfaction rate of 47% with the Rewards and Recognition program. Nearly half (45%) of employees are satisfied with their local satellite panel and only a minority (12%) expressed dissatisfaction. A high percentage of those who have nominated someone before (77%) said they would nominate again. There were many positive comments from those who have received recognition and those who saw recognition given to someone they appreciated.

**Q: What areas need improvement?**

**A:** We must make sure recognition is not only appropriate, but also adequate. Improving awards ceremonies and other methods of recognition will strengthen the program. Also, there is a need to better publicize those who receive the lesser-known awards, e.g., innovative and membership. Lack of familiarity with some of the awards was also apparent. While 82% are familiar with the Manager/Employee of the Quarter Award, only 16% are familiar with the Impact Award.

**Familiarity with Awards Granted by R&R Program**

	Very Familiar	Some-what Familiar	Not Very Familiar	Not At All Familiar	Never Heard Of	% Familiar
Manager/Employee of the Quarter	506	328	127	39	16	82%
Innovative Award	92	190	269	223	237	28%
Extra Mile Award	172	253	267	177	142	42%
Impact Award	63	100	219	235	392	16%
Heroism/Humanitarian Award	147	210	258	217	179	35%
Membership Award	125	126	153	204	401	25%

**Q:** What are some challenges?

**A:** Many employees are unaware of some of the simpler aspects of the program, such as the various awards and how to nominate someone. Also, 29% of employees weren't aware of the Rewards and Recognition Intranet site, where they can access the program guidebook and nomination forms.

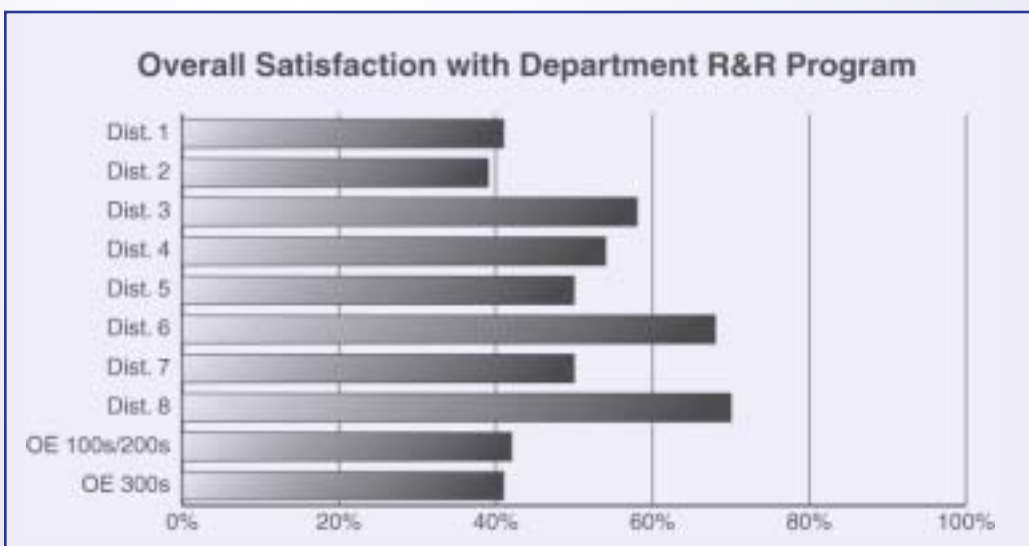
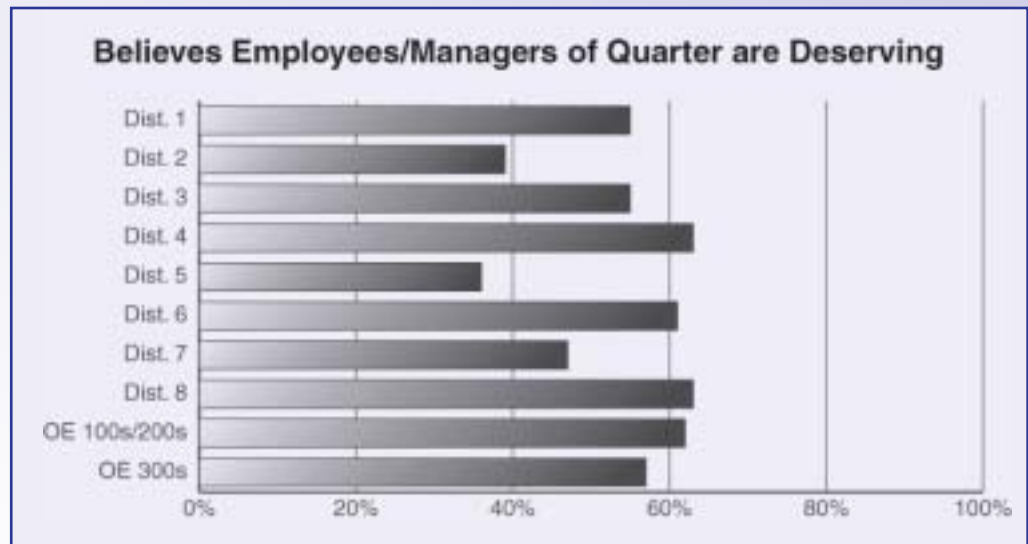
Another issue that may be difficult to overcome is the perception that bias occurs during the selection process. A substantial number of employees felt that undeserving people sometimes win the awards, or expressed disappointment that the person they nominated lost to someone not as deserving. However, many also criticized the length and difficulty of the nomination form.

**Q:** Where do we go from here?

**A:** Satellite panels will continue to review the results and comments. They will gain awareness of barriers to full acceptance and use of the program in their area. From there they can begin to develop strategies to overcome the barriers. After some time we will measure our successes and challenges.

**Q:** Where can additional information be found?

**A:** A survey report, summarizing statistics and comments, is available to employees on the NDOR Intranet, which is accessed through the department Internet website at [www.dor.state.ne.us](http://www.dor.state.ne.us). The appendix at the end of the document has links to the original survey and numerous charts. ♦



*Rewards & Recognition Committee members who assisted with the survey include: Linda Rumpza Clarke, Scott Griepenstroh, Christine Hansen, Betty Hauser, Blane Osterman, Cindy Shockey, Cynthia Veys, Gary Voss and Randy Wills.*



# Reflections of 50 Years at NDOR

By Merritt "Andy" Andreasen  
Highway Mechanic District Supervisor  
District 2, Elkhorn

*I've seen a lot of changes  
over the past 50 years...*

I was hired to work for the state in 1951 by Wilber Hattan, an Area Engineer in Fremont. My hourly rate of pay was \$.75 for the first two years, and for the next couple of years, I received a \$.05 an hour raise. District 2 consisted of 14 counties with headquarters in Lincoln (6th & South Streets).

In the 1950's many of the highways in the Omaha area were gravel such as: Hwy. 91 from Blair to Hwy. 15, Hwy. 133 from Blair to Irvington, Hwy. 31 from Elkhorn to Hwy. 30, Hwy. 64 from Valley to Prague, Hwy. 370 from Papillion to Gretna, and Hwy. 109 from Fremont to Wahoo.

Fremont was the office for Blair, Wahoo, Colon, Morse Bluff, Snyder, Elk City and Herman. Elkhorn was the office for Papillion, Gretna, Bellevue, Ashland, South Omaha Bridge yard and Ithica.

## Hydrants and Wood Stoves

Shops and crew areas were heated with wood stoves. Elkhorn was the only yard providing indoor plumbing; all other yards had outhouses and one hydrant for water. In the early 1980s Blair was the last yard in this area to get indoor plumbing.

Our equipment consisted of 1½- and 2-ton single axle trucks, FDW and Oshkosh, motor graders, mower tractors, 5-foot bar mowers, cement mixer, rock crusher and oil distributor.

Mowing operations were two per crew; we drove our own car at \$.06 per mile. We hauled gasoline, oil, grease and sickles. The first contract mowing was in the mid-1950s and the

road contracted was Hwy. 63 from Hwy. 77 to Ashland. This area was contracted to a farmer with a team of horses and a sickle bar mower. My job was to pick up his sickles every other day and take it back to the shop to repair and sharpen, then deliver it back to the farmer for another go around.

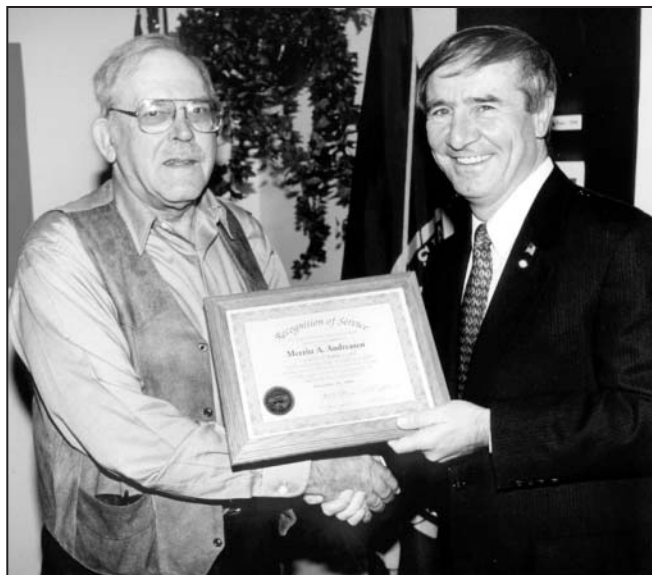
Asphalt overlay was done with a motor grader. The material was cold mix that was made in a windrow. It was loaded onto the trucks with shovels because we had no loader.

Crack sealing was a winter activity. A kerosene fired tar pot was used and tar was poured with cone-shaped tar buckets.

## Cinders for Ice Control

Cinders were used instead of gravel for ice control. Cinders were from the steam locomotives that were serviced in Omaha at the Union Pacific Rail Yard. They were watered down when taken out of the locomotive to quench the hot embers, then loaded onto wooden gondola rail cars and shipped to the state yards along the rail system. When they reached their destinations, they were unloaded by shovels onto trucks and hauled to the yards where the cinders were mixed with flake calcium chloride, and then stockpiled.

The sanding or cinder operation meant loading the trucks with a shovel. One or two people rode in the truck box to shovel the cinders off where needed. Cinder barrels were also used on hills and were available to the public during inclement weather.



John Craig presents Andy Andreasen a plaque for 50 years.

The first spreader showed up in the mid 1950s. They were chain-driven from the left rear wheel of the truck. The driver had to open the door, reach out to a lever to engage/disengage the spreader clutch. In the 1960s, hydraulic sander spreaders showed up, which brought the end to cinders.

In the early 1950s, snowplows were raised by means of a hand-operated hydraulic pump mounted on the floorboard in the passenger area of the truck. It was the job of the "plow shaker" to operate the hand pump to raise the plow and open a hand valve to lower it. This activity helped keep the "plow shaker" warm.

By the late 1950s or early 1960s, engine-driven hydraulic pumps replaced the hand-operated ones. At about the same time, permanent-type antifreeze became available, which meant 180-degree engine thermostats could be used. That kept the trucks a lot warmer and a few two-way radios were introduced in the 1960s.

Often, in the winter, truck radiators and engine blocks were drained at night. In the morning water was heated on the stove, which made them easier to start. If one truck started, it could be used to pull others to get them started.

*As you can see, there's been many changes over the past 50 years and I expect to be involved in a lot more to come.◆*

# NDOR Receives Community Development Award

The Nebraska Department of Roads received a Community Development Week Achievement Award during ceremonies March 14 in Kearney at the Nebraska Planning and Zoning Association annual conference. Ron Schlautman, Urban Planning & Liaison Engineer, received the award on behalf of the department.

NDOR was recognized for developing and fostering a statewide comprehensive community planning initiative, with special recognition for their involvement in encouraging larger non-metro communities to plan for growth and development by maintaining a comprehensive plan that includes a detailed long-range transportation model. In addition, the department was lauded for assisting Nebraska communities and counties in fostering and carrying out planning through local, state and national initiatives. They were also mentioned for supporting planning education through the Nebraska Planning and Zoning Association.

According to Schlautman, the Comprehensive Plan Assistance Program is designed to provide financial and technical assistance to mid-sized Nebraska communities with populations between 7,500 and 50,000 to initiate or update a comprehensive plan for their area. The comprehensive

plan is required to include a long-range transportation plan, a traffic assignment network and data (e.g., air service, land use, economic development, and green space) in a



Ron Schlautman, Urban Planning and Liaison Engineer, left, and Roads Director John Craig hold the Community Development Week Achievement Award, received March 14 at the Nebraska Planning and Zoning Association annual conference in Kearney.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) format to help both the community and NDOR better plan for future transportation improvements.

Funding of \$100,000 will be allocated to the program each year, with funding splits of 80 percent maximum state and federal share, and 20 percent minimum local share. The program is administered through NDOR's Planning and Project Development Division.

Schlautman convinced Omaha's MAPA agency to give up \$50,000 of their federal planning money for Grand Island. As a condition, MAPA requested that NDOR add \$25,000 of state funds for a total of \$75,000 given to Grand Island. When the Director's office gave approval for the state money, Roads Director John Craig wanted to help other cities as well, thus initiating this local Comprehensive Plan Assistance Program. At the end of July, another community that matches the priority selection criteria will be chosen to participate in the program.

Schlautman said the information gathered using this program will provide better regional and statewide future traffic forecasts, and will build on Nebraska's GIS database by including information on land use and environmentally sensitive areas that previously have only been available in the large metropolitan areas.

Roads Director John Craig has been very supportive in the program's development and implementation, advocating its use to help communities that aren't eligible to receive Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) planning funds, and to provide an avenue for NDOR to participate in more collaborative planning with local communities. ♦

## National Bike Month/Bike to Work Week

This year marks the 46th consecutive year the League of American Bicyclists has proclaimed May as National Bike Month. During the month, state and local organizations are invited to join in sponsoring bicycle activities in order to increase awareness and acceptance of bicycling throughout the country.

The League is also promoting Bike to Work Week from May 13-17 and Bike-to-Work Day on Friday, May 17.

Employees are encouraged to ride a bike or walk to work during that week.

Because of a sharp increase nationwide in the number of bicycle fatalities resulting from car-bike collisions at night, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) has issued a warning to bike riders to take necessary steps to make themselves and their bicycles more visible at night.

- > Use a headlight.
- > Be sure your bike has front and rear reflectors, pedal reflectors, and side rim or wheel reflectors.
- > Wear reflective clothing.
- > Always wear a CPSC-approved helmet.
- > Young children should not ride at night.
- > Avoid riding on dark, narrow roadways.

# Nebraska Installs Historic Trails Signs

Nebraska leads the way in getting highways properly marked for motorists following the Oregon and California Historic Trails and the Pony Express. According to national trails official Jere L. Krakow, Nebraska is the first to complete a cooperative federal-state effort for installing signs so visitors can use highways to follow trails across the state.

Krakow, currently superintendent of the National Park Service's Long Distance Trails Office in Salt Lake City, said Nebraska has more mileage of the Oregon, California and Pony Express trails than any other state. The trails cross at a southeast-by-northwest angle, starting near Odell in the southeast part of the state and

entering Wyoming near Henry in western Nebraska.

Krakow praised Randy Peters, NDOR Traffic Engineer, for seeing that signs were not only put up "but put where history buffs traveling through Nebraska will see them."

Peters said 269 signs were recently installed. Financing for the \$60,000 project was shared equally between the state and the National Park Service.

"Where possible," Peters said, "we put three trail signs together on one board. This saved some money."

About 150 signs outlining the route of the Mormon Trail were installed in 1998, primarily on the north side of the Platte River in commemoration

of the 150th anniversary of the Mormons' trek to Salt Lake City.

Krakow said the National Park Service intends to spend \$305,000 as its share in all states along the trails. The effort is part of the National Trails Systems Act approved by Congress, and included in the comprehensive management plan completed in November of 1999.

The park service began early negotiations with the Department of Roads to complete the job. Numerous Western states—Wyoming, Idaho, Utah and Oregon—are close to completing their program, while negotiations are underway with Missouri, Kansas, Colorado, Nevada and California.◆

- Omaha World Herald

## New Dynamic Message Signs in Omaha

Recently installed dynamic message signs at District 2 are in operation to assist motorists this year. These message signs were installed at nine different locations on the Interstate system in the metro Omaha area.

Traveling motorists will benefit by advanced warnings of major accidents, road advisories during construction, rush hour traffic jams and information concerning road conditions during inclement weather. Drivers will be able to slow down or take alternative routes to avoid problem areas.

The dynamic message signs are a part of the Department of Roads Intelligent Transportation System improvements.◆



Looking westbound, this dynamic message sign is located on Interstate 80 at approximately 94th Street in Omaha.

## Motorist Assist Program Expanded

Several heavily traveled roadways have been added to the Metro Area Assist Program, which aids stranded and lost drivers in the Omaha area. The Nebraska State Patrol said Highways 64, 6 and 275 west from Interstate 680 were added.

Previously, volunteers were on Interstate 80 from the Mahoney exchange to the U.S. Highway 6 exchange, Interstates 480 and 680 and U.S. Highway 75 to LaPlatte during rush hours. The State Patrol also announced that a third van has been added.

The program was started in 1998 and has 27 volunteers who provide assistance.

In 2000, the program was expanded to Interstate 80 travelers in the Lincoln area, with the Nebraska Motorist Assist Program, or NeMap. In that program, 12 volunteers patrol the Interstate between the Utica exit and the Platte River every morning and evening during rush hours and Sunday nights.

Trained by the State Patrol, which oversees the operation, volunteers help motorists find gas or change a tire, give jump-starts, pick up hazardous debris and check and tag abandoned cars. Two volunteers are on duty at a time.

NDOR had a key role in development of both the Omaha and Lincoln programs and provides funds, along with other major sponsors, including AAA/Cornhusker Motor Club and Nebraska Office of Highway Safety.◆

# We Get Letters ...

March 15, 2002

NE Dept. of Roads

Thank you for the outstanding job that was done yesterday to clean the snow off of the roads between Kimball and Scottsbluff on Highway 71. It was very stressful to come up in the morning but so very easy to make it home in the evening. I am amazed at how much snow we had and that you were able to clean it all off. You made my day and my return home travel so very easy. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Sincerely,

Paul Zolman  
Kimball, Nebraska

**Editor's Note:** Thank you to the Kimball and Scottsbluff maintenance crews. Kimball Supervisor, Steve Sterling. Scottsbluff Supervisor, Scott Rajewich. Scottsbluff Superintendent, Mike Johnson.

**The Department of Roads receives numerous complimentary letters. The letters printed here are representative of those often sent praising the many fine and deserving employees of the Department of Roads.**

March 25, 2002

We deal with several different State D.O.T.'s and I found your web site to be the best site. It was very user-friendly. Thanks to your designer.

Tom Webster,  
Cone Engineering Contractors  
Lebanon, TN

January 30, 2002

Laird Weishahn  
Materials & Research Division

Dear Mr. Weishahn:

I want to thank your division for the very kind service to the Lincoln High School Applied Chemistry Courses by John Dageford. On early turn-around notice, John packaged a number of asphalt samples for the students to use in a petroleum unit laboratory exercise. He also gave us information we could use to understand variation in their properties related to their structural alterations, and spent time on an "orientation" conversation with me to aid in setting up the lab and working with the materials provided.

He offered to provide a tour for interested students. I know from personal experience how much fun tours are at the Department of Roads Testing Laboratory. It is such an exemplary laboratory setting and the people there are all so competent and friendly with respect to demonstrating the activities there...

I want to express my appreciation again to your knowledgeable and service-oriented staff.

Sincerely

Ms. Lelia M. Coyne  
Highly Gifted Program Mentor  
Lincoln Public Schools

**Editor's Note:** John Dageford is an Engineering Unit Supervisor in Materials & Research Division.

## I-80 Ranks Near Top on Atlas Survey

Nebraska's I-80 placed second for the "safest stretch of highway" in the United States—with I-10 in Texas named first, by 330 drivers from Atlas Van Lines who were polled on a few of the most timeless truck-driver questions. I-10 in Arizona placed third behind Nebraska.

Interstate 70 in Colorado was voted as the country's most scenic stretch of highway, with a tie for second place between Hwy. 101 in California and I-90 in Montana. Interstate 84 in Oregon

took third place honors.

A significant majority of drivers said Florida has the nation's best rest stops. Georgia and Texas tied for second place, followed by a tie between Ohio and Washington for third place.

Atlas Van Lines is North America's third-largest carrier of household goods with some 600 agents in the United States and Canada and more than 800 worldwide. The complete driver survey can be found on the Atlas website: [www.atlasvanlines.com](http://www.atlasvanlines.com). ♦

## TURF & GARDEN

By Dick Gray  
Agronomist



### Time for Spring Clean-up

**Turf** - Turf damage will likely show up this spring. We had winter desiccation from no snow cover and snow cover on unfrozen ground for snow mold to develop. As usual, after a Nebraska winter there is reseeding to do. Begin your spring cleanup in earnest now, no more procrastinating. Aerate, power rake, mow to 1½ to 2". Reseed and work in compost to revitalize your lawn. Keep the pre-emergence in the sack until the first or second week in May. Moles a problem in your lawn? A product called "Moles No More" has been tested by Michigan State University and the report is good.

**Trees** - Look for winter damage here, too. Prune the broken and dead branches. Did you get that hedge pruned in late March? It can still be done now. Work on

your landscape design and select your plants as soon as they come into your favorite store. The plants are as fresh as they are going to get when they arrive. Plant a \$20 tree in a \$40 hole. Make the hole deep enough to set the plant at the same depth as it was, or slightly higher if you have a tight clay soil that does not want to drain. Make the hole wide enough to allow the roots to develop properly. Mulch trees and shrubs. Use about 3" of uncompacted mulch. Too much mulch can cause problems. Check soil for wetness under the mulch before you water. Too much water is as bad as too little, and the results are the same—dead plant material.

**Garden** - Wait to plant until the soil temps are going to allow the seed to germinate. Minimum degrees Fahrenheit for spinach-38°, radishes-40°, lettuce-41°, onions-41°, peas-42°, potatoes-45°, cabbage and broccoli-45° (transplants). At 60° you can plant sunflower, pumpkin, cucumbers, watermelon, corn, snapbeans and set out peppers and tomato plants. Hold on okra until the soil temps are closer to 70°. New plants for this year—Tidal Wave Silver petunia, Black Magic Rose geranium and Sparkler Blush Cleome (Bee Plant).

**General** - Keep that mower blade sharp and your lawn will look better. El Niño is coming and maybe we will have rain this summer! ♦



## Health & Safety

By LoyAnn Rossel, RN,COHN-S

### Health Risk Factors



Did you know that nearly half of the deaths in Nebraska are caused from heart disease and stroke? The three major risk factors that cause heart disease and stroke are: High blood pressure, high blood cholesterol and smoking. Many of these risks can be eliminated by making a few changes in your lifestyle.

#### Blood Pressure - "The Silent Killer"

There are no symptoms of high blood pressure. The only way to know your blood pressure is to have several readings taken. Readings greater than 140/90 are considered elevated. Be aware that blood pressures fluctuate. Your heart beats 100,000 times a day, and you will get that many different readings! To help make sure the readings are consistent, refrain from caffeine and cigarettes for 30 minutes before it is taken.

One in four Americans has high blood pressure. Are you one of them? An elevated blood pressure can be

lowered with a low salt diet, weight loss, exercise, and decreasing alcohol consumption. Your physician may decide to use medicine, if these methods aren't effective. You may get off the medicine if you improve your health.

#### High Blood Cholesterol

Almost everyone knows that the cholesterol level should be below 200, but do you know your LDL, HDL and triglyceride levels too? Your cholesterol reading may be good, but you are still at risk if your LDL, HDL or triglyceride readings are not normal.

Too much LDL (low density lipoprotein) is called the "bad" cholesterol. It contributes to plaque buildup and clogging of the arteries. To remember which one is the bad or good cholesterol think of the "L" in LDL as meaning "lousy." The HDL (high density lipoprotein) is the "good" guy, and protects the heart. The triglycerides are a combination of fats and sugars and an elevated reading is linked with heart disease.

To decrease LDLs and increase HDLs—limit all animal and hydrogenated fat, lose weight, stop smoking, eat more whole grain food, fruits and vegetables, and exercise more.

#### Smoking

A smoker has a two to four times greater risk of sudden cardiac death than a nonsmoker. Smoking causes premature deaths of 417,000 Americans every year. It also contributes to high blood pressure and lowers HDLs. ♦

# NDOR Events Calendar

## — April —

- 5 Bd. Examiners for Co. Hwy. & City Street Supts.**  
8:45 a.m. Hwy. Commission Meeting Rm.  
contact Andrew Cunningham @ 479-4569
- 8-12 National Work Zone Awareness Week**
- 11-14 National Historic Roads Conference**  
Embassy Suites Hotel, Omaha  
contact Cindy Veys @ 479-4410
- 12 Project Scheduling Meeting**  
8:30-11:30 a.m., NDOR Auditorium  
contact Craig Anderson @ 479-4666
- 13-20 Great Nebraska Trash-Off**
- 16 New Employee Orientation Program**  
NDOR Central Headquarters  
contact Steve Olson @ 479-3601
- 18 Letting** 1:30 p.m. NDOR Auditorium  
contact Karl Fredrickson @ 479-4528
- 19 Hwy. Commission Meeting**  
10:00 a.m. Hwy. Commission Meeting Rm.  
contact Shirley Schafer @ 479-4530
- 19 Bd. Public Roads Class. & Stds.**  
9:00 a.m., NDOR Auditorium  
contact Andrew Cunningham @ 479-4569
- 22 Earth Day**
- 26 State Holiday – Arbor Day**

## — May —

- 3 Bd. Examiners for Co. Hwy. & City Street Supts.**  
10:00 a.m. Hwy. Commission Meeting Rm.  
Contact Andrew Cunningham @ 479-4569
- 7 New Employee Orientation Program**  
NDOR Central Headquarters  
contact Steve Olson @ 479-3601
- 5-11 National Safe Kids Week**
- 10 Project Scheduling Meeting**  
8:30-11:30 a.m., NDOR Auditorium  
contact Craig Anderson @ 479-4666
- 12-18 National Transportation Week**

- 13-17 Bike to Work Week**
- 17 Hwy. Commission Meeting**  
10:00 a.m. Hwy. Commission Meeting Rm.  
contact Shirley Schafer @ 479-4530
- 17 Bd. Public Roads Class. & Stds.**  
9:00 a.m., NDOR Auditorium  
contact Andrew Cunningham @ 479-4569
- 23 Letting** 1:30 p.m. NDOR Auditorium  
contact Karl Fredrickson @ 479-4528
- 20-27 Buckle Up America Week**
- 27 State Holiday – Memorial Day**

## — June —

- National Safety Month**
- 1 National Trails Day**
- 4 New Employee Orientation Program**  
NDOR Central Headquarters  
contact Steve Olson @ 479-3601
- 12 Blood Drive – Community Blood Bank**  
NDOR Central Headquarters  
contact Diane Holthus 479-4580
- 14 Project Scheduling Meeting**  
8:30-11:30 a.m., NDOR Auditorium  
contact Craig Anderson @ 479-4666
- 21 Bd. Public Roads Class. & Stds.**  
9:00 a.m., NDOR Auditorium  
contact Andrew Cunningham @ 479-4569
- 27 Letting** 1:30 p.m. NDOR Auditorium  
contact Karl Fredrickson @ 479-4528
- 28 Hwy. Commission Meeting**  
10:00 a.m. Hwy. Commission Meeting Rm.  
contact Shirley Schafer @ 479-4530

If you would like key events included on upcoming calendars, call the Communication Office 479-4512 or e-mail [lwilson@dor.state.ne.us](mailto:lwilson@dor.state.ne.us). Information for the June/July Roadrunner should be received by May 17.