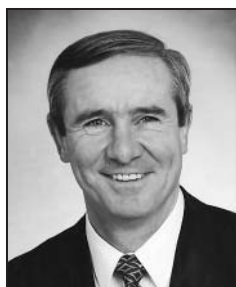


# The Future Looks Even Greater!

By John L. Craig

Director, Nebraska Department of Roads



John L. Craig

At this time last year in this column I proclaimed, "The future is going to be great!" As we take the time to analyze this past year, some

could dispute that statement. So many accomplishments have been overshadowed by recent events that have transpired on the national and international front.

While the tragedy of September 11 and the ensuing anthrax scare were intended to dampen the American spirit, we have shown that the fabric of our nation is woven with a much stronger and more substantial fiber than many of us had previously realized.

On the positive side, many have paused to consider what is important in their lives and reevaluated future plans. Renewed commitment to faith, family and friends has been a common denominator in these assessments. Good relationships with our co-workers and business associates have also been in the mix. We have all grown closer, realizing our interconnectedness, our reliance

and dependence upon each other. We are all in this together, all part of the team of humanity. And it is fragile indeed. We must never take it for granted.

While much has changed in our world, some things remain constant. Here at NDOR, we are as committed as ever to achieving our goals, with our vision, mission and strategic plan as our guide. Over the past year, we have made steady and noticeable advances toward attaining our vision: *to be the premier state transportation agency in the country.*

## Major Accomplishments

Some achievements include: recent implementation of the new 511 travel information phone line, with Nebraska the first state to implement the system statewide; continued advances toward development of joint operations centers and transportation operations to increase the efficiency of the state's surface transportation system; applying asset management principles in optimally allocating resources for the preservation, upgrading and replacement of our highway assets; expansion of our research program to develop ways to increase the quality and durability of Nebraska's roadways; and further consolidation of maintenance facilities for optimal efficiency. The list goes on, but these are major accomplishments of which we can be proud.

We will continue to leverage new technologies for increased efficiencies and, ultimately, to continue to develop and maintain the high-quality, durable, safe and cost-effective roadways that Nebraskans have come to expect.

Safety remains at the top on the priority list. We have seen some positive signs in this area over the

past year. The number of fatalities on Nebraska's highways has decreased for the third consecutive year—the opposite of the nationwide trend. We participated in the first annual "Put the Brakes on Fatalities Day" to focus attention on practicing safe driving behaviors and reducing traffic fatalities. No fatalities were reported on that day on Nebraska's highways, and October had the lowest number of fatalities on record for the month of October since 1943, with 16 deaths, compared to 28 deaths in 2000.

We continued to emphasize safety in our highway and maintenance work zones through an extensive information campaign. We completed employee memorial dedication ceremonies at each of the eight highway districts, honoring NDOR employees who lost their lives while on the job thus reminding motorists of the need for vigilance while driving or working on the highways.

## Working Together

As we look to the future, our success continues to hinge upon working together as a team, and building upon relationships with our transportation partners. As I've often said before, it's all about the people. They are our greatest assets. We must do everything possible to appreciate each other and to provide and use the tools and resources needed to nurture the talents of every member of our team. Only then will we reach our full potential.

I am proud of our NDOR family and our accomplishments this past year. And I believe next year will be even better! As we approach this holiday season, my sincere wish for each one of you is a renewed spirit of faith, hope and joy that will sustain and guide you through a safe and peaceful New Year. ♦

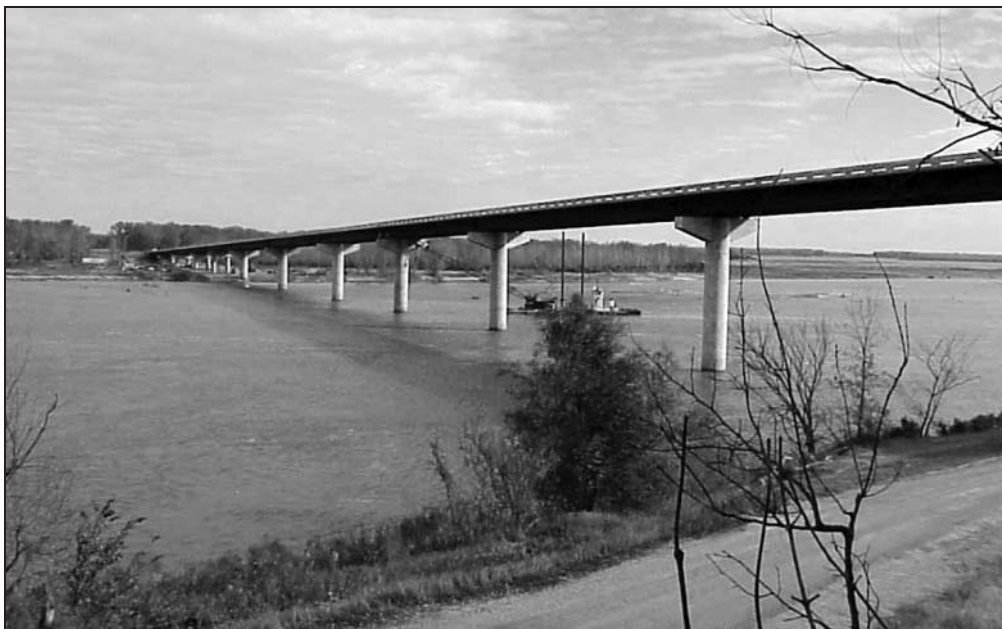
## the Roadrunner

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Governor .....Mike Johanns  
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The information presented in this newsletter is contributed by employees, retirees and friends of NDOR.



The newly completed Missouri River Bridge linking Vermillion, SD and Newcastle, NE, looking north from Newcastle.

## Newcastle-Vermillion Bridge Becomes A Reality

By **Pete McShane**  
Communication Division

Completion of the Newcastle-Vermillion Bridge culminated nearly 70 years of hoping, planning and waiting by area residents. The new Missouri River Bridge linking Vermillion, South Dakota and Newcastle, Nebraska opened to traffic November 1. A ribbon cutting with dignitaries attending from both states was held November 10.

The bridge shortens the drive from Newcastle to Vermillion to only 11 miles rather than the previous 75 miles. Newcastle is now linked to a state university, large manufacturers and a major hospital in Vermillion. Both communities and surrounding areas anticipate an economic boost as a result of the project.

South Dakota's Department of Transportation was the lead agency in building the new twelve-span bridge for approximately \$16.2 million. The 2,455-foot, continuous composite girder bridge connects with a 4.8-mile approach built by the South Dakota DOT and a 2.83-mile approach built by NDOR. Nebraska's approach is about 4½ miles west of Newcastle, then north of Highway 12 on new Highway 15.

Initial work on Nebraska's 2.83-mile approach began in May 2000 and was completed in spring 2001. Work on the first phase of Nebraska's approach included grading, grubbing seeding and erosion control. The prime contractor, Anderson Construction Company of Mapleton, Iowa, had the \$1,971,792.15 contract for this work.

The second phase of the approach began in March 2001 and was completed in November. Work on this section included guardrail, lighting, and bituminous surfacing, and curb and gutter work. The prime contractor, Brower Construction Company of Sioux City, had the \$778,078 contract.

Subcontractors for the approach included D.N.K. Enterprises, Inc., North Central Contracting, Collins Contracting Co. Inc., S and S Seeding, Terracon Consultants, Inc., Traffic Safety Services, Inc., Drainage and Ground Improvement, Inc., Toms Construction, Kayton Electric, BAB, Inc., Guardrail Systems, and D. P. Sawyer.

Beth Neimeyer with Banner Associates, Inc., of Brookings, South Dakota, was the designer of the new Highway 15 segment in Nebraska. Lou Lenzen and Ed Palandri were the NDOR consultant coordinators. NDOR employees Dale Lange, Robert Wiebelhaus, Mark Droppers, David Wendte, Tony Dirks and Larry Hausman worked on both phases of the approach. Larry Hausman served as the NDOR project manager for the first portion of the project, and Robert Wiebelhaus served as the NDOR project manager for the second phase of the project. ♦



This new section of Highway 15 is located approximately one mile south of the Newcastle-Vermillion Bridge, looking north.

# New 511 Traveler Information System

**Nebraska's new high-tech weather and road condition reporting system became operational and available to travelers on October 1.**

Nebraska is the first state to utilize 511 statewide for traveler information since the Federal Communication Commission designated 511 for that purpose. Travelers are now able to access the Advanced Traveler Weather Information System (ATWIS) by dialing 511 from any cellular or land line telephone. In addition, 511 information is available via the Internet through the Nebraska Department of Roads web site at [www.dor.state.ne.us](http://www.dor.state.ne.us) or the Nebraska State Patrol web site at [www.nsp.state.ne.us](http://www.nsp.state.ne.us).

511 replaces the weather and road condition report service previously offered by the State Patrol via a toll-free 800 number. The State Patrol system relied on officers observing and reporting weather and road conditions from the field. The information was then compiled and recorded five times per day or more frequently as weather conditions and workloads permitted.

For now, callers to the Nebraska

State Patrol's toll-free information line (1-800-906-9069) will be connected to the 511 system. Anyone outside of Nebraska can dial the same number as in the past which is (402)471-4533. That number will also connect directly to the 511 system.

## 24-Hours-A-Day

Unlike the Patrol's service, which operated only during the winter driving season, 511 will operate 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week, and all 52-weeks-a-year. ATWIS, developed by Meridian Environmental of Grand Forks, North Dakota, will serve as the backbone of the 511 system. As part of ATWIS, Nebraska has been blanketed by a network of 10-kilometer grids, slightly larger than a township, to provide up-to-date information around the clock. When

travelers call 511, a recording will ask for their location, highway number and direction of travel. Current conditions are then provided for the next 60 miles ahead of them. North Dakota, South Dakota, and Minnesota currently utilize ATWIS. Nebraska will have the first statewide system in the

nation that accepts calls from both cellular and land line telephones.

Initially, 511 will offer localized reports on weather and road conditions. Eventually, the system will carry construction and

**"This new system will free-up officers to focus on law enforcement issues during severe weather rather than reporting road conditions."**

- Colonel Tom Nesbitt  
Supt. Nebraska State Patrol

detour information and tourist information. That might include advertisements by hotels and motels as well as restaurants on Nebraska's nearly 10,000 miles of state and federal highways, including expressways and interstates.

## Cooperative Effort

There will be no charge to callers for using 511 thanks to a cooperative effort between the state and communications carriers. Nebraska's Division of Communications will track implementation of 511 by local telephone exchange companies and cellular services. Through the Public Service Commission, the state will provide informational material to announce the availability of 511 in local telephone directories.

The Department of Roads and the State Patrol are funding the system at a first year cost of approximately \$120,000, with an estimated annual operating cost of \$110,000. The State Patrol will dedicate funds previously allocated for the weather line and the

### Year-Round Nebraska Traveler Information



Dial from anywhere in Nebraska,  
cell phone or land line.

Short-term, route specific  
weather forecasts and  
road condition reports for  
state highways.



[www.nsp.state.ne.us](http://www.nsp.state.ne.us)



Nebraska  
Department of Roads  
[www.dor.state.ne.us](http://www.dor.state.ne.us)

- ✓ Stay safe when you drive.  
Wear your safety belt.
- ✓ Use your cell phone responsibly. Don't dial and drive. Find a safe place to stop.
- ✓ Stay 100 feet behind snowplows. Pass only with extreme caution.
- ✓ If snow is blowing, should you be going? Don't push it!

### Call 511.

If outside of Nebraska,  
call (402)471-4533



# Operational

Department of Roads anticipates federal Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) grant funding to cover the cost of the new system.

## Benefits All Nebraskans

Governor Mike Johanns applauded those involved with the project, "The developers of the new 511 system established a public/private partnership and sought grants to provide a far superior service to Nebraskans without spending more state tax dollars. It's important to note that this service will benefit all Nebraskans. This isn't just state-of-the-art technology for the metro areas, this represents our commitment to the entire state by making Intelligent Transportation Systems a reality in rural Nebraska, too."

Roads Director, John Craig, called the new system an important advancement, "We at the Department of Roads are pleased to be on the cutting edge of information technology. We know the citizens of Nebraska will be well served by this year 'round traveler information system. 511 will be a valuable service and a key safety resource."

Colonel Tom Nesbitt, Superintendent of the Nebraska State Patrol, is confident this new technology will impact public safety, "Travelers will have up-to-the-minute information relevant to their specific location. We hope that will translate into a more cautious approach by travelers. In addition to the safety benefits, this new system will free-up officers to focus on law enforcement issues during severe weather rather than reporting road conditions."

The Public Service Commission played a key role in the 511 project. Commissioner Anne Boyle said, "The 511 system provides users with ease of access to important, potentially lifesaving, information while traveling. This is one of the many benefits of our new technological world." ♦

# Rewards & Recognition

July, August, September 2001

## Employees & Managers of the Quarter

### Employees

#### OE 200 Divisions

**JoAnn Britton**  
Accountant II  
Controller Division

#### OE 300 Divisions

**Stacy Burford**  
Materials & Tests Tech II  
Materials & Research Division

#### District 1

**Jeff Fossenbarger**  
Hwy. Construction Tech II  
Tecumseh

#### District 2

**Todd Spark**  
Hwy. Construction Tech III  
Omaha

#### District 3

**Monty Koch**  
Hwy. Construction Tech II  
Columbus

#### District 4

**Rick Stanczyk**  
Hwy. Maintenance Worker Sr.  
Loup City

#### District 5

**Bill Riggs**  
Hwy. Maintenance Worker Sr.  
Chadron

#### District 6

**Kathy Fread**  
Hwy. Construction Tech II  
North Platte

#### District 7

**James Bassett**  
Hwy. Maintenance Worker Sr.  
McCook

#### District 8

**Jill Hipke**  
Office Clerk III  
O'Neill

### Managers

**Jim Schmailzl**  
Facilities Maintenance Manager I  
Logistics Division

**Larry Legg**  
Engineer V  
Roadway Design Division

**Randy Seybert**  
Hwy. Maintenance Supervisor  
Lincoln

None

None

**Esther Shepherd**  
Administrative Assistant I  
Grand Island

**Clarence Johnson**  
Hwy. Maintenance Supt.  
Scottsbluff

**Gary Thayer**  
Engineer V  
North Platte

None

None

*Awardees receive a certificate, pin and a monetary award of \$250 before taxes.*

# NDOR Hosts Annual Meeting of North Central States Consortium

By Samir Sidhom, P.E.  
Bridge Division

On October 16-17, the Nebraska Department of Roads hosted the annual meeting of North Central States Consortium, which includes Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, South Dakota, North Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan and Illinois. The two-day meeting was held at the downtown Lincoln Holiday Inn. Meeting arrangements were coordinated by Samir Sidhom, Policy & Standards Engineer, and Vince Koenig, Bridge Design Supervisor, both from the Bridge Division, and Bud Thomsen, General Manager of Lincoln Steel Company, with the direction of Gale Barnhill, Assistant Bridge Engineer and Lyman Freemon, State Bridge Engineer.

The Consortium has two committees: Bridge Design Committee, which includes all Policy & Standards Engineers from North Central States (NCS) DOTs, and Materials & Fabrication Committee, which includes representatives from the NCS along with fabricators and manufacturers. Also attending the meeting were some of the assistant bridge engineers, design engineers and fabrication inspectors from the Bridge Division.

Agendas and discussion items for the meeting were prepared by Samir Sidhom, NDOR; Richard Mesloh, Kansas DOT; Todd Niemann, Minnesota DOT; and Steve Cook, Michigan DOT.

## Committee Discussions

During the Bridge Design Committee meeting, attendees discussed various bridge design issues including precast/prestressed girder bridges, bridge decks, general design, bridge design specifications, steel girder bridges, Mechanically Stabilized Earth (MSE) walls, bridge design software and plan development.

The Bridge Design Committee invited Dr. Maher Tadros, Cheryl Prewett Professor of Civil Engineering at the University of Nebraska, Omaha,

and Dr. Atorod Azzizinamini, Professor of Civil Engineering at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, and Director of the National Bridge Research Organization (NaBRO) to present the latest bridge research projects sponsored by the Roads Department.



**Above** - New splice details for steel girder bridges were shown to guests at the University of Nebraska Engineering Lab.



**Left** - This 48-ton concrete pier section was viewed by Consortium attendees at Concrete Industries, Inc.

As part of the meeting, the guests visited the Concrete Industries, Inc. plant and the University of Nebraska Engineering Lab. At Concrete Industries, Inc., the guests, accompanied by Professor Tadros, saw the 48-ton, concrete pier section that will be used for spliced prestressed/post-tensioned concrete girder bridges, a demonstration of the continuity details for prestressed concrete girder bridges and the University of Nebraska (NU) precast bridge deck systems. In the University engineering lab, the guests, accompanied by Professor Azzizinamini, saw the new splice details for steel girder bridges, the tests conducted to remove code limitations for high performance steel, and the proposed details to improve construction safety.

During the Materials and Fabrication Committee meeting, numerous steel fabrication issues were discussed, including: field welding details, modular bridge expansion joints and

their fatigue problems, sharing shop inspectors with other states, coatings on steel/galvanized steel, American Welding Society (AWS) 2002 code, National Steel Bridge Alliance (NSBA) documents, warranties on materials & workmanship and the American Institute of Steel Construction (AISC) categories. Also, industry representatives introduced the latest on the subjects of electronic record keeping of inspection reports, ultrasonic impact treatment of welds, portable laser weld inspection devices, electro slag welding and the manufacture of light poles.

The meeting was a great opportunity to share information and experiences; it showed Nebraska's hospitality and the leading role of the Bridge Division nationally and among the North Central States. At the end of the meeting, the Bridge Design Committee voted Samir Sidhom as the chairman for the next two years.◆

# Highway Safety Summit Sets Groundwork for Results

On October 25, the Nebraska Department of Roads and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Nebraska Division, jointly hosted a one-day Nebraska Highway Safety Summit. The purpose of the summit was to bring a diverse group of Nebraska highway safety advocates together to develop strategies for reducing highway crash fatalities and injuries. There were about forty participants, including representatives from federal, state, county and city transportation and safety agencies, the insurance industry, law enforcement, academia, Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), the construction industry, news media and emergency medical services.

Following briefings on roadway elements, driver behavior, enforcement, emergency response and the Nebraska highway safety picture, the participants were assigned to six multidisciplinary teams to develop potential strategies for reducing fatalities and injuries. The entire group evaluated over thirty potential strategies and five were selected for further development: centerline and shoulder rumble strips; primary enforcement law/develop seat belt law coalition; red light camera enforcement; emphasize education on fatigue, alcohol and safety belt use; and increase fines for speeding.

Three criteria were considered when selecting the five strategies: (1) Is there willingness to work on this? (2) Can obstacles be overcome by utilizing Legislative or other resources? (3) Are funds available?

The participants were asked to volunteer for follow-up groups to pursue development of the strategies. (See strategy groups listed on this page.) These efforts will be continued through existing organizations.

According to Randy Peters, NDOR Traffic Engineer, the summit was beneficial in many ways. He noted that by assigning a broad based group of people to work on these specific issues, innovative ideas, new collaborations and partnerships have been developed that will help insure positive outcomes.

"We can make a big difference in fatalities if just two of these strategies are developed. If the seat belt usage law passed, the current 68 percent seat belt usage rate could increase to an 85 to 90 percent usage rate. Also, the red light camera enforcement law would be a force multiplier for law enforcement agencies," Peters said.

The consensus of the participants was that a similar summit should be held next year. To further expand the base of participants, a new sponsor and venue will be selected for a future meeting. ♦



NDOR Director John Craig facilitates strategy session at Nebraska Highway Safety Summit.

## Strategy Group Participants

### Centerline and shoulder rumble strips

Eldon Poppe, Roadway Design, NDOR - Leader

Brian Elliott, M.D., Position Medical Director  
Dan Cady, Director, Nebr. Technology

Transfer Center, UN-L

John Craig, Director, NDOR

Jim Knott, District 7 Engineer, NDOR

Bruce Lind, Division Administrator, FHWA

Rich Ruby, District 1 Engineer, NDOR

Dean Sicking, Ph.D., Director, Midwest

Roadside Safety Facility, UN-L

### Primary enforcement law/ develop seat belt law coalition

Key Farrell, Safety & Health Council of  
Greater Omaha - Leader

Judy Craig, Program Manager, Nat'l. Hwy.  
Traffic Safety Admin. (NHTSA)

Lisa Vonnahme, State Farm Insurance Co.

Rick Bell, Omaha Police Dept.

Terry King, Executive Director, Associated  
General Contractors of Nebr.

Simera Reynolds, Executive Director,

Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD)

Les O'Donnell, District 6 Engineer, NDOR

Pat McCoy, Ph.D., Director, Mid-America  
Transportation Center, UN-L

### Red light camera enforcement

Marcella Ganow, NDOR - Leader

Virendra Singh, Lincoln Public Works Dept.

Shane Dostal, Lincoln Public Works Dept.

Jay Seiboldt, V.P., Operations, Farm

Bureau Ins. Co. of Nebr.

Scott Opfer, Lincoln Public Works Dept.

Charles Krajicek, Omaha Public Works  
Dept.

Gene Amparano, FHWA Liaison to NHTSA

### Emphasize education on fatigue, alcohol and safety belt use

Alan Baldwin, President, Police Chiefs  
Assn. of Nebr. - Leader

Elyse Mueller, State Director, Fed. Motor  
Carrier Safety Admin.

Pat Phillips, Dept. of Motor Vehicles

Simera Reynolds, Exec. Director, MADD

Judy Craig, Program Manager, NHTSA



# Nebraska Goes High-Tech as Road Crews Prepare for Winter Weather

Nebraska's highway snow removal fleet is positioned for success in their upcoming battle with the elements, thanks to several new advances in technology. Travelers on the state's roadways this winter should benefit substantially from these innovations.

Key improvements include availability of up-to-the-minute traveler weather and road condition information; methods for early detection of changing road conditions; advanced systems for tracking location of snow removal equipment; automated bridge de-icing systems; and more widespread use of liquid chemical processes for treating frost, ice and snow on roadways.

## 511

On October 1, Nebraska became the first state to implement a statewide 511-telephone system. By dialing 511 on their cellular telephone or landline telephone, motorists will be able to access the quickest, most up-to-date information about weather conditions, road conditions and travel advisories. The 511 system will operate 24 hours a day, year round. The new system will replace the state's current toll-free 800 number for road conditions. It is also available on the Internet at [www.dor.state.ne.us](http://www.dor.state.ne.us).

## RWIS

Nebraska has expanded its remote weather information system (RWIS) to ten additional towers, for a total of 41 towers along roadways throughout the state. Instruments on the tower measure wind speed, temperature, humidity, barometric pressure and

precipitation. Pavement and subsurface pavement conditions are also transmitted. The data is relayed by telephone line to NDOR maintenance crew computers about every 30 minutes during winter. The RWIS system increases safety on the state's roads by allowing crews to respond more quickly with de-icing materials, and road crew supervisors to make fewer trips to check on road conditions. Crews can also tailor de-icing applications to the conditions of the road, which means more efficient use of materials.

## GPS

Road crews are ready to put technology to use while clearing the roadways. District 5 (Bridgeport) has installed advanced vehicle location tracking systems, using GPS, on six snowplows in Sidney and six snowplows in Kimball. A real-time display of location and status of snowplows is provided via the Department of Roads' computer to supervisors' computers, providing increased safety for snowplow operators and optimal management of equipment.

**Allow extra room between vehicles during winter weather.**



## De-Ice Systems

Several districts either have already completed or are currently installing bridge de-icing systems. These systems are temperature and precipitation sensitive and can be activated manually or by computer. District 4 (Grand Island) has a system located on Interstate 80 at Reference Post 277. District 5 is installing a new system on

a bridge on Highway 71 between Terrytown and Scottsbluff. District 6 (North Platte) is installing the system on two Interstate 80 bridges located at Reference Post 201. Because of the ability to pre-treat the pavement, bridge de-icing systems have proven helpful in preventing accidents and are especially effective for frost conditions.

## Fleet Ready

Over 1,000 trained employees are prepared to handle weather-related highway emergencies across Nebraska. Approximately 900 units of equipment make up the Department of Roads' fleet, including trucks, snowplows, front-end loaders and motor graders.

## Frost Fighters

The Department plans expanded use of liquid chemical processes for frost, ice and snow control on roadways. Maintenance crews will use several liquid chemicals on the roadways, including salt brine and agricultural-based products mixed with magnesium chloride.

The agricultural-based mixtures result from ethanol production and help prevent ice and snow from bonding to the pavement surface, or they may be applied as de-icing materials to help remove ice and snow buildup on the roadway. They may also be used as pre-wetting agents to make other chemicals more effective. They are used in various concentrations from 10-50% in association with magnesium chloride or sodium chloride. Salt brine is a chloride solution that may be applied to roadways up to two hours before a winter storm to prevent ice and snow from bonding to the pavement surface.

The Districts' plans for chemical applications are as follows:

- ✻ District 1 (Lincoln) will expand use of agricultural-based products mixed with magnesium chloride. These will be used on highways,



This file photo from last winter shows a snowplow on Highway 6, between Pleasant Dale and Milford, clearing the roadway for Nebraska travelers.

bridge decks, and for treating salt and sand stockpiles. Liquid salt brine will also be used for anti-icing, de-icing and as a pre-wetting agent. They will also use sand, salt and calcium.

❄ District 2 (Omaha) will use agricultural-based products mixed with magnesium chloride for treating salt and sand stockpiles and as a pre-wetting agent. They plan more anti-icing prior to predicted storms.

❄ District 3 (Norfolk) crews will continue to expand their use of liquids for pre-treating and de-icing on selected roadways and bridges. The remainder of the district will use gravel/salt mix treated with liquids.

❄ District 4 (Grand Island) will use salt brine again this year for pre-treating selected sites. Some sites will also use agricultural-based products mixed with magnesium chloride for frost control, anti-icing and de-icing operations. Salt/sand mix will also be used across the district.

❄ District 5 (Bridgeport) will use salt and gravel as their primary chemical treatment. They will use salt brine in some areas as a pre-wetting agent.

❄ District 6 (North Platte) will use potassium acetate for anti-icing and de-icing. They may also use agricultural-based products mixed with magnesium chloride. Salt and sand mix will be used as needed at all locations.

❄ District 7 (McCook) will use sand, salt and calcium chloride mix for snow removal.

❄ District 8 (Ainsworth) will use salt/sand as their primary chemical treatment. Liquid salt brine will be used for pre-treating hills, curves and hazardous areas on selected roadways.

### Timely Messages

Fifty-four Changeable Message Signs (CMS), including 33 positioned along Interstate 80 from Kimball to Lincoln and 21 to be used on other highways throughout Nebraska, will be used to alert motorists of immediate and/or upcoming closures. Over 100 pre-

programmed messages are available. State Roads personnel will be able to access the signs using personal computers and modems to either initiate or verify the messages.

Information on winter road conditions continues to be available on DTN monitors at the twenty-five I-80 rest areas across the state. In addition, information is available on the Department's web site, [www.dor.state.ne.us](http://www.dor.state.ne.us), under the heading "Road Reports & Travel Info." Various weather links are also available on the website. ♦

### Weather/Road Conditions

Nebraska .....	511 toll-free in NE
	402-471-4533 toll call outside NE
Colorado .....	303-639-1111
Wyoming .....	307-772-0824
Kansas .....	800-585-7623
Iowa .....	515-288-1047
Missouri .....	800-222-6400
South Dakota .....	605-773-7515
Minnesota .....	800-542-0220
Illinois .....	800-452-4368
Oklahoma .....	405-425-2385



# District 8 Dedicates Employee Memorial

The District 8 Rewards and Recognition Panel held an employee memorial dedication ceremony at the District 8 office in Ainsworth on November 6. The District's memorial boulder was unveiled and is displayed just west of the parking lot.

The ceremony honored the three former District 8 employees who lost their lives while working for the NDOR. These included: Elmer Welch who was killed in 1943 while working from the Bartlett yard, John Young who died in 1946 in the O'Neill area, and Ernest Philben who was killed in 1962 just south of the Springview yard.

In addition to honoring the employees, the memorials serve as a visible reminder to the traveling public that NDOR employees are risking their lives to build and maintain Nebraska's roads, and vigilance is needed while driving or working on the highways.

Michael Rudnick, Project Manager and Chairperson of the District 8 Rewards and Recognition Panel, acted as Master of Ceremonies. Speakers included Director John Craig, District Engineer Kris Winter and District 8 Highway Commissioner Jerome Fagerland. Two of the three families of the former District 8 employees were in attendance and spoke about



**Above** - District 8 Rewards and Recognition Panel Members pictured with the employee memorial, include, *l to r*, Mel Ohri, Carlene Burrows, Michael Rudnick, Director John Craig, Susan Neal and Dan Ziska.



**Left** - Standing near the District 8 employee memorial, *l to r*, are relatives of Ernest Philben including his sister-in-law and grandson, holding his great-grandson. Kneeling/sitting are Elmer Welch's two daughters and son. Philben was killed in 1962 and Welch in 1943, while working for NDOR.

the employees. Approximately 35 people, including former and present NDOR employees, were present for the ceremony.

With the completion of District 8's employee memorial dedication ceremony, all eight highway districts now have their memorial plaques and boulders in place. Districts 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6 have memorials in place at rest areas, while memorials for Districts 3, 7 and 8 are located at the district offices. ♦

## Heed the Message: Don't Drink & Drive

This holiday season, the Nebraska Department of Roads joins the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and thousands of transportation and law enforcement agencies across the country in getting the message out to drivers: You Drink and Drive. You Lose.

For the first time in five years, the number of people killed by drunk drivers nationwide has increased. In 2000, 16,653 people died in alcohol-related fatalities,

compared to 15,786 in 1999. The U.S. Department of Transportation has set a goal of no more than 11,000 alcohol-related fatalities annually by 2005.

There is an average of one alcohol-related fatality every 33 minutes. More than 308,000 people were injured in crashes where police reported that alcohol was present—an average of one person injured every two minutes.

The rate of alcohol involvement in fatal crashes is about four times as high at night as during the day.

Younger drivers are especially at

risk. The highest rates of intoxication in fatal crashes in 1999 were recorded for drivers 21-24 years old (27%) followed by 25-34 (24%) and 35-44 (21%).

Impaired and drunk driving is one of the most frequently committed violent crimes in the United States. Unlike other violent crimes, this one is 100% preventable.

During December, National Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month, and all year long, the message is simple. Don't drink and drive, and don't let your friends or loved ones drink and drive, either. ♦



# NDOR Hosts Grasslands Studies Meeting

The Fall 2001 meeting of the Center for Grasslands Studies (CGS) Citizens Advisory Council was held at the Nebraska Department of Roads on October 19. Director John Craig provided an overview of NDOR activities.

Dick Gray, NDOR Agronomist, discussed the history of grass plantings by NDOR. He pointed out how their evaluations of different plantings over the years have led to the use of more native species in today's seeding mixtures.

Cindy Veys, NDOR Environmental Section Manager, described some of the many environmental issues with which NDOR deals. She described the Wetland Mitigation Banking program, which is the development of large wetland areas to replace small, isolated (and less functional) wetlands

destroyed by highway construction projects. This is done by acquiring land for the bank sites through permanent easement or out-right purchase.

Veys noted that Nebraska is divided into 16 Physiographic Regions within which NDOR is attempting to develop banks. The actual number of banks will grow as credits are used up from the fully developed ones. There are currently 17 bank sites in various stages of development and approval, four of which are fully certified.

During the meeting, updates were also presented on a new professional golf management program, grazing livestock systems major at UNL, and the Nebraska grazing conference.

The Center for Grasslands Studies was formed within the Institute of

Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) in 1994. The Center's mission is to implement focused, interdisciplinary research, educational and service programs and activities that emphasize the role of grasslands as a natural resource and conservation measure and that enhance the efficiency, profitability, sustainability, and aesthetic value of grasslands, wetlands and turfs.

The Center serves those in both rural and urban environments. Clients include farmers, ranchers, livestock producers, turf grass and lawn managers, grass seed and sod producers, wildlife managers, conservation biologists, researchers, educators, students and homeowners. ♦

## National Highway Safety Award Goes to Nebraska

Nebraska was one of 11 states recently named as a recipient of the 2001 National Highway Safety Award, sponsored by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Roadway Safety Foundation (RSF). Started in 1987, these biennial awards recognize innovation, effectiveness and efficient use of resources to improve highway safety.

The awards were given in three categories: safety improvements; operational improvements; and program planning, development and evaluation. Nebraska received the award for operational improvements—activities, other than physical improvements, that contribute to the safe operation and maintenance of the highway facility.

The Midwest States Smart Work Zone Deployment Initiative involved the deployment and evaluation of 26 work zone technologies to determine their impact on the safety and efficiency of traffic operations. This public-private partnership includes

the state DOTs of Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas and Missouri; the university transportation faculty in each state; FHWA; and the Mid-America Transportation Center.

Of the 60 entries received, the states honored were found to be outstanding examples of highway safety projects. In addition to the four-state consortium involving Nebraska, other states receiving the award included Alabama, Delaware, Kentucky, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Washington.

In announcing the awards, FHWA Administrator Mary E. Peters said, "President Bush is committed to making America's transportation system as safe as possible. These project winners provide excellent examples of the continuous progress our nation is making in improving safety on our roads, from planning and research, to physical improvements, to enhance operation and maintenance." ♦

### A Rewarding Thought

*"There's nothing more important than making certain that each employee feels respected and valued."*

- Robert Crandall, CEO, American Airlines

**Brought to you by the Rewards & Recognition Agency Panel.**

Nomination forms can be found on the Intranet at <http://www.dor.state.ne.us> on the Human Resources page.



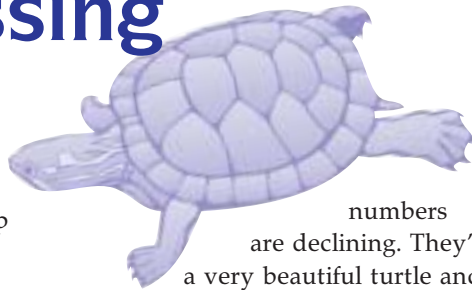
# Hwy. 83 Home to Turtle Crossing

It's a sign of the times. Deer crossings and cattle crossings along rural roadways have evolved into another realm. Now a new turtle crossing on U.S. Highway 83 will help steer endangered turtles clear of danger.

To avoid harming wildlife by widening the highway across the Valentine National Wildlife Refuge, NDOR roads crews from District 8 erected 5,360 feet of 3-foot-high chain-link fence to prevent threatened Blanding's turtles from crossing the highway and becoming road kill. The \$31,000 chain link fence is being used to herd turtles through under the road culverts.

While jokes abound about why turtles cross the road, according to Cindy Veys, NDOR Environmental Section Manager, care had to be taken to protect the Blanding's turtles as they have been listed nationally as a "species of special concern" meaning they could be headed for threatened or endangered status.

According to Mark Lindvall, Valentine National Wildlife Refuge Manager, they're a relatively rare turtle in the U.S. and there is some concern that their



numbers are declining. They're a very beautiful turtle and they live a long time, 60 to 70 years.

Lindvall said the turtles duck inside their shells when threatened and stay put, leaving them vulnerable for long periods on a highway. He noted this study will evaluate the effectiveness of these crossings in two ways: first to keep the turtles from getting on the road and killed and then to see if fences will direct turtles into culverts.

The fencing was erected near the wetlands of the Valentine National Wildlife Refuge, the place Blanding's turtles call home. It is similar to fencing installed in Minnesota and California, Veys said.

While a first for Nebraska, other states have special crossings.

California has similar underpasses for threatened desert tortoises, Florida has bear underpasses,

Montana has goat underpasses and Massachusetts has salamander tunnels. ♦



## Wetlands Area Revived for Turtles

After a surprise discovery of Blanding's turtles at Memphis State Lake, the State has refilled a small wetland area there. Workers dammed a 3/4-mile-long wetlands channel at the lake, which has been drained for a renovation project. According to Mace Hack, head of wildlife research for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, that should provide some watery habitat for these rare turtles during the 12-month-long project.

A Lincoln man recently sighted the Blanding's turtles, thought to be found mainly in the Sand Hills. They are rare in Eastern Nebraska, and until this sighting, Commission biologists were unaware of their existence at the lake.

Blanding's turtles are a medium-sized box-like turtle with yellow spots that are on threatened and endangered species lists in some states and are a species of special concern in Nebraska.

- Omaha World-Herald

### Communication Corner

## Why We Don't Hear Others

If you want to listen so you really hear what others say, make sure you're not a:

- **Mind reader.** You'll hear little or nothing as you think "What is this person really thinking or feeling?"
- **Rehearser.** Your mental tryouts for "Here's what I'll say next" tune out the speaker.
- **Filterer.** Some call this selective listening—hearing only what you want to hear.
- **Dreamer.** Drifting off during a face-to-face conversation can lead to an embarrassing "What did you say?" or "Could you repeat that?"
- **Identifier.** If you refer everything you hear to your experience, you probably didn't really hear what was said.
- **Comparer.** When you get side-tracked assessing the messenger, you're sure to miss the message.
- **Derailer.** Changing the subject too quickly tells others you're not interested in anything they have to say.
- **Sparrer.** You hear what's said but quickly belittle it or discount it. That puts you in the same class as the derailer.
- **Placater.** Agreeing with everything you hear just to be nice or to avoid conflict does not mean you're a good listener.

- Communication Briefings-Ideas that work



# Service Awards

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

## 30 Years

Rick Ernstmeyer, Trans. Planning  
John Luedeke, Bridge  
John Miller, Construction  
Claude Oie, Construction  
Douglas Teachman, District 2  
Alan Whitford, Information Systems  
Robert Wysocki, District 4

## 20 Years

Duane Acklie, Highway Commission  
Gerald Cook, District 1  
Richard Norton, District 7  
Todd Muehlich, District 2  
Gary Voss, District 1

## 10 Years

James Agena, Materials & Research  
Dawn Allyn, Roadway Design  
Gary Baxter, District 8  
Terry Becker, District 3  
Gerald Blacketer, Roadway Design  
William Burke, District 6  
Judy Dietz, Right-of-Way  
Daryl Fullerton, District 4  
Fred Harb, Information Systems  
Brian Johnson, Roadway Design  
Paul Otto, District 3  
Randy L. Peters, District 4  
Mark Traynowicz, Materials & Research

# We Get Letters ...



October 10, 2001

*I want to express my deepest appreciation to Linda Grabowski, Denise Wallman, Esther Shepherd, Christine Trueblood, and Vern and Virginia Ohrman for helping me at the Rewards and Recognition ceremony on September 19, when I got sick.*

*They got me wet cloths, found a wheelchair and ice water, and put me in the car with the help of my husband.*

*Linda Grabowski called my house that evening to see how I was feeling. The ladies were very concerned.*

*I sure did appreciate them. I truly thought they walked the extra mile to help us.*

*Thanks so much,*

*Mrs. David O. (Arlene) Merklin*

**Editor's Note:** The helpful NDOR employees were Linda Grabowski, Office Clerk III, D-7; Denise Wallman, Administrative Assistant I, Logistics; Esther Shepherd, Administrative Assistant I, D-4; Christine Trueblood, Word Processing Specialist II, Communication; and Vern Ohrman, Hwy. Maintenance Worker Sr, D-7, Hayes Center.



***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.***



## Human Resources Efforts Recognized

District Engineer John Jacobsen presents a plaque of appreciation on behalf of the eight district engineers to Sue Larson, interim Human Resources Administrator. The plaque was given as a thanks for helping resolve human resource issues in accordance with the Labor Contract and fostering productive customer service with much appreciated cooperative spirit.



By LoyAnn Rossel, RN,COHN-S

# Life's Lesson



The holiday season this year probably won't be the same as we have experienced in the past. Due to recent events, we have lost our innocence and feeling of immortality. Our emotions have been shaken.

We worry more about the future for our family and ourselves. We have learned not to be as trusting or passive and, most of all, we realize that freedom and unity are very important.

These traumatic events have also reminded us that life is not easy. In fact, we should **expect** life to be difficult. It helps to know this when we hit those bumps in the road of life.

These acts of terrorism that have caused suffering and death make us reassess what is really important to us. We can view this time as a fork in the road of life. We have the power to decide how we will handle it.

Here are some of my suggestions:

*Enjoy family and friends more and material things less*

*Drink hot chocolate and apple cider more and alcohol less*

*Eat healthy basic foods more and fast foods less*

*Hug more and fight less*

*Walk more and ride less*

*Exercise and yoga more and eat less*

*Sleep more and stress less*

*Give more and take less*

*Laugh more and frown less*

*Listen more and talk less*

*Pray and meditate more and judge less*

*Compliment more and gossip less*

*Be grateful more and negative less*

*Watch sunsets more and T.V. less*

*Drink water more and caffeine less*

*Save more and spend less*

*See the beauty of others more and gossip less*

*Love more and hate less*

## All Dressed Up...



Trick-or-treaters from Southwood Preschool and Daycare in Lincoln made their annual visit to NDOR's Highway Safety Section on Halloween, creating quite a stir with their crafty costumes and cheerful chatter.

**Above** - A bubbling cauldron created a perfect setting for the grown-up witches, cowboys, soldiers, clowns and other spooky spectacles, employees of NDOR's Highway Safety Section.

**Top right** - The Doublemint twins were on hand with treats to ensure "double the pleasure, double the fun."

**Right** - Lions and tigers and bears were observed roaming NDOR's central headquarters, with sightings of Batman, bumblebees, princesses and angels also reported.



# NDOR Events Calendar

## — December —

### National Drunk & Drugged Driving Prevention Month

- 4 New Employee Orientation Program**  
NDOR Auditorium – contact Steve Olson @ 479-3601
- 6 Letting** 1:30 p.m. NDOR Auditorium  
contact Karl Fredrickson @ 479-4528
- 13 Proj. Scheduling Monthly Meeting**  
8:30 - 11:30 a.m. NDOR Auditorium  
contact Craig Anderson @ 479-4666
- 14 Hwy. Commission Meeting**  
10:00 a.m. Hwy. Commission Meeting Rm.  
contact Shirley Schafer @ 479-4530
- 18 New Employee Orientation Program**  
NDOR Auditorium – contact Steve Olson @ 479-3601
- 21 Bd. Public Roads Class. & Stds.**  
9:00 a.m., NDOR Auditorium  
contact Andrew Cunningham @ 479-4569
- 21-23 You Drink & Drive. You Lose.**  
**National Holiday Lifesavers Mobilization**
- 25 State Holiday – Christmas**

## — January —

- 1 State Holiday – New Year's Day**
- 11 Proj. Scheduling Monthly Meeting**  
8:30 - 11:30 a.m. NDOR Auditorium  
contact Craig Anderson @ 479-4666
- 18 Bd. Public Roads Class. & Stds.**  
9:00 a.m., NDOR Auditorium  
contact Andrew Cunningham @ 479-4569

- 21 State Holiday – Martin Luther King Jr. Day**
- 25 Hwy. Commission Meeting**  
10:00 a.m. Hwy. Commission Meeting Rm.  
contact Shirley Schafer @ 479-4530

## — February —

- 7 Letting** 1:30 p.m. NDOR Auditorium  
contact Karl Fredrickson @ 479-4528
- 8 Proj. Scheduling Monthly Meeting**  
8:30 - 11:30 a.m. NDOR Auditorium  
contact Craig Anderson @ 479-4666
- 10-16 National Child Passenger Safety Week**
- 18 State Holiday – President's Day**
- 15 Bd. Public Roads Class. & Stds.**  
9:00 a.m., NDOR Auditorium  
contact Andrew Cunningham @ 479-4569
- 15 Hwy. Commission Meeting**  
10:00 a.m. Hwy. Commission Meeting Rm.  
contact Shirley Schafer @ 479-4530
- 22 Bd. Examiners for Co. Hwy. & City Street Supts.**  
10:00 a.m. Hwy. Commission Meeting Rm.  
Contact Andrew Cunningham @ 479-4569

If you know of key events you would like 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 February/March Roadrunner should be received by January 18.

