



WVDOT Today!

July 2024, Volume 6: Issue 7



Secretary Wriston Presents Covered Bridges Poster to Governor Justice



Clay Country Rail Bikes Open to the Public



**Secretary Wriston
Announces Across
the Board Pay Raise
for All Employees!**



Section of US 35 Used to Test Road Striping Materials

If you're driving on US 35 near Point Pleasant, don't be alarmed if you suddenly hit what looks like half a mile of brightly colored rumble strips. The West Virginia Division of Highways (WVDOH) is not turning a section of the road into a massive parking lot.

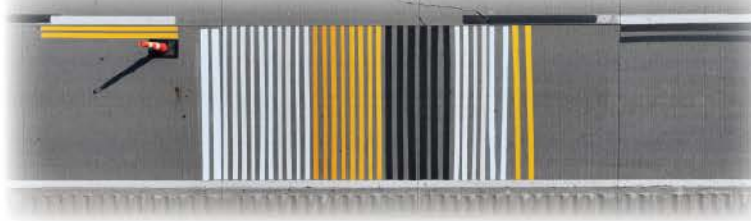
The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) has partnered with the WVDOH to use the strip of highway to test the durability of different products used for highway striping.

"AASHTO appreciates West Virginia providing us the resources to do this work," said Katheryn Malusky, program director of the AASHTO Product Evaluation and Audit Solutions section.

In all, 32 manufacturers are testing 150 different products for use on highway surfaces. Each product is laid down on the road, where data will be collected on it for the next three years to determine which products hold up best under real world traffic conditions.

The manufacturers themselves are paying for the materials and doing the work to lay down the stripes. AASHTO is collecting the data, and the WVDOH is providing the road.

The WVDOH will be placing signs alerting motorists before they reach the test stripes.



WVDOT Today!

is a monthly newsletter published by the West Virginia Department of Transportation's Public Relations Division. The purpose of this publication is to facilitate connection across the diverse worksites and professions represented among WVDOT employees to empower us to function as **one West Virginia Department of Transportation**.

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WVDOT Covered Bridges Poster Available for Free Download

West Virginia is renowned for its covered bridges. Seventeen of the historic structures are located in the Mountain State, many still actively carrying traffic.

As the West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT) maintains its more than seven thousand bridges statewide, historic covered bridges are not overlooked.

Color posters of the state's covered bridges are now available for free download on the West Virginia Department of Transportation's (WVDOT) website. Printer-friendly versions of the poster are available online in 6-by-4-inch, 12-by-8-inch, and 17-by-11-inch sizes.

Centerpiece of the poster is the 286-foot Philippi Covered bridge, which still carries traffic on major highway US 250 across the Tygart River in Philippi. The bridge was built in 1852, and was used by both sides during the American Civil War.

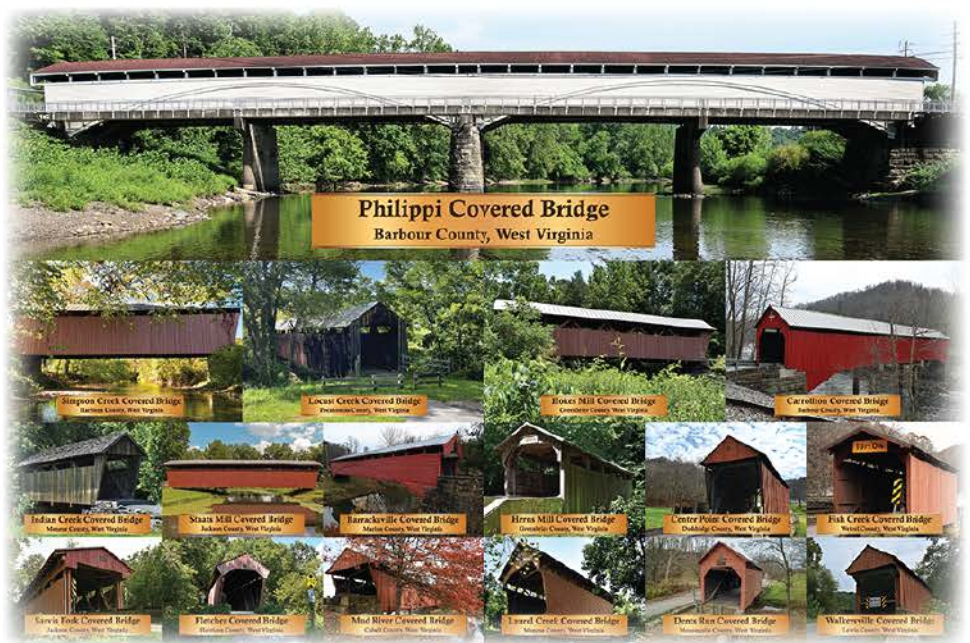
Other notable bridges included on the poster include the Carrollton Covered Bridge in Barbour County, badly damaged by fire in 2017 and painstakingly restored by WVDOT's own District 7 bridge crews; and the Staats Mill Covered Bridge, which now resides at Cedar Lakes Retreat near Ripley in Jackson County.

West Virginia's 17 covered bridges include:

- Philippi Covered Bridge, Barbour County.
- Simpson Creek Covered Bridge, Harrison County.
- Locust Creek Covered Bridge, Pocahontas County.
- Hokes Mill Covered Bridge, Greenbrier County.
- Carrollton Covered Bridge, Barbour County.
- Indian Creek Covered Bridge, Monroe County.
- Staats Mill Covered Bridge, Jackson County.
- Barracksville Covered Bridge, Marion County.
- Herns Mill Covered Bridge, Greenbrier County.
- Fish Creek Covered Bridge, Wetzel County.
- Sarvis Fork Covered Bridge, Jackson County.
- Fletcher Covered Bridge, Harrison County.
- Mud River Covered Bridge, Cabell County.
- Center Point Covered Bridge, Doddridge County.
- Laurel Creek Covered Bridge, Monroe County.
- Dents Run Covered Bridge, Monongalia County.
- Walkersville Covered Bridge, Lewis County.

Randy Damron, Troy Morgan, Rusty Marks, and Jennifer Dooley, of the WVDOT Public Relations Division, captured photographs of the historic structures while traveling around the state. Public Relations Division graphics designer Chris Moynahan laid out the poster.

While several of the structures have been retired from service and now serve as tourist attractions, many of the bridges still carry traffic on a daily basis.



Building a Supportive Workplace Culture

As a place to begin - we know to be kind, refrain from spreading gossip, offer sincere compliments, and build on each other's strengths as we never know what battles someone else is fighting. At work we're all around each other a lot, a lot, a lot and although we don't know firsthand what each other are up against, we have a lot of opportunities to make a day better for someone.

There are a million small ways to be supportive and encouraging of each other, and as our agency continues to actively work on becoming a place where individuals can thrive and talents can shine, we're taking a moment to spotlight resources for facing depression and anxiety, and to offer the reminder that we can work together to build a team that's just out-of-this-world good at being good to each other.

Depression and anxiety are the leading mental health issues that face employees in the workplace. Nearly half of all employees have experienced symptoms of depression at work and around two-thirds have experienced significant stress according to the American Psychological Association (APA).

Depression is the persistent feeling of sadness, hopelessness, and loss of interest. This impacts your concentration, energy levels, and overall functioning. This brings on decreased productivity through increased absenteeism or just presenteeism (physically present, but not fully productive). This can and will lead to a high turnover rate in these employees because they feel unsupported and or overwhelmed, leading to job dissatisfaction.

The legal and ethical avenues that can be used are outlined by Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). These guidelines help the Human Resource (HR) Department to aid and provide direction to employees going through these moments.

HR professionals adhere to strict confidentiality and privacy standards when assisting employees. This can be done by creating a supportive workplace culture. We at the West Virginia Department of Transportation have an Employee Referral Program (ERP), provide presentations and programs through Training and Development (T&D), and Build a Better You.

There is a helpline for West Virginia; it is First Choice Services (844HELP4WV). It is part of an International Council for HELPLINES, that promotes wellbeing, facilitates access to behavioral health, and social services.

In conclusion, the more we talk about mental health the more likely our employees will be able to overcome the stigma and seek the help they need.



844
HELP4WV

WV's Addiction & Mental Health Helpline

1-844-437-7498

Help4WV.com

The Story Behind the Bridge Named Glenn



West Virginia is home to many signature bridges you could drive on each day and maybe never see. It makes sense, because your eyes are on the road, and the bridges are massive.

WVARNG Sergeant Glenn F. Lough, P.E., Memorial Bridge, carrying Interstate 64 between Dunbar and South Charleston is one such bridge. You can drive up one side of the river and down the other and still not see it. It extends beyond your peripheral vision. You can look, but you can't see the whole thing.

The thing is curvy. It's concrete, gracefully curving an award winning distance of 2,975 feet and 5 inches. That's more feet than you actually have in both of your shoes. Its main span alone has 760 feet.

Glenn Lough worked for the (WVDOH) for 25 years. He was in a leadership role, with two employees in his section, but he led everyone else too. Glenn was working on heat straightening damaged steel bridges, among other things. He could preach a fiery sermon about how suddenly bridges get hit, how gracefully to repair them and it would keep you alive if you were in the second session after lunch break at a conference when everyone else's speech would put you to sleep.

There's a point where you can fix certain things and they're still not going to be perfect. Glenn fixed things constantly. Buy just an ordinary paper shredder and it stops shredding paper. Glenn takes it and brings it back shredding paper, but with a note that says, "I'm working but broken." He knows why it's broken, explains down to the individual plastic piece, but you can keep shredding things with it because ... he actually fixed it around the fact that it's broken.

Glenn died June 27, 2017, age 47, on the way back from an efficiently planned trip to evaluate several damaged bridges. One of the things noticed with the most persistent sadness by co-workers in the Engineering Division immediately following his death is that the light outside his office was flickering and he wasn't there to fix it. None of us could touch it. We just had to go around. We were working, but broken.

Engineering Division lost another bridge engineer, Bob Blosser, six months later. Bob's absence meant no one singing classic rock out loud with old school Walkman headphones, and no clicking of ostrich cowboy boots in the hallway. Both were missed. Both Bob and Glenn had good ideas which are now being implemented.

We only get one each of each brilliant person. As public servants, it might seem we could just leave and the same list of tasks would remain as our job spec for another person to apply for, but if we look around at the folks we actually know – it isn't true. Lists can only approximate what each of us can do. Someone else can come along and do kind of different similar stuff, but the agency, no matter how many thousand of us there are, still runs on the skill and finesse and greater understanding by individuals of how to fix what you can fix to keep going.

Here we are, each with only two feet, paving all these feet of roadway and making significant progress so that West Virginia's bridges are not in decline. We have our job specs, but our actual skills and talents far surpass them. The story behind the bridge named Glenn is that we're not even perfect yet, but we're doing really big things. Just like the WVARNG Sergeant Glenn F. Lough, P.E., Memorial Bridge, we can't even see the whole thing while we're accomplishing it.



New Softwares and Functionality to Replace REMIS System Have Been Launched

The West Virginia Division of Highways (WVDOH) has implemented new softwares and functionality to replace the REMIS system that has served highways for several decades. The change occurred at the beginning of Fiscal Year 2025, Monday, July 1, 2024.

REMIS is being replaced with modern software, as part of the WVDOH's overall Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) initiative. WVDOH will expand the use of wvOASIS for financial and procurement functionality; new software from Deighton will be used for Maintenance Management, and Asset Works will be implemented for Fleet Management, as stated in a memo sent to WVDOH employees by Business Manager Carla Rotsch.

As the calendar flips to July, the REMIS system will only be available for data review, reports, and queries. No transactional updates will be done in REMIS beginning July 1, 2024.

"This has been years in the making getting to this point," said Jake Bumgarner, P.E., Chief Engineer of Special Programs. "We started working on putting a different maintenance management system together over 15 years ago. This is a significant time."

Users' security access in REMIS will change to only accommodate data review.

REMIS was built more than three decades ago, according to Bumgarner, and has been in place with the WVDOH ever since.

"The transition will be bumpy. We are going to have a team of people ready to answer questions, ready to help people with entry," Bumgarner said about employees who may be asking for help through the transition.

Project tracking and authorizations have already transitioned with the HUB, and time entry is a cornerstone of the wvOASIS system.

Other software and systems going live in July include Asset Works for managing the WVDOH's large fleet, and a new Encroachment ePermits Portal for citizens and businesses. Additional phases of a new right-of-way software are expected to be implemented in the coming months with a full implementation of a Highway Safety Software product.

West Virginia Division of Motor Vehicles Reminds Motorists of July License Plate Renewal

As the calendar flips to July, many deadlines have arrived to renew license plates in West Virginia.

Classes included in the Monday, July 1, 2024, deadline of renewal include Class B plates (trucks, truck tractors, or road tractors with a gross vehicle weight of 10,001 pounds or more), Class M plates (Mobile Equipment including self-propelled vehicles, not designed or used primarily for the transportation of persons or property over the highway), Class J plates (Taxi Cabs, motor vehicles used for the transportation of persons for compensation), and Class X plates (Farm Trucks, motor vehicles used exclusively for the transportation of farm products and supplies by a farmer).

A large number of specialty license plates including associations & organizations, college & university plates, military plates, and special interest plates such as wildlife plates, breast cancer awareness, etc. expire Monday, July 1, 2024.

"I would also encourage the public to renew all Class A plates and specialty plates online at dmv.wv.gov," said Linda Ellis, Deputy Commissioner of West Virginia Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV). "If your plate is peeling or faded, let the DMV know when you renew so we can assign a new plate."

July is typically one of the busiest renewal months of the year other than January, February and April.



WVDOT Celebrates Opening of Clay County Railbike Trail

On Friday, June 7, 2024, Gov. Jim Justice; Transportation Secretary Jimmy Wriston, P.E.; Tourism Secretary Chelsea Ruby; and entrepreneurs for rail excursion company Rail Explorers met in Clay to debut Rail Explorers' newest railbike trail along a six-mile section of the former Buffalo Creek & Gauley Railroad.

The new tourist trail was made possible by a partnership between the West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT), Department of Tourism, and Rail Explorers founders Mary Joy Lu and Alex Catchpoole.

"It was a little bit of everybody," said Cindy Butler, commissioner of the WVDOT's Division of Multimodal Transportation Facilities.

"The Buffalo Creek & Gauley Railroad is the perfect location for a different type of tourist attraction," Butler said. "Railbikes are currently found in many states, but this will be the first in West Virginia. Rail Explorers is a first-class operation that has six other operations in five different states. West Virginia will be the next one on their list and we are lucky to have them.

"I believe this will be a huge tourist draw for Clay County and the State of West Virginia," Butler said. "With over 600,000 riders and counting, this operation has a proven track record of success. Welcome to West Virginia!"

Rail Explorers began when Lu saw similar railbikes on a South Korean television show. She and Catchpoole traveled to South Korea to meet with the manufacturer and bring a fleet of railbikes to the United States.

They opened their first trail in New York state in 2015, and have been expanding ever since.

"This unforgettable outdoor adventure combines the tranquility of nature with the thrill of railbiking and magic of the railroad," Lu said. "We are incredibly excited to bring Rail Explorers to Clay, West Virginia. The beauty of this area is unmatched – we are so proud to re-activate this historic railroad that has been a lifeline in the community for over 100 years. This two-hour, eco-friendly activity is fully accessible to people of all ages and abilities, making this a perfect activity for families, friends, and solo explorers."

Rail Explorers offers two-seat and four-seat pedal-powered railbikes, which have electrically assisted motors to make pedaling easier. Visit RailExplorers.net or call 877-833-8588 to learn more and reserve tickets.

WVDOT crews were heavily involved in the railbike project. Rail crews from Multimodal helped lay in track and a switch for the project, and members of West Virginia Division of Highways (WVDOT) Central Forces built a new parking lot.

"The Departments of Transportation and Tourism have joined forces to make this anticipation a reality," said Wriston. "Our motto at Transportation is 'ONE DOT.' With each collaborative project, we are working together for the betterment of our state."



WVDOT Reminds Drivers to Slow Down in Work Zones



Officers from six different law enforcement agencies stopped 146 vehicles and issued 105 speeding tickets in the Interstate 64 work zones between Barboursville and Huntington on Tuesday, June 11, 2024.

"Yesterday's operation should be a reminder that slowing down in work zones is so important," said Randy Damron, Work Zone Safety spokesman for the West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT).

"Work zone safety is about keeping every worker, every driver, and every passenger safe in every work zone," Damron said. "We each play a role in getting everyone home safe at the end of the day."

With hundreds of construction projects scheduled around the state in 2024, the WVDOT urges drivers to pay attention and obey traffic laws in work zones.

West Virginia State Police, the Public Service Commission, Cabell County Sheriff's Department, and police from Milton, Barboursville, and Huntington took part in a speed enforcement operation in the area throughout the day, and will continue patrolling the work zones through West Virginia Day, Thursday, June 20, 2024.

The enforcement event was a collaborative effort between local law enforcement and the WVDOT to increase safety and raise awareness in work zones. The WVDOT and law enforcement remind drivers to slow down, pay attention, and stay off cell phones while traveling through work zones.

Law enforcement agencies worked in concert during the operation, with some officers tracking vehicles on radar and other officers chasing them down. The fastest vehicle pulled over by officers was going 94 mph in the 55-mph work zone.

The traffic stops did not only result in speeding tickets. Among the citations written Tuesday were violations by 16 commercial vehicles, three suspended licenses, and one license revoked for driving under the influence.

Data prove that issuing speeding tickets in work zones is effective in getting drivers to slow down, but only temporarily. "Too many people are still speeding in our work zones," Damron said.

Over the past year, the Barboursville Police Department has issued 4,300 citations in the Barboursville Mall work zone on I-64.

Five people were killed in work zone crashes on West Virginia highways in 2023. The previous year, there were 800 crashes in West Virginia work zones, killing eight people and injuring 276.



VISION AWARDS

Congratulations to the following individuals being recognized this month by Secretary Wriston for their dedication to The Vision.

Noah White - District 1
Tiffney Adkins - District 1
Michelle Petry - Finance Division
Victoria Peyton - District 2
Don Rose - District 2
Kim Conway - District 2
Paul Estep - District 2
Allisyn Lynch - DMV
Charles Blevins - DMV
Nina Orndorf - Budget Division
Sandra Jones - Financial Reporting
Jennifer Curia - Budget Division
Cindy Wilkinson - Finance Division
Kristy James - Procurement

The Vision is simple; to be the best DOT in the country, for the purpose of giving our West Virginia the chance it should have - a place of prosperity and joy, where citizens have the best chance to build the lives they hope for. To be the best DOT in the country based on the quality of our work and motivation. To be the safest place for our employees to work. To be the best trained, and most educated. To go Above and Beyond, every day.



WVDOT Announces Across-the-Board Raises for Fifth Consecutive Year

On Tuesday, June 4, 2024, Transportation Secretary Jimmy Wriston, P.E., announced across-the-board pay raises for all permanent West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT) employees effective Monday, July 1, 2024. It is the fifth straight year that Gov. Jim Justice and the West Virginia Legislature approved raises for state employees.

Wriston attributed the raises to Gov. Justice's vision to help attract and retain the state's workforce through competitive wages and benefits.

"He has a very unique understanding of the economics of the working people and how they have to be in good health financially in order to produce for the state," Wriston said. "And that's what they're doing."

Starting in July, every permanent WVDOT employee will see a raise of \$2,900 a year. That amounts to an ongoing raise of about \$1.40 an hour. Workers should start to see the raises on the Friday, July 26, 2024, paycheck.

Unlike other state agencies, WVDOT's Classification and Compensation Career Plan is adjusted with the across-the-board raise. This means that incoming employees will also see the benefit of the raises. It's part of building a better base for WVDOT in both the present and future, to bring the WVDOT more in line with other state DOTs in terms of salary. The raises are designed to help all WVDOT employees, with many in our workforce being on-the-ground transportation workers.

"Inflation's killing everybody," Wriston said. "It's tough to make a living these days, especially when you work all the time and don't seem to be making gains. This will be a big help for our folks."

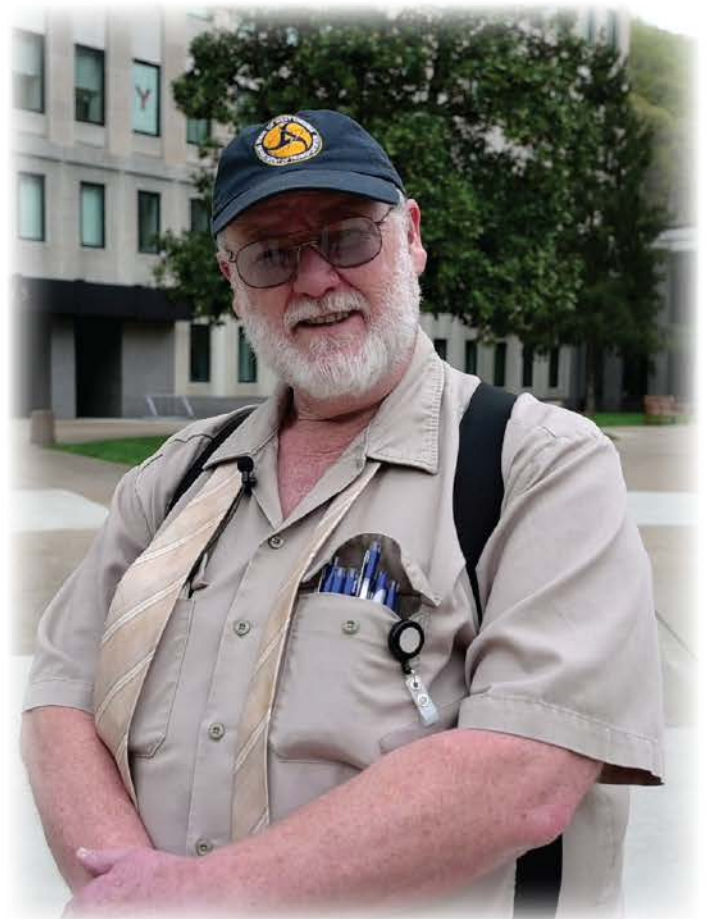
"There's no down time for a Transportation Worker," Wriston said. "They come out of snow and ice removal in the winter, right into the pothole blitzes, right into their core maintenance plan, right into the fall tree canopy cutting, and right into the same cycle again."

Paying for the raises is another matter.

When Gov. Justice and the Legislature give out state pay raises, the Legislature increases each agency's budget to cover the raises. But since the WVDOT is funded out of the State Road Fund, Wriston and central office staff have to find the money within the WVDOT's existing budget.

Wriston said the raises have been funded through increased efficiencies within the agency. The WVDOT's data-driven decision-making processes and ability to keep close tabs on costs and expenditures has allowed the WVDOT to work harder, smarter, and cheaper.

"Working for the Department of Transportation these days is very attractive," Wriston said. "We have very good competitive benefits packages, and we have our career paths. It's not just a job."



WVDOT, WVU Partner for Online Learning Opportunities in the Fall

In collaboration with the Wadsworth Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering (CEE) at West Virginia University (WVU), the West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT) will offer exciting opportunities for online learning this Fall 2024.

The following civil engineering online course offerings include CE 413: Construction Methods (Instructor: Dr. Yoojung Yoon), CE 418: Construction Estimating (Instructor: Dr. Fei Dai) and CE 493B/593D: FRP Composite Structures (Instructor: Dr. Hota GangaRao).

WVDOT employees have the opportunity to take advantage of the educational expense reimbursement while expanding their career in Construction Management and Civil Engineering. Employees are asked to submit applications at least 30 days before the start of the semester to take part in this valuable educational experience. A link to the policy, which contains the application, can be found at transportation.wv.gov/formsandpolicies.

Aspiring students can apply to WVU as Non-Degree students in order to register for these courses. More information on the process is located at the link below at <https://online.wvu.edu/admissions/visiting-students>.

Monica Ashford, Assistant Director of the Human Resources Division, said students will have the ability to experience the flexibility of self-paced learning with asynchronous recorded lectures delivered at a set schedule for CE 413 and CE 418. Homework and assignments will be either posted on eCampus or sent via emails.

CE 493B/593D will also have synchronous lectures with class meetings on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11:00am-12:15pm. Zoom links will be sent to the students to attend the lectures.



New Guests Each Week!



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