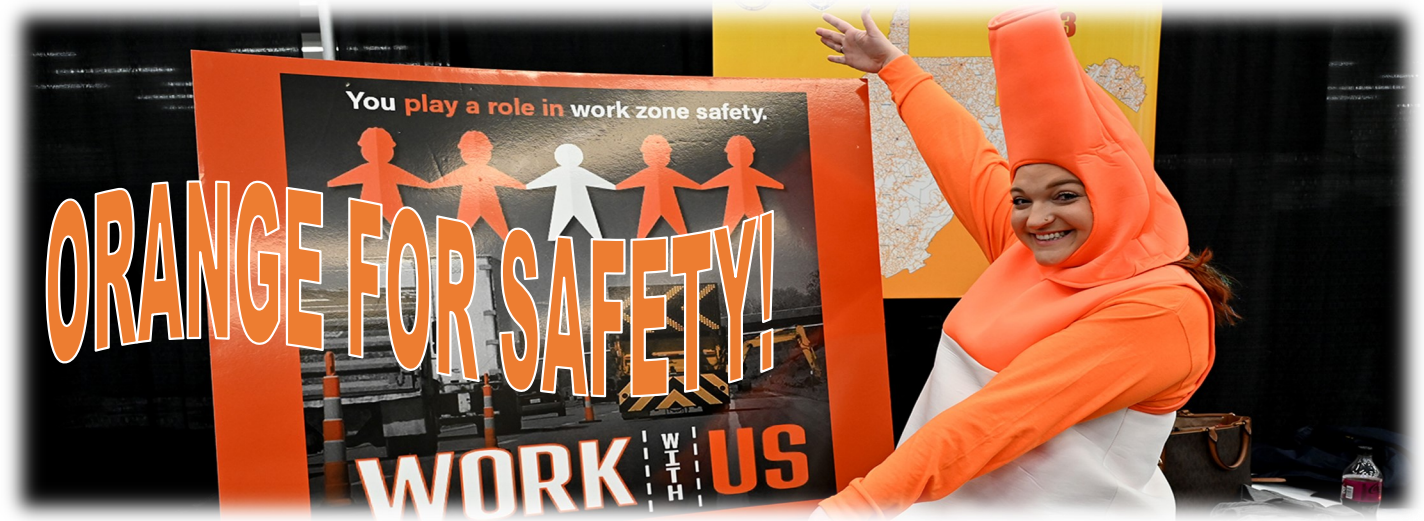


WV DOT Today!



April 2023—Volume 5: Issue 4



2023 Construction Expo

The West Virginia Construction & Design Exposition (Expo) was held at the Charleston Coliseum & Convention Center on Wednesday, March 22, 2023,

and Thursday, March 23. The Expo featured nearly 300 exhibitors in the construction and design industries, 80 seminars and dozens of continuing education opportunities.

The West Virginia Division of Highways (WVDOH) Public Relations booth at this year's expo stressed work zone safety, as the WVDOH embarks on a massive work zone safety campaign designed to eliminate work zone crashes throughout the Mountain State. Public Relations' contributions to the expo included roving traffic cones (staffers Lindsey Hanks and Rusty Marks) wandering the event to remind visitors of the importance of paying attention in work zones, and a live taping of the WVDOH podcast "Around the DOT" with Randy Damron and Jennifer Dooley.

The expo began in a parking lot at the South Charleston in 1979, moving to Charleston the following year. Since then, it has become the premier trade show in the state for those in the contracting, construction, and design fields.

"Any new technology that is going to be presented is presented at Expo," said Mike Clowser, recently retired executive director of the Contractors Association of West Virginia. "Any time there are programs on new construction or projects, it is unveiled at Expo."

"Networking is a huge aspect of the show," said Show Manager Cassidy Webb. "And it's not just attendee and exhibitor networking, but exhibitor to exhibitor networking. It's always a successful show when one exhibitor even makes one contact that they can deal with in the future."

Webb, who also serves as communications director for the Contractors Association of West Virginia, said it's becoming more difficult to entice young people into the construction fields. The Contractors Association is working on several



outreach programs to get the word to young people that construction work is a viable and lucrative career path.

"The workforce in the construction

industry has been an issue," Webb said. We've partnered with some of these agencies such as WorkForce West Virginia, state Department of Education and the Governor's Jobs & Hope program to educate employers on the different programs they have to take advantage of when it comes to gaining employees."

Clowser said contractors and WVDOH have always had an important relationship.

"Probably one of the greatest partnerships in the history of construction in West Virginia has been between the Contractors Association of West Virginia and the West Virginia Division of Highways," Clowser said. "On one level, the DOH is a highway contractor's biggest client. On the contractor's level, the DOH has to have contractors to accomplish their goals and objectives.

"Over the years we've been able to work through committees and cooperative efforts to come up with new designs, new procedures, new ability to build a better road at a cheaper price," Clowser said.

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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WVDOH Cuts the Last Tree of the Season



West Virginia Division of Highways (WVDOH) maintenance crews cleared more than 430 miles of trees and branches away from the state's roadways between November 2022 and the end of March 2023, enough to stretch from Charleston to Myrtle Beach.

Canopy clearing plays a vital part in prolonging the life of the pavement on West Virginia's 36,000 miles of road. Along with keeping ditches cleared and proper drainage, keeping roads cleared of overhanging canopy is important both to the life of the road and to the safety of drivers.

"I can't tell you how proud I am of the crews," said Transportation Secretary Jimmy Wriston, P.E. "I gave them a challenge. They believed they could do it. I believed they could do it. They did it!"

Wriston said the miles of road cleared are enough to drive from Charleston to Myrtle Beach. The old record of 170 linear miles would have left you stranded north of Greensboro, North Carolina.

Wriston set a goal for the state's 10 highway districts to clear at least 400 miles of trees and branches along the state's roads, a

process known as canopy clearing. By law, maintenance crews are only allowed to clear canopy between Nov. 15 and March 31. The restriction is in place to protect endangered bat populations, which don't use trees during those months.

WVDOH work crews exceeded that goal, clearing more than 430 miles of trees and branches by the end of the season.

Canopy clearing is important in maintaining uncluttered sight lines for drivers and eliminating the hazards from falling trees and branches, but is vital in keeping roads dry.

"Water is a highway's worst enemy," said Joe Pack, P.E., WVDOH Chief Engineer of District Operations. "Anything we can do to keep water off our roadways or to help dry up that water will prolong the life of that road." Moisture left on pavement degrades asphalt fast, so maintenance crews cut away limbs and branches to allow sunlight to get to the roadways below.

Maintenance crews use bucket trucks, chainsaws, pole saws and chippers to clear away branches and limbs and grind them up. Bucket trucks have a reach of 40 feet, but maintenance crews have pole saws that are up to 175 feet long for reaching the highest branches.



South Fairmont Arch Bridge Goes Out with a Bang

The southbound portion of the South Fairmont West Virginia Arch Bridges in Marion County was demolished on Wednesday, March 22, 2023 as part of the massive Interstate 79 widening project from Harrison County to the Pennsylvania state line, made possible by Gov. Jim Justice's focus on highway infrastructure.



The bridges span the Tygart River near the White Hall exit. The southbound bridge was built in 1960 and northbound bridge was built in 1966.

The section of interstate in Marion County from the South Fairmont to the Pleasant Valley exits, where the South Fairmont West Virginia Arch Bridges sit, is being widened to three lanes in each direction at a cost of \$72.5 million by Pennsylvania-based Swank Construction.

County Route 60, Vinegar Hill Road, was closed until 4 p.m. Wednesday, March 22, 2023, for work crews to remove the

existing bridge.

Motorists were advised to plan ahead and allow additional time for their commute.

Only authorized personnel were allowed within the explosives loading/handling area. The explosive charges were not detonated until the area was clear of all

traffic and personnel. Swank Construction was the contractor for the project. Veit & Company, Inc's Senior Blaster Shannon North, a subcontractor in charge of the blast, went door to door to notify nearby residents. Swank Construction had two boats on the river to stop boat traffic.

With projects moving forward rapidly all around the state, West Virginia Division of Highways reminds motorists to slow down and be aware in work zones as we work closely with our contracting partners to build the infrastructure West Virginia deserves.

Women of Asphalt

A group that was created to empower women in the asphalt industry now has a chapter in West Virginia.

The Women of Asphalt (WofA) West Virginia chapter launched in March and the group was represented at the 2023 West Virginia Construction & Design Exposition (Expo) in Charleston.

"We think it gives women a place to land, promote awareness and a sense of community in a predominantly male-dominated field," said Megan Temple, the co-chair of WofA West Virginia. "We think it's a great thing to let people know that construction and asphalt aren't just for men."

Temple is an estimator at Kelly Paving. She said the goals of the chapter are to bring awareness of opportunities in the industry, elevate knowledge through education and resources, and provide platforms to create supportive relationships and growth.

Therese Mizer, chair of the WofA West Virginia chapter, has

worked in construction for more than two decades. She currently runs the Northern Division for Mid-Atlantic Maintenance.

"It used to be that the women were just in the offices," said Mizer. "Now they are out there in the field like flaggers, roller operators, all the way up to owners of companies and P.E.s."

West Virginia was the 17th state to create a chapter of the group. The Asphalt Paving Association of West Virginia helped create the chapter.

Mizer and Temple said the chapter is always looking for members and sponsors. Visit www.womenofasphalt.org and follow the prompts to become a member.

U.S. Sen. Shelley Moore Capito will be the keynote speaker for a WofA event Wednesday, April 5, 2023, at the Charleston Coliseum & Convention Center. Registration is free.



WVBDBC Final Competition

ROAD



Congratulations to all our West Virginia Bridge Design and Build Contest participants. You made it another great year.



WVDOH Secretary Jimmy Wriston Lays Out Spring Pothole Repair Blitz Plan

West Virginia Division of Highways (WVDOH) is committed to patching every pothole in the state by Memorial Day as part of an aggressive spring repair blitz.

WVDOH maintenance crews in nearly two dozen counties across more than half of the WVDOH districts have taken advantage of a few asphalt plants opening early to get a jump start on patching potholes.

“We’re seeing the benefit of doing that (patching) at this time of the year,” said West Virginia Transportation Secretary Jimmy Wriston, P.E., during Gov. Jim Justice’s administration update on Wednesday, March 22, 2023.

“We attack them now and we can reduce claims, we can get this part of the work done before that hot August weather comes and we’re not out there sweating to patch these potholes.”

WVDOH maintenance crews can’t make permanent hot asphalt repairs during the winter, when temperatures are often under 40 degrees Fahrenheit. Temperatures have to be 40 degrees or above for hot asphalt to stick properly.



Cold weather means that most asphalt plants don’t open until early April. But a few plants around the state opened earlier based on a mild end to winter.

Pothole milling and filling is just one part of a multifaceted plan to keep West Virginia’s roads in the best condition possible. WVDOH has a dedicated core maintenance plan that includes keeping

ditches clear to stop water from pooling beside roadways, cutting trees and branches that overhang roads to allow sunlight to dry wet roads, and proper pothole filling – milling out a nice square hole, removing all dirt and debris, putting down a sticky layer of tack to make asphalt stick better, and rolling out new, hot asphalt.

A proper patch on a pothole will last for years, meaning there will be fewer potholes to patch next year and the years thereafter.

“We’re going to have a great year paving,” said Wriston. “We’re going to do a lot of bridge work. We’re going to have another banner year in West Virginia with infrastructure.”

The Cone Must Go On

West Virginia Division of Highways (WVDOH) Public Relations staffers Lindsey Hanks (see Page 1) and Rusty Marks (right) recently donned traffic cone costumes to help spread the message for Transportation Secretary Jimmy Wriston, P.E., about the importance of work zone safety. There were 800 work zone crashes in West Virginia in 2022, killing eight people and injuring 276. Wriston has vowed to do everything in his power to bring that figure down to zero work zone safety deaths.



DMV to Initiate Purple Heart Parking Spaces for Veterans

West Virginia Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV) Commissioner Everett Frazier is pleased to announce that a local, veteran-initiated program honoring Purple Heart Veterans is getting statewide recognition with signs to be displayed at all DMV regional offices.



time, effort, and sometimes pay the ultimate sacrifice--their very lives--so that we can enjoy our freedoms. To me, giving them a parking spot at each office is just a small way that we can say 'Thank you for your service!'"

Over the last year, Commander Wally McMasters of the VFW Post 4442 has been promoting his "Purple Heart Parking Spot" program idea in the Northern Panhandle. He has gotten support from many retail and business outlets, who have each agreed to make one parking spot in their shopping areas specifically dedicated to Purple Heart Veterans. McMasters approached the DMV in Moundsville about the idea, and Commissioner Frazier not only agreed, but wanted to have one at each regional office across the state.

Wheeling and surrounding areas was his "Phase 1". "Phase 2 is going statewide, and Phase 3 will be touching the nation," McMasters said.

The first Purple Heart Parking spot sign to be included at a DMV regional office was installed in Moundsville on Wednesday, March 22, 2023, with several veterans and DMV staff in attendance. Over the next couple of months, signs will continue to go up across the state until each regional office is included.

"If it was up to me, I'd give our veterans the whole parking lot," Frazier said. "Our service men and women in uniform give their

For more information, please visit the DMV website at dmv.wv.gov.

WVDOH Bridge Inspectors Know the Ropes



Bridge inspectors work year round keeping West Virginia's bridges safe, and they get there any way they can.



Doug Berror Retires from Multimodal Transportation Facilities

Doug Berror retired from the West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT) Division of Multimodal Transportation Facilities – Rail Division on Thursday, March 23, 2023. Doug had 27 years of service with WVDOT, with 25 of those working with the railroad. Doug worked on many projects with the West Virginia Division of Highways (WVDOH) Central Forces, or Cenforce, group.

He was part of the team that built an observation deck on the West Virginia Central Railroad, helped build an ash pit at Cass, and most recently, worked to build the Trout Run Bridge on the portion of track between



Durbin and Cass. The Cenforce crew pulled together a group of employees with specific skills to get the job done. The railroad and Cenforce crew will miss Doug's expertise on the grapple truck and his team spirit.

Doug plans to do some traveling in his retirement. He wants to take a train (of course) out west and see some of the country. Doug lives in Petersburg and has one son, Luke. In addition to traveling, he will also enjoy his time in the woods bear hunting. We wish him nothing but the best in his retirement.

Gov. Justice, WVDOH Celebrate Babcock Trail Projects

On Monday, March 27, 2023, Gov. Jim Justice; Transportation Secretary Jimmy Wriston, P.E.; and workers celebrated the completion of two recreational trail projects in Babcock State Park.

In February 2022, Gov. Justice announced \$700,000 in grants to rehabilitate and cut new recreational trails in the park. Half of the funding went to rehabilitate and upgrade an existing trail on a former narrow gauge railroad bed, while the other half went to open a five-mile stretch of trail from the end of Babcock's existing trail system to the abandoned community of Sewell.

The stretch had been abandoned for decades. Opening the section of trail required massive excavation work and the construction of a new bridge.

"It was all impassable, even by foot," said Randy Guthrie, a West Virginia Division of Highways (WVDOH) equipment operator who had been on the job since early spring. "There were trees so big



you couldn't even get your arms around them that had to come out."

Work on the trails was done by WVDOH Central Forces, or Cenforce, a group of highway workers with special skills pulled from all over the state and tasked with taking on special projects.

Work on the existing trail, which follows an old narrow gauge railroad bed, was complicated by an inability to bring heavy equipment down the trail. Everything Central Forces needed for the job – materials, tools, generators to power saws and charge drills – had to be packed into the sight on side-by-side all-terrain vehicles, and packed back out again at the end of the day.

Central forces crews worked every day, no matter the weather, to get the job done. Among their accomplishments was an elaborate stairway to connect a section of trail with a swinging bridge over a creek. While they were at it, they built an observation deck overlooking the water.



WVDOH Partners with Bluefield State for Upcoming Civil Engineering Conference

Bluefield State University is set to host its 6th Annual Southern Technical Conference on Thursday, April 6, 2023 in conjunction with the West Virginia Division of Highways (WVDOH).

The one-day conference will be held on the Bluefield State University (BSU) campus inside the Basic Science Auditorium. The student chapter of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) at BSU will have the ability to meet, network and learn from dozens of engineering professionals in the region.

The 2023 event will be the first in-person conference in several years due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I think this is very beneficial for the students," said Kerry D. Stauffer, Ph.D., P.E., P.S., Civil Engineering Technology Professor, ASCE Faculty Advisor at BSU.

"Not only the technical content that they'll be able to participate in but starting to form the framework of networking and some of those connections professionally."

The day will begin with registration, breakfast and a welcome from Stauffer. From 8:25 to 8:40 a.m. are opening remarks from Dr. Robin Capehart, Interim President of BSU and other BSU leaders.

Dale Hill, the executive director of Builders Supply Association of West Virginia is the first scheduled speaker from 8:40 to 9:35 a.m. Other scheduled speakers in the morning include John



Tuggle, P.E., P.S., Executive Director and Lesley Taylor and Cassandra Lawson, Senior Project Specialists, for WV Region 4 Planning and Development Council.

Joe Pack, P.E., WVDOH Chief Engineer of District Operations, is scheduled to speak about the "WVDOH in 2023."

The afternoon speakers are scheduled to be Faheem Ahmad, P.E., S.E., of E.L. Robinson Engineering, Ryan Ward, a Senior Environmental Scientist with AllStar Ecology, and Stevie Steele, P.E., Key Account Manager for CHA Consulting, Inc.

Jimmy Wriston, P.E., West Virginia Department of Transportation Secretary and WVDOH Commissioner is scheduled to give closing remarks.

Stauffer said this conference has a history of students making important networking connections.

"We've had several students that have had job opportunities and end up going to work for some of the consultants and many of them the West Virginia Division of Highways as a result of people they meet and talk to at this conference," he said.

Six professional development hours are available for participating in the entire conference.

To register for the conference, contact Stauffer via email, kstauffer@bluefieldstate.edu or via phone at 304-888-1957.

Statewide Drugged Driving Prevention Enforcement to be held Thursday, April 20, 2023

Drug-impaired driving has become more prevalent on our nation's roads. In recent years, several states have created new laws allowing marijuana on a recreational or medical basis, which has made discussing the impaired-driving issue even more important. The GHSP wants all marijuana users to know that in West Virginia, it is illegal to use marijuana and then drive.

Although its origins are uncertain, April 20th (more commonly

known as 420) has become synonymous with marijuana use, and in some circles, this date is considered a "marijuana holiday." Consequently, there will likely be an increase in marijuana use.

To help keep drugged and dazed drivers off our roads, the GHSP is teaming up with NHTSA and local law enforcement to spread the message that drug-impaired driving of any kind is dangerous and illegal.



DMV Vehicle Services Director Presents at National Conference

John Springer, Vehicles Services Director for the West Virginia Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV), presented at the American Association of Motor Vehicle

Administrators' (AAMVA) Workshop & Law Institute on Thursday, March 9, 2023.

He discussed the current efforts to modernize the agency, including electronic

liens and titling (ELT), new legislation passed establishing a Title Clearinghouse, and West Virginia being the first state in the nation to process a fully digital title.

ELT is a paperless way for lienholders to file, release, correct or transfer liens and titles. The benefits of ELT for both lienholders and the DMV include the reduction of errors in data entry, improved efficiency and reduced costs, reducing the opportunities for fraud, etc.



Regarding the new title clearinghouse legislation, the bill's purpose is to allow West Virginia licensed non-resident businesses to transfer existing out-of-state titles into a West Virginia title in their name, even when the vehicle is located in another jurisdiction.

The legislation's passage takes advantage of the

advanced title and registration system that the WV DMV enabled in 2022 while developing the electronic liens and titling program. WV DMV is currently working on preparing the space needed to house new employees and positions at Headquarters.

On August 30, 2022, the first fully electronic title with a lien was processed at DMV Headquarters. Director Springer projects that the majority of the modernization process for ELT will be complete within 18 months, sometime before the end of 2023.

I-64 Contractors Recommit to Safety

Brayman-Trumbull, the contractors on the Interstate 64 Nitro/St. Albans Bridge construction project, and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), have signed a partnership agreement committed to providing a safe workplace for workers.

The joint venture on the massive \$224.4 million project is between Brayman Construction and Trumbull Construction and is part of Gov. Jim Justice's Roads to Prosperity program.

"We have agreed to work together to oversee and improve the safety of our workers on the project and all of the subcontractors that work for us," said Tom Hesmond, P.E., project director for the Brayman-Trumbull joint venture.

On hand to sign the agreement at the project office in Nitro was Frank Piedimonte, the President of Brayman; Mark Gentile, the President of Trumbull; and Blake McEnany, the Area Director for OSHA and U.S. Department of Labor in the Charleston area.

Jason Hamilton, P.E., West Virginia Division of Highways (WVDOH) Regional Construction Engineer for Districts 1, 2, and 3,

was in attendance for the signing.

The partnership means that OSHA will meet with Brayman-Trumbull quarterly to provide additional insight to the project from a safety standpoint.

Hesmond said the goals are to lower the injury rate at the job site, which is already below the national average. The Total Incident Rate (TRIR) for the Nitro/St.Albans project in 2023 was zero.

Other goals discussed included Brayman-Trumbull improving internal inspections and helping their subcontractors with safety programs.

"This shows the company's dedication to their safety," said Hesmond. "Our goal is everyone goes home the same way they showed up to work that day, without being injured or anything happening to them.

"They are all here doing a job, they all have families to go home to."



GHSP Reminds Drivers: U Drive. U Text. U Pay.

Distracted driving comes in many forms: adjusting the radio or GPS, applying makeup, eating and drinking. But it's cell phone use — specifically, texting, talking, and social media use — that has become the most common distraction. Texting is an especially dangerous form of distracted driving because it takes your eyes off the road, hands off the wheel, and concentration off driving.

From April 3-10, 2023, the GHSP is partnering with law enforcement agencies statewide, along with the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to help spread the word about the dangers of distracted driving. During this time, we'll conduct a high-visibility enforcement effort called **U Drive. U Text. U Pay.**, during which we will increase enforcement efforts and issue citations for distracted-driving violations. The campaign exists to remind drivers of the consequences of their reckless actions, and to continue to spread the message about the dangers of distracted driving. These expanded efforts to prevent distracted driving will be conducted in a fair and equitable way.

According to NHTSA, nearly 32,483 people died in distraction-affected crashes over the ten-year period from 2011 to 2020. In 2020, there were 3,142 deaths linked to driver distraction, or 8% of all motor-vehicle crash fatalities. This is an increase of 23 fatalities compared to 2019.

Research shows that Millennials and Generation Z are the most distracted drivers, often using their cell phones to talk, text, and scroll through social media while behind the wheel. According to NHTSA research from 2017, young drivers 16 to 24 years old have been observed using handheld electronic devices while driving at higher rates than older drivers since 2007. In 2020, 7 percent of drivers 15 to 20 years old involved in fatal crashes were reported as distracted.

Drive Safe Every Trip

No one wants to get a ticket for distracted driving. And, you

certainly don't want to cause a crash because you decided to read or send a text. If you're driving, follow these steps:

- If you are expecting a text message or need to send one, pull over and park your car in a safe location. Once you are safely off the road and parked, it is safe to text.
- Ask your passenger to be your "designated texter." Allow them access to your phone to respond to calls or messages.
- Do not engage in social media scrolling or messaging while driving.
- Cell phone use can be habit-forming. Struggling to not text and drive? Activate your phone's "Do Not Disturb" feature, or put your cell phone in the trunk, glove box, or back seat of your vehicle until you arrive at your destination.

As state employees, let's lead by example, especially when we are driving state vehicles. Never drive distracted. Always wear your seat belt. Obey the posted speed limit.

Do not be responsible for taking a life or for causing someone serious injury. Texting while driving is dangerous and illegal. Break the cycle. Remember: **U Drive. U Text. U Pay.**

For more information about distracted driving, visit www.nhtsa.gov/campaign/distracted-driving.

Did you know that each state is required by federal statute to have a highway safety program? West Virginia's program falls under the Division of Motor Vehicles. Our mission is to reduce crashes, fatalities, and injuries on West Virginia's roadways. We do this through concerted media and enforcement efforts in an attempt to change driving behaviors. We want YOU to be safe on the roadways so that we ALL are safe on the roadways.

For more information, please visit the highwaysafety.wv.gov or visit the GHSP's social media channels at facebook.com/wvghsp or twitter.com/WVhighwaysafety.



In the Nick of Time

District 1 Human Resources Manager Taylor Freeland was instrumental in finding appropriate attire for Public Relations Division's mascot during the construction Expo in Charleston, where he greeted visitors to the Division's booth with a warning to slow down in work zones. Freeland couldn't help getting her picture taken with the mannequin, whom she quickly dubbed Nick.



VISION AWARDS

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

Dana Casto—DMV

**Christine “Michelle” Cunningham—
District 4**

Carl Ross—Performance Management

Tommy Collins—District 8

Amy McClure—District 9

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.



April 17—Go Orange!

Beginning the day you read the newsletter —
The challenge is to wear *something* orange each day.

Shirt, pants, lapel pin, hat, scarf, watch, socks...
At least one item of orange, each workday.

Then on
Monday April 17
and all that week
Go Orange!

As orange as possible!

As we celebrate National Work Zone Safety Awareness Week we are challenging all WVDOT Agencies, Districts and Divisions to wear orange prominently the week of April 17.

The public, through the media, will be invited to join us.

Send photos to Public Relations Division for social media.

