

WV DOT Today!



Our Crews: Our Drills

“Our crews are excellent as far as caring about the rig and making sure that it gets maintained properly,” said Tony Clark, P.E., District 6 Engineer. “One of the operators actually took the manual home with him and was reviewing all the grease points, all the maintenance items on it, on his own time, which to me shows how much they care about this rig specifically, and how much they care about the job they do in general.”

As District 6’s drilling crew worked on a string of projects along a rural road in Tyler County, the commended the residents for working with them. “They always let me know when they need out,” said Clark, “And our guys are really good to make sure they get out quickly.”

One resident in particular got a little more attention, and affection, than most. He was a cute little fellow with one ear that points up and one that folds down, and he waited around patiently for pats on the head and someone to play fetch. “This is our Buck’s Run mascot,” said Dylan Cooper, Crew Chief.

“We’re real appreciative that the state finally recognizes that we’re capable of handling our own drilling rig,” Cooper said.

“When we had the rental we really put out a lot of good work, I’m just glad that we’re able to do it with our own rig now.”

WVDOH currently has two drills, one in District 6 and one in District 10. These Districts are particularly slide-prone areas where crews had worked tirelessly to catch up using the rented drills. It’s a DOH staple concept; take what you have and use it to the best of your ability — then when you have something more, repeat. Ownership of the drills eases scheduling and ensures that the drills are kept moving to catch up more piling projects more quickly.

“We’re excited about the new drill,” said Cooper. “We’re happy to have one that’s actually state owned that we can keep track of and just really try to get some work knocked out.”

Also in This Issue:

Plow Drivers Recognized on

“13 Gives Back”



“13 Gives Back” Recognizes DOH

Driving in to work on Christmas morning at 3:00 a.m., WOWK Channel 13 news anchor Hannah Goetz realized that the only people on the road with her were WVDOH snow plow drivers, there to make sure she, and other essential workers, would be safe.

“For “13 Gives Back” every month we work to highlight people in the community that work super hard, maybe behind the scenes or every single day, that people don’t normally recognize as working hard,” said Goetz.

“Nobody wants to work Christmas Day,” she continued. “I had to work it, a lot of people at my station had to work it, so I was driving in to work around 3 o’clock in the morning and the only other cars on the road where DOH crews. There were a lot of men and women out

there, working hard to make sure I could get to work, not only me but our front line workers, our health care workers, our first responders, making sure that everybody was able to get where they needed to be safely. I know that’s not just on Christmas that they do that. They do that year round, so it was an easy pick.”

Channel 13’s crew presented the award in District 1 at the Interstate garage on a rainy afternoon. Although presented at the garage that was local for her, Hannah made it a point to note that the award was to recognize the efforts statewide, with the entire region hit by heavy snow and ice

and the work of crews year-round to keep drivers safe. WVDOH takes this opportunity to say thank you to Hannah for the recognition; your work made our people feel great about their work.



WVDOT Today! is a monthly newsletter published by the West Virginia Department of Transportation and distributed statewide via email to a strong network of the best employees on earth. All content is developed by the editors, unless otherwise credited. 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**. It’s all connected. WVDOT Today! welcomes you to write in and share your thoughts; write to Jennifer.J.Dooley@wv.gov

West Virginia Division of Highways
Attn: WVDOT Public Relations
1900 Kanawha Boulevard East
Building 5, Room A-137
Charleston, West Virginia 25305
Editors: Jennifer Dooley and Randy Damron

We are recognizing our people.



WV DOT Legislative Team



Photo by Hillary Kemerer.

By Rita Pauley

Your legislative team works for you throughout the legislative session. The team is: Co-captions: Byrd White, quarterback and Jimmy Wriston, fullback; Nate Tawney, running back; Lorrie Hodges, tight end; and Rita Pauley, wide receiver. You each have positions on the team, whether offense, defense, or special teams. We may be the front line, face of DOT for the legislative session, but we can't run a play without the rest of the team.

The Legislative process, on both the Federal and State levels, was designed to be slow and difficult. The underlying idea is that citizens' rights are less likely to be infringed on if the process has multiple steps.

The process is interesting, entertaining, and maddening. Everyone should understand the process because the laws passed by the Legislature are the playbook we all live and work by. After each session, your legislative team reviews all the bills that have been passed and summarizes the ones that affect you on the job or your insurance or retirement, or may be of interest to state employees. Those summaries are sent to each DE/

DM and division head to share with all of you. You should read the summaries and share them with your family and friends; ignorance is no excuse under the law. If you don't receive bill summaries, ask for them.

The following is the short version of the process our agency bills must survive. There are clips, unnecessary roughness, and technical fouls along the way.

1. The team proposes Legislation to the Governor. If approved, we get senators or delegates to sponsor our bills.
2. An attorney (drafter) in the Legislative Services bill drafting office is assigned to research the law and write the bills.
3. The bill is reviewed and any changes made.
4. Bills that pass muster join the other bills that are ready to be introduced on the floor of the Senate or the House of Delegates. The Senate and House clerks give the bills numbers and proofread them prior to introduction. Any member may cosponsor a bill by telling the clerk's office to add their name as a sponsor.
5. The bills are formally introduced on the floor of each house



WVDOT Legislative Team (Continued)

and sent to committees.

6. Many bills are thrown out of the game at this step. Most bills are rewritten or amended by committee attorneys at the direction of the chairperson. A lobbyist or another agency may work against our bill to keep it off the agenda or change it to the point it doesn't meet our original goal.

7. Some bills are sent to more than one committee. They may be changed by any committee along the way before going to the House or Senate for consideration.

8. If the House or Senate agree to take up a bill it will go to a vote. The state constitution requires a bill be read on three separate days but the constitutional rule may be suspended in special cases to read the bill two or three times in one day. When a bill is read the third time it is put to a vote immediately.

9. Bills approved by one house are sent to the other house for consideration and go through the committee process again, then back to the floor for another vote. This means there are multiple opportunities for mischief; the journey is perilous for our bills and this part of the journey is not complete until the gavel bangs at midnight on the 60th day of the session.

10. If a bill passes both houses it goes to a final committee, The Joint Committee on Enrolled Bills. The chairperson from each house, the Senate President and the Speaker of the House, and the clerks of each house sign off on them as "correctly enrolled." They then go the governor for review. The governor may sign a bill into law, let it become law without his signature, or veto the bill. The Legislature may correct the bill to meet the objections of the governor and pass it again by a majority vote or try to overrule the veto. After the Legislature adjourns, the governor has 15 days to veto bills and file objections to them. Any bill not signed or vetoed becomes law without a signature.

At any point in the process someone may delay, completely change the bill, or throw it out of the game as evidenced by these statistics:

Of 853 bills introduced in the Senate, 258 were passed to the House.

Of 1,530 bills introduced in the House, 243 were passed to the Senate.

Of 2,383 bills introduced, 356 bills (188 House and 168 Senate) became law in 2020.

WVDOH Builds Crews: Crews Build Pile Walls

Road crews from West Virginia Division of Highways District 1 have finished a massive piling-supported retaining wall in Putnam County.

The 400-foot structure along Lime Kiln Road near Red House is the first piling wall project done by District 1 work crews on their own. WVDOH often contracts out retaining wall projects, but Transportation Secretary Byrd White and Deputy Secretary Jimmy Wriston have been pushing for highways crews to do more work in-house to get more mileage from each taxpayer dollar and bring to life Governor Justice's vision for West Virginia roads.

"It's a one-lane road with a major slip," said Arlie Matney, Highway Administrator. "It was really narrow in spots, right

around eight feet wide." Matney thought the slip would be perfect for District 1 to undertake as a first project.



"These guys took to it like ducks to water," he said. "When you look at it at first, the length of it is overwhelming," he said. "These guys did an excellent job. I'm really impressed by what they were able to do."

Matney said District 1 crews were able to widen

Lime Kiln Road by six to eight feet.

"Basically, we turned a one-lane road into a two-lane road," he said. "We saved something like \$200,000 just from our people doing the work."



District 6 Drills: Photo Feature



Hard Hats Protect Our People

By Shane Hudnall



Many of you know that in June of last year, we revised our policy regarding the use and hard hats. This decision was made to increase the safety of our number one asset, our employees. Due to the extensive range of job duties our employees have, I felt the best course of action was to require hard hats during all field activities. The OSHA regulation 29CFR 1910.135(a)(1) states that the employer shall ensure that each affected employee wears a protective helmet when working in areas where there is a potential for injury to the head from flying or falling objects.

In our industry, especially in our work zones, there is always potential and risk for head injuries. Whether it's a passing car throwing rocks or debris from the roadway, working around our own equipment or something as simple as setting up traffic control. Our employees are expected to be experts in so many areas, and they are. One day you may be plowing snow, the next day you may be patching potholes and then you may be cutting up a tree from the road. We always have to be ready for whatever mother nature or the road may throw at us. With the incorporation of our uniforms our hardhats are essential to make us safer while performing our jobs.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reports that only 16% of workers who sustained head injuries wore hardhats even

though there were required to wear them. Head injuries account for over 9% of all injuries in the workplace. In the last 3 years at Highways, we have had 45 work related head injuries, which resulted in lost workdays and/or hospital visits. No one wants to be injured, so our number one goal is to reduce or eliminate all workplace injuries. With your help we can achieve that.

Here are some maintenance tips for your hard hats:

Regularly inspect hard hats for any damage and replace them as often as necessary. Check for cracks and holes daily, and keep in mind that paints, cleaning agents, and UV light can weaken the surface of the hat and even weaken its electrical resistance.

Clean hard hats daily. Doing so can extend the life of your hard hat.

Check the suspension system regularly for wear and tear, replace when necessary.

Store hard hats in a shaded, well-ventilated area. Sunlight and extreme heat can damage hats over time.

Do not cover the entire hard hat with labels or stickers that may hide cracks or other damage.

Do not create holes into a hard hat since doing so may damage its ability to protect.

If you have any questions regarding hard hats, please consult with your supervisor or your district safety officer. As always, be prepared and be safe!

TMC Spends Christmas with Harold

By Jim Lambert

As families across West Virginia awoke to find a beautiful white Christmas, Transportation Management Center (TMC) Operators were on duty answering calls for assistance due to Winter Storm Harold. TMC Operators staff the center 24/7, 365 days a year. Over the course of their shifts on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, TMC Operators received multiple calls from County 911 centers and the public about vehicle crashes, tractor trailer jackknives and requests for road treatment. TMC Operators also update incident information, post roadwork and road conditions to the Statewide 511 system, as well as maintain WV511 Twitter feeds and the WVDivesafe App. The TMC is a busy place with Operators posting and monitoring messaging on the Dynamic Message Boards (DMS), providing detour information, keeping DOT management apprised of

incidents, coordinating on weather trends and transmitting weather data to the National Weather Service in addition to communicating with the District personnel plowing and treating the roads.

Television screens on the video wall shuffle through camera feed tours and show operators traffic flow on Interstates and other major routes as well as how snow (or other weather) is impacting the road surface. The WV511 website reflects everchanging incidents and road conditions. Road Weather Information System (RWIS) stations provide weather data regarding the impacts of storms and there is a constant stream of radio, telephone and transportation incident data from WV 911 Centers to manage.

Between Christmas Eve and the end of Christmas Day the Transportation Management processed 275 calls for service. In



Dear Editors,

I didn't want this to go unsaid.

One of our school bus operators left a note saying that "Whoever is trimming on Crab Creek and Little 16 Mile from the state road is doing the best job I have ever seen." Bus #201, Ron Thomas.

Our school bus operators need good visibility at intersections and curves, so thank you!

Sherry Sadler, Program Assistant, Office of School Operations & Finance, West Virginia Department of Education.

Dear Editors,

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!

I couldn't find an appropriate email address to contact so I hope this one is ok. I wanted to express my gratitude to the men and women who are out on the roads and away from their family on Christmas to get the roads safe and passable after last night's snow. I travel an hour on rural roads and interstate in Monongalia and Marion counties at 4am to get to work, and it's always a relief to see a plow truck.

If at all possible, could you please pass along my thanks to the team that keeps these roads safe in the winter. My family is truly grateful for them!

Very Respectfully,

Jenna Brobst

It ain't over till it's over.

Mask Up!

VISION AWARDS

Congratulations to the following individuals being recognized this month by Secretary Byrd White and Deputy Secretary Jimmy Wriston, P.E., for their dedication to The Vision.

Daniel Brayack—Materials Division

Steve Carr—District 8

Tim Coffman—District 9

Dave Cramer—Economic Development

Matt Crum—District 1

Jennifer Dooley—Public Relations Division

Melissa Jarvis—District 3

Bill Keller—District 5

Sarah Marsh—District 7

Dave Piontek—District 6

James Sampson—District 10

The Vision is simple; to be the best DOH 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 DOH 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.



Ohio Man Becomes West Virginian

By Jesse Ward



February 10, 2021 will be my one-year anniversary with the WV DOH. Growing up as a kid in Ohio, I never once thought I would be working for State Government, let alone, West Virginia State Government. Most of my job experience came from retail, so I came in with little expectations on what this job would entail. I came in willing to learn and

understand how the WV DOT functions and how each Agencies works together. I have learned a lot over the past year about what goes on in the inner workings of the DOT.

As someone coming in from the outside, there is a lot more work that goes into what the public would consider a “simple” job. Before, I would be driving and see a pothole or hit a rough patch in the road I would think “Why can’t they just get a crew out here to fix this?”. Now that I have been with the DOH, I know it takes a bit more then just sending out a crew. A lot of decisions must be made before work can begin on even a smaller project like fixing a pothole. The location must be looked into, the materials needed must be secured, the equipment must be ready and available, and what other jobs

need to be done. Though no job is small or unimportant, some jobs must take priority to make sure that all the resources needed are available at the appropriate times.

Over the course of this year, I have learned how adaptable the DOH can be. From things we can prepare for, such as a mudslide overnight, to a global pandemic effecting everyone’s jobs. The quick response the DOT had to the Covid 19 outbreak was, by far, one of the best things I’ve seen from a government agency. Most people would assume that people would be out of work for a longer period of time but, within a short period of time, the DOT had a task force, guidelines, and a game plan ready to get our employees back to work. Even during the time when everything was getting put together, there was training and tasks to be done at home so employees did not miss work and could continue to get paid. In a short amount of time, our road crews were back to work with guidelines to keep themselves safe.

Though I’ve only been with the DOH for a year, I feel like I’ve learned a lot from the people I talk with every day. People like Jennifer Dooley and Randy Damron, who I work with everyday in the Public Relations office. They have taught me the ins and outs of working for the DOH and drive me to better understand what we are working towards. There are many more people I could mention. I have talked to so many people and learned so much this past year, but I know I’ve only scratched the surface of what I can learn.

Journalist Becomes Public Relations Professional

Rusty Marks, a professional journalist with more than 30 years of experience, and a graduate of Marshall University’s W. Page Pitt School of Journalism, recently joined WVDOT Public Relations Division in Charleston. Rusty has spent his 30 year career working at newspapers and public relations firms, but his career is about to really get interesting. Journalists tell two sides to every story; but Public Relations Professionals tell whole stories, with more than two sides — and it’s telling the story of WVDOT which will earn him his gray beard.

Rusty plays half a dozen musical instruments, including electric and acoustic guitar, banjo and bass. He is an avid student of history and can tell you more than you’d ever want to know about what equipment the U.S. military fielded during the Spanish-American War.

Rusty’s mission now is to channel his skill, and laser focus on accuracy into a never-ending stream full of small boats, with each boat carrying another story on the work of the dedicated men and women of the WVDOT.



Cooperation Will Replace Historic Rail Bridge



A collaborative effort between the West Virginia Division of Highways, West Virginia State Rail Authority and owners of the Durbin & Greenbrier Valley Railroad will soon reopen a rail line closed by a bridge that washed out 35 years ago and open new economic opportunities in Pocahontas County.

The Trout Run Bridge, which spans the Greenbrier River, washed out during 1985 floods. The bridge has never been replaced.

“It’s the final connection that will connect Durbin and Cass back together,” said Cindy Butler, executive director of the State Rail Authority.

The Rail Authority owns the railroads in the area, contracting with the Durbin & Greenbrier Railroad to run excursion trains both at Cass Scenic Railroad and along the Greenbrier River from Durbin. In years past a rail line also ran from Durbin to Cass and back, but the line was severed by the loss of the

Trout Run Bridge.

Division of Highways crews decided to take on part of the construction of the bridge after initial bids for the replacement project came in well above estimates.

Todd Schoonover, DOH’s project manager for the job, said DOH crews are currently doing the foundation and earth work for the new bridge. A contractor will later build the steel structure for the bridge, and the railroad will lay the track.

But Schoonover said the project has unique challenges in the rugged terrain of Pocahontas County. He said the bridge site is six miles east of Cass and two miles west of Hosterman, with no road access whatsoever.

“We have to bring every single thing in by rail car,” Schoonover said – including an 86,000-pound drilling machine.

Weather has also been an issue.

Schoonover and Jamie Rossi – District Engineer for District 8 where the bridge is located – said DOH divisions and districts from all over the state have lent their expertise and help for the project. But above and beyond that, they said everyone from contractors to the railroad to the State Rail Authority have pulled together to get the bridge replaced. All seem to have a real interest in seeing the rail connection reopened.

Schoonover said the DOH’s role in the project is scheduled for completion by July. He and Rossi believe the effort will be worth it.

“I think it’s an important project for the economy,” Schoonover said. “Tourism is a huge employer in the area.”

“It’s very beautiful through there,” said Rossi. Reopening the line to Cass will offer further expansion of rail excursions through a particularly scenic area of the state, he said.

DOH Thanks First Responders After Fire



A fire destroyed a five-bay West Virginia Division of Highways (WVDOH) maintenance garage in Randolph County on the evening of Monday, Jan. 4, 2021. A fairly new grader and an old culvert clearing truck were in the 4,000-square foot garage at the time of the fire. Both were destroyed. Another dump truck, usually stationed at the garage, was in Elkins for maintenance at the time, but its snowplow attachment was lost in the fire.

WVDOH takes this opportunity to publicly thank the first responders who arrived to extinguish the fire. We know it wasn’t easy.



Marion Hardees Thanks DOH



Marion County DOH employees want to give a shout out to Hardees in White Hall for filling their bellies with great sandwiches and biscuits and gravy!!!

Hardees wanted to do something special to show their appreciation to the guys for working through their Christmas holiday and ensuring the roads were cleared for the traveling public.

Check out this snowdrift in Terra Alta!



New Plows for War on Snow

Road crews with the West Virginia Division of Highways (WVDOH) are combatting snow this season with 185 brand-new snowplows.

“The 2020 equipment plan was the largest buy plan in the history of DOH,” said Todd Campbell, assistant director of the WVDOH equipment division in Buckhannon.

Fueled by Gov. Jim Justice’s massive Roads to Prosperity construction and maintenance program, Campbell said state highways officials authorized the purchase of more than \$40 million in new equipment for Fiscal Year 2020, which began on July 1, 2019.

Since July, Campbell said, WVDOH has ordered and received 185 new snowplows. The vehicles include 23 new single-axle Ford F-550 trucks, capable of carrying about 3.5 tons of salt; 60 new mid-sized International trucks, capable of carrying about 7.5 tons of salt; and 102 two-axle Freightliner trucks, each of which can carry about 15 tons of salt. The large Freightliner trucks will be a mainstay of the snowplow fleet, dedicated to keeping West Virginia’s interstate highway system clear.

During spring, summer, and fall months, the trucks serve as traditional dump trucks, hauling stone or whatever other construction materials might be needed. Come winter, each is fitted with state-of-the-art plows and salt spreaders to help clear the Mountain State’s 555 miles of interstate, and more than 34,000 miles of secondary roads.

Some trucks will also be equipped to spread salt brine, a mixture of salt and water that allows road crews to pre-treat roads prior to bad weather, making it easier and cheaper to plow and salt roads once the ice and snow arrive.

Campbell said the new vehicles are more fuel-efficient and ergonomic than previous snowplows, a fact appreciated by drivers.



Listen on the Soundcloud App.

New Shows: Thursday 4:00 p.m.

[Transportation.wv.gov](https://transportation.wv.gov)

Click on the Podcast link.

