

WV DOT Today!

A series of winter storms across the state this February brought out what District 2 Manager, Scott Eplin, calls “the best of Appalachian spirit.”

The weather was particularly ugly; our people were astonishingly good.

In the District 1, 2 and 3 counties of Cabell, Jackson, Lincoln, Mason, Putnam and Wayne counties, a series of ice and snow storms left more than 280 roads unpassable. Governor Jim Justice declared a State of Emergency for the counties on February 16. By that time, crews from across the state were already rolling in to help.

“Our employees who were asked to travel to District 2 to participate in the tree removal related to the ice storm did it without hesitation, without complaint,” said Joe Pack, District 10 Engineer. “They understood the severity of the issue and made immediate plans in their personal life, and started taking action here to arrange all their equipment and tools and we

were on the road early the next morning, and we were more than glad to help.”



Into the Cold To Help Our Neighbors

Eplin, along with District 1 Engineer Travis Knighton, both described the storm as worse than the derecho that hit West Virginia in 2012.

“This is not a typical snow storm where they’re driving a plow truck,” said Eplin. “This is labor-intensive, dangerous work, cutting these twisted trees, ice coated, trying to do emergency push-through to get the roads open, and they may be going from one location to another and can help shove the person who has a couple kids in

the car that slid off the road into the ditch, and get them out.”

For more on our employees response to the storm; visit our WV DOT Facebook, Twitter and YouTube channels, listen to the February 25 episode of “WV on the DOT” podcast and visit transportation.wv.gov website.

**Also In this Issue: How Can Students Earn
A Free New River Gorge Bridge Catwalk Tour?**



Friday, March 12, 2021 – 11:59 p.m.

Friday, March 12, 2021, at 11:59 p.m. is the absolute deadline for students to enter the West Virginia Bridge Design and Build contest, earn themselves and their family a free tour of the New River Gorge Bridge and possibly advance to the final competition where they can win cash prizes while learning about engineering.

This STEM competition, hosted by the West Virginia Division of Highways and now in its 20th year, allows middle and high school students an opportunity to try engineering, while having fun. While only middle and high school students can advance to the final competition, elementary students are eligible to earn their family a free BridgeWalk tour, just by submitting a design that shows up on the contest leaderboard. It doesn't matter if the student or team's design is in first place or 300th place, all students who submit designs have earned the free tour of the New River Gorge Bridge for their family. It's the perfect West Virginia staycation, fun for the whole family, a welcome break from everything anyone needs a welcome break from. And the process of earning it is also worthwhile.



(Photo from a previous year's final competition. This year's final event will be virtual for everyone's safety.)

Any student considering whether or not they would be able or eligible to enter the competition can ask themselves the following questions; a YES answer on any question below is a YES answer for giving the contest a try.

- 1.) Am I a K-12 student in West Virginia (public school, private school, home school, in person, virtual, any school) - YES? Enter the contest!
- 2.) Am I a little bored with a drab year and would I like to try something new—YES. Enter the contest!
- 3.) Do I want to be an engineer, or not be an engineer, or am I good at science and math or not good at science or math, or am I super excited

about the contest or just a little interested—YES. Enter the contest! No worries if you don't think you want to be an engineer when you grow up. There's nothing to prove and it's all for fun. This is something WVDOH does for all students; it's a gift so go ahead and accept it.

To register, download the free software, watch the tutorial and get started, visit: wvbridgedesignandbuildcontest.com

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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T-Shirt Weather



Every day is T-shirt weather, if you're Bob Davis.

A 20-year transportation worker out of Tucker County, Davis can be seen in his short sleeves cheerfully plowing several feet of snow in the cab of a six-wheel-drive John Deere road grader.

The snow has to be pretty deep to call out the road graders, but that's how they roll in Tucker County, one of the Mountain State's snowiest counties.

But Davis doesn't mind.

"I did this kind of work all my life," Davis said. "Twenty years.

"Moving snow is important," he said. "You never know who's down the road and sick or something and can't get out. That keeps you awake. That's what keeps you going."

"You gotta keep busy," Davis said. "You gotta keep looking at everything."

Brighter Days



Kelsey Hively's favorite thing about working for the West Virginia Division of Highways is hot patching. She doesn't care if that sounds weird or if other folks don't like working in the hot sun, she's happy to be there in the summer time, and happy to be in her snow plow all winter long.

"Last winter I worked from noon to midnight, and this winter I've been working from midnight to noon," said Hively. "I wanted to try something different. I've never did anything like this before, so I figured it would probably be really interesting and fun, and I've enjoyed it ever since I got hired on."

Hively is diligent in maintaining her truck at the end of each shift and keeping it in good working order for the next driver. "At Summersville, I drove a Hino, and an International, it's very different going from one of those little trucks to a big truck like this," Hively says, as she confidently operates the big, bright yellow, wonderful truck where she seems right at home.



Listen to the PODCAST

On the Soundcloud App.

New Shows: Thursday 4:00 p.m.

Or listen on our webpage:

Transportation.wv.gov

Click on the Podcast link.



Turnpike Director Recognized for Community Service

West Virginia Parkways Authority Executive Director Jeff Miller was recently recognized by the Beckley-Raleigh County Chamber of Commerce for years of service to the Raleigh County community.

Miller, who oversees operations of the West Virginia Turnpike, was awarded the Raleigh County Chamber of Commerce 2020 Outstanding Young Business Leader Award at a Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors meeting on Wednesday, Feb. 17. The newly-created award is given to a Chamber of Commerce member under 40 who has "positively impacted the community through their excellence in business leadership and community involvement."

"I've been a part of the [Raleigh County] Chamber since I graduated from college," said Miller, 37. "I'm from Raleigh County."

Miller attended both Concord College and Mountain State

University in Beckley, going into the banking industry right after graduation. A former county administrator for the

Raleigh County Commission, Miller served on several Chamber of Commerce committees. He is a past chairman of the Chamber's board of directors and remains a member of the board.

Miller said he grew up with a feeling for community service, and sees service on the Chamber of Commerce as a way to give back to Raleigh County and southern West Virginia.

Miller was appointed executive director of the Parkways Authority in August 2020. He sees the position as an opportunity to continue bringing good

things to Raleigh County and southern West Virginia.

"We're here to serve the people of southern West Virginia and the travelers who pass through our state," he said.



100 Years of Slip Repair: WV 2, St. Marys



Workers in District 3 discovered that this slip on WV 2 near St. Marys has been a problem for 100 years. No more! District Engineer Justin Smith is thankful for an aggressive program of road repair statewide, and funding to repair the problem for good.



Ice Storm: Shared Photos from Around the DOH



1-99 McCullough Rd Huntington WV

346°N (T) 38.390812°, -82.434394° ±16ft ▲ 778ft



Cabell County Ice Storm #2
Your Watermark - See Settings

Miller Road CO 52-1
18 Feb 2021, 10:00:30





West Virginia Department of Transportation agencies are fighting gray weather with bright orange and yellow trucks!

The Parkways Authority, which operates the West Virginia Turnpike, has always used orange as their color. Jeff Miller speculates it may go back to orange as a work zone safety color — it's bright and easy to see.

The West Virginia Division of Highways has many older trucks in our fleet which are still white, but newer trucks are being ordered in the much more visible bright yellow. Jeff Pifer in the Equipment Division says the color increases visibility in snow.

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.

Sarah Runyon—Right of Way

Roy Thatcher—District 1

Thad Smith—District 1

Dylan Cooper—District 6

Paul Anderson—Finance

Mercedes Hanshaw—Traffic Engineering

Chad Toney—Right of Way

Bob Davis—District 8

Kelsey Hively—District 1

Tommy Collins—District 8

Brian Conrad—District 2

Angie Richardson—DOH Personnel

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, every day.



Meet Kathy Rushworth: D-1 Maintenance Engineer

Growing up around farmers in Fremont, Ohio, District 1 Maintenance Engineer Kathy Rushworth was as apt to have her nose buried in a book as she was to be hanging out with the horses or putting up hay.

"I think that probably my best work experience is baling hay," said Rushworth, who has been with the West Virginia Division of Highways since 2018.

A self-described nerd, Rushworth came to public service somewhat naturally.

"My dad was a civil engineer, and my brother studied civil engineering at the same college where I was," she said. "I knew I wanted to work in engineering.

"I always really liked math and science," she said. Rushworth's B.S. degree is in geology, but she soon decided she preferred more hands-on pursuits.

So she decided to pursue a Masters Degree in civil engineering. Her first jobs out of college were in Columbus, Ohio and Seattle, Washington, but the work didn't really give her a chance to get her hands dirty.

"I liked doing construction projects," Rushworth said. So in 1994, she came to work for the City of Charleston, where she served as landfill engineer, assistant city engineer, city engineer and general manager for the Charleston Sanitary Board.

Rushworth served as an engineer for DHHR's Bureau of Public Health before taking a break to raise her children.

Eventually, she decided to go back to work. Rushworth came to the Division of Highways in 2018, initially as a Regional Operations Engineer. She found herself working more and more with District 1, and was soon made Acting Maintenance Engineer for the district.

The position became permanent on Jan. 30, 2021. Although the Division of Highways has

had women serving as acting maintenance engineers in the past, Rushworth is believed to be the first female promoted to Maintenance Engineer; one of the toughest jobs in the WVDOT.

The position is important, considering that maintenance is the main mission of the Division of Highways. She is responsible for a maintenance schedule that ideally sees every pothole on every road in the district patched every year, one-third of all the roads in the district ditched every year, mowing along state roads as much as four times a year and twice-yearly maintenance of District 1's gravel roads. It's Rushworth's job to make sure it gets done.

Rushworth said growing up around hard work on the farm gave her an appreciation for what work really is. Her favorite part of her job is working with those who are on the front lines.



DOT Looking After Our Own



Recently, Kylena Nunnally, Administrative Services Assistant in the State Highway Engineer's Office, discovered she had lost \$60 cash somewhere in or around Building 5. Lisa Dunlap sent an email to all Building 5 employees to be on the lookout for the missing money.

But Paul Anderson, DOT Purchase Card Coordinator in the Finance Division, did one better. Paul took up a collection within the division and presented Kylena with a donation to replace the missing money. It's another example of how we at WVDOT look after one another.



WVDOH Equipment Training

West Virginia Division of Highways is rolling out a new training program to make sure its mechanics are the best in the business.

Coordinated by DOH Equipment Division in Buckhannon, mechanics training programs are now available for transportation workers to up their skill sets, gain experience and ultimately advance within DOH.

Acting DOH Personnel Director Natasha White said the new training program offers standardized instruction for mechanics all over the state, based on a common curriculum.

“Before, it was either the skill set that you came with or what you could learn from the other mechanics at the garage,” White said. “Although there was some training, it wasn’t uniform.”

WVDOH Highway Equipment Manager J.D. Haller said the new training courses were rolled out in 2020, but COVID-19 got in the way of full-scale implementation. Courses will be offered both at the Equipment Division in Buckhannon and out in the district garages in order to give mechanics more hands-on training time. Six trainers will conduct the classes.

Core training classes will be offered to transportation workers in basic electrical, storm guard training and preventative maintenance.

Because many mechanics are afraid of working with electricity, Haller said the Equipment Division decided to conduct electrical courses. They built their own circuit boards for the course, saving the approximately \$11,000 cost of buying each instruction board.

“We saved \$87,000,” he said.

The Equipment Division also has its own devices for air conditioning and vehicle courses.

Transportation Worker 2 and 3 level employees will be given preference for higher level courses in emissions, advanced electrical, basic hydraulic, advanced hydraulic and HVAC work.

Training will also include a four-day course concentrating on the DOH’s fleet of Hino vehicles and a three-day turbo training course dealing with the Ford Powerstroke engine.

The Equipment Division will also offer Automotive Service Excellence

(ASE) training to “focus on recruiting individuals with the knowledge and talent to provide a more efficient workforce and identify those who possess certain levels of knowledge, skills and abilities in equipment repair to act as a knowledge resource for developing other mechanics,” Haller said.

Once through the ASE training courses, mechanics will be able to test for certification through the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence. The ASE certification will provide third-party, objective recognition of a mechanic’s skills and abilities.

In all, highways officials hope the comprehensive training program will make not only better mechanics, but also better-maintained equipment. Instead of the bandage approach to patching up old equipment until they can’t fix it anymore without sending it higher up the chain, mechanics will be able to fix and maintain equipment at the garage.

White said the money spent on training and instruction will be made up in better maintained, longer lasting equipment.

“The governor has given us a whole lot of new equipment,” White said. “We might not get that kind of money again if we don’t take care of it.”



Visit the WVDOT Online Newsroom at:

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



Gratitude for Our Workers: Editorial by Randy Damron

If someone asked you why you are employed by WVDOH, a possible reaction might be "I'm here for a paycheck." But, is that all?

The word 'appreciation' is defined as recognition and enjoyment of the good qualities of something or someone. The qualities of a person or their work are discussed and assessed, basically... gratitude!

The men and women in each of our Districts should know that although much of the travelling public very seldom say 'thank you' for the work you do (especially in SRIC conditions) appreciation may be slow to develop toward what people take for granted and expect.

Recently, Governor Justice declared several West Virginia counties a weather emergency, and you came to the rescue. Work crews were assembled from around the state to offer manpower, equipment, help and support.

This was not just an afternoon removing trees from the roads, but several overnights, on the road, miles away from your warm homes. This event is still occurring as I'm writing this, so for some, you are still away from your homes.

Stop and think for a moment about the way the work you do affects every person in West Virginia, not just the motorists who pay the fuel tax and DMV fees. The person living in the nursing home, the citizens who no longer drive but depend on transportation for their food and goods. Those frustrated when their mail delivery cannot get through due to downed trees.

Whether each citizen realizes it or not, they depend on the actions of WVDOH in their everyday lives.

Our transportation workers who signed up for the job to work and maintain our West Virginia roads could probably enjoy some positive reinforcement, even if it's just a friendly wave when one of our bright yellow trucks with plows go by. Especially from the rest of the WVDOH family.

You're driven to do the job because it's what you chose to do. If you didn't, the entire state would literally come to a standstill—and no one would appreciate that.

To all the transportation workers, thank you for clearing the roads last week so that I could get to work, too. No matter where we are, we all depend on you.

More Collected "Thank You's"

To helpful employees in District 1:

I was stuck on Pittman Road, a little side road and my car was sliding. Roy Thatcher stopped his big truck to manually put some salt down on the curve for me to drive out safely. Young man (I'm 71 and was crying I was so scared.) Another DOH employee named Thad Smith does a wonderful job and keeps us informed the best he can. I will find out whoever their boss is and try to contact them as well.

Respectfully,

Nancy Sarver, Charleston

To Taylor County (District 4) road crews:

Feb. 11, 2021

We are staying at a cabin at Tygart Lake and I was so surprised this morning just after 9 a.m. to see the snowplow plowing the road. That is awesome and definitely way sooner than I imagined someone would be out this road to clear it. Thank you to all the hardworking DOH employees for all they do to ensure others safety. May God always bless you and watch over each of you.

Lisa A. Browning

To Telecommunicator Richard E. Scott:

Mr. Scott,

Thank you for assisting me in my calls to have our road plowed & graded up on Ellis Ridge. I would like you to know that you have always provided me with outstanding service. I know that you are a blind dispatcher and just want to add that your positive attitude has always left me with a smile on my face. I truly admire your dedication and commitment to serving the people of our community.

Competent and energetic workers like you really make a difference and I appreciate your hard work. You set a good example for us all.

God bless and I look forward to speaking to you in the future.

--Carla Joseph, Vice President and Credit Analyst, Citizens Bank of West Virginia



Leave Donation: It Works

Although the West Virginia Department of Transportation offers generous sick time and leave for its employees, the unfortunate fact is that sometimes workers get sick for extended periods of time. Thanks to the West Virginia Legislature, however, a program was implemented that allows workers to donate unused annual leave to fellow workers who have used up all their leave and sick time due to illness or an illness in their immediate families.

For some in the WVDOT family, this donated time means the difference between continued health care or losing their jobs and benefits. That's a win-win for all of West Virginia.

Jeanne Phillips, a Highway Engineering Technician in District 7, is a case in point. When Jeanne found out she had pancreatic cancer, she wasn't sure what she would do. A call went out for leave donations.

Here's what happened, in our workers' own words.

"I currently work as a Highway TRET Senior for the WVDOT District 7 Construction Department," said David Wood, one of Jeanne's co-workers. "I have worked with Jeanne Phillips, who is a Highway Transportation Engineering Technician in District

7 for five-and-a-half years. To be specific, for six months we worked side by side checking construction estimate projects.

Although she was classified in a lower position she was always willing to train me in every way. She is a very detail-oriented employee."

"When I found out that Jeanne was diagnosed with Stage III Pancreatic Cancer, I was heartbroken," David said. "I had an excess of annual leave that I would have lost had I not donated it to someone. Jeanne was kind enough to train me; I wanted to return the favor to her. For this reason, I donated my leave to Jeanne via the Leave Donation Program."

It's an understatement to say Jeanne was grateful.

"I am absolutely blessed," she said. "I want to say Thank You to everybody who donated their leave to me so that I could continue to receive a paycheck

and keep my insurance.

"I would also like to thank everyone for all the cards, texts, letters and those who have visited me," she said. "Those who know me, know that I am not much for fancy words. But I am truly overwhelmed and grateful."



Don't forget:

EVERY K-12 student in West Virginia can earn their family a tour on the catwalk of our lovely **New River Gorge Bridge; just by uploading a design to the West Virginia Bridge Design and Build Contest.**

Enter before March 12, 2021 at 11:59 p.m.

There's no cost to enter, the software is free too; it's WVDOH's commitment to you.

Go to: wvbridgedesignandbuildcontest.com

