

econnections



December 2006

The electronic newsletter of MoDOT District 4, Kansas City Area

MEETINGS/TRAINING

Thursday, December 7

Resident Engineers,
8:30-11 a.m., Room 255
Maintenance Superintendents,
12:30- 3 p.m., Room 136
Public Meeting on proposed road at
126th Street and Route 169; 4-7 p.m.,
Vineyard Church, 12300 NW Arrowhead
Trafficway, Kansas City

Tuesday, December 19

Stock Area Team Meeting, 8-10 a.m.,
87th Street Project Office
District Tracker, 9-11 a.m., Boardroom

Wednesday, December 20

Munck Area Team, 8:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m.,
Kearney Maintenance Building

Thursday, December 21

Management Team, 9-11 a.m., Boardroom

Wednesday, Jan. 17, Room 236

Job Status, District 1, 8-9 a.m.,
videoconference
Job Status, Group 1, 9:30-10:30 a.m.
Job Status, Group 2, 10:30-11:30 a.m.
Job Status, Group 3, 12:30-1:30 p.m.
Job Status, Group 4, 1:30-2:30 p.m.

EVENTS

Thursday, December 7

Holiday Breakfast, 7:30-9 a.m.,
District Office break room
Chris Cakes pancakes; tickets \$5.50 from
D4 Employees Fund committee members

Friday, December 8

SRI news conference, Jefferson City

Thursday, December 21

Holiday Potluck Luncheon,
11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m., District Office

Monday, December 25

Christmas Holiday – state offices closed

Monday, January 1

New Year's Holiday – state offices closed

Drivers Simulate, Then Operate in Winter Storm

by Steve Porter

It was a case of good timing before a bad winter storm.

District 4 plow operators were scheduled to test out computerized snowplow simulators the last week of November. By the time the first of about three dozen operators climbed behind the wheel in the simulated truck cabs, a nasty winter storm was bearing down on Missouri.



The simulator provided urban and rural scenarios. Operators such as Mark O'Dowd (above) and Kevin Simcosky (right) had to look ahead, to the sides and check rear-view mirrors to maneuver in traffic.

Operators evaluating the simulator by mid-afternoon Wednesday, Nov. 29, would find themselves behind the wheel of real trucks within hours, applying their snowstorm driving skills in the real deal. The season's first ice and snowstorm brought more than a foot and a half of snow to some highways in the south and east parts of the district.

The simulators, housed in a trailer parked east of the District Garage, were provided on a trial basis by MPRI Simulations Group of Salt Lake City. District 4 was selected to evaluate the product, and other districts were invited to send operators to participate. Jefferson City officials will decide whether the simulator will be used by MoDOT in the future.

"Even though it was a simulator and not a true copy of the trucks we drive, it did an excellent job of copying the look and feel of being in the snow," said Wess Murray, maintenance superintendent. "It gave us an opportunity to evaluate drivers in a safe environment."

The simulator provided urban and rural scenarios, with the jerks and bumps that occur when deploying front plows, wing plows or crossing railroad tracks or shoulders. Drivers look ahead, to the sides and check rear-view mirrors to maneuver in traffic. The simulator operator can create several levels of ice, snow, fog, and side winds up to 195 miles per hour, replicating the sudden wind bursts that plow operators might experience in mountain passes.



Drivers may be plowing along without incident when the simulator operator creates a patch of black ice and the truck begins to spin out of control. Scenarios can change from freezing rain to heavy snow and blizzard-like conditions at the stroke of a computer key, and the driver must adapt to the same conditions encountered in typical snowflights.

By late Wednesday, the weather outside the simulator had deteriorated to the point that the step into the trailer had to be salted to keep from icing.

Snowstorm Skips North, Hammers South and East

The winter storm that began Wednesday afternoon with rain, freezing rain and sleet turned to snow Thursday afternoon, Nov. 30. When it was done, District 4's north counties were either spared or received an inch or two, and counties south and east were digging out of record snowfalls nearing two feet.

By early Friday morning, as the storm was leaving the area, MoDOT trucks from Platte and Clay counties were heading to Henry and Cass counties to help push back blowing and drifting snowfall. Ray County crews headed east on I-70 to help District 2 and 5 crews dig out of a winter blast that closed I-70 and Route 50 for extended periods.

One of District 4's two TowPLows was sent to Harrisonville to help open Route 7 to Clinton, and a stretch of Route 13 south of Clinton to St. Claire County. Both TowPLows were used on I-70 to reopen stretches closed because of ice-glazed pavement, heavy snowfall, wind-drifting snow and stalled vehicles. By Saturday afternoon, crews stood down for the first time in 72 hours.

Windsor received 18 inches of snow, Clinton got 18-20 inches, and some areas up to two feet before the storm was over. Cass and Henry County crews experienced near-white-out conditions from about 3 a.m. to dawn Friday morning, but kept plowing. One truck overturned near Chilhowee, but the belted-in driver escaped injury.

Service Anniversary, Safety Award and Other Honorees Recognized

Annual service and safety award ceremonies for District 4 employees were held in early November. Project teams and work units that earned special awards during the past year were also recognized.

5 Years

Steven Alley, Daniel Allred, Johnny Appleberry, Heather Barrows, Stephen Boone, Ryan Brown, Randy Buhler, Dennis Calton, Michael Church, Stephen Cobb, Jennifer Dunkeson, Tad Eddleman, David Eppright, Clifford Everts, Chad Foley, Deloris Goetz, David Hemme, Randy Johnson, Nathan Juliana, Harry Madden, Steven Mummert, Eric Nold, Richard Parks, Alfred Payton, David Price, Kevin Pugh, James Reavis, Kevin Rhodes, Sharon Stone, Hope Visconti, Marvin Wallace, Jay Ware, Leann Wollard, Allan Zafft

10 Years

Paul Boenisch, Larry Boeschen, Jeanette Brockman, Joseph Caldwell, Jeffrey Clevenger, Steven Elrick, Hugh Harrison, Timothy Hibdon, Deborah Jerome, David Johnson, Brenda Jones, Pamela Nugent, Mark O Dowd, Barbara Orrison, Clarence Overholtzer, Kevin Pitts, Christopher Sholl, Randy Skaggs, Scott Snelson, Mark Sommerhauser, Jackie Stoner, Andrew Strong, Maria Stuck, Jamale Wilcox, Jeffrey Wolfe, Larry Zeller

15 Years

John Cave, Sandra Chapman, Grover Chatmon, Dennis Cummings, Jafar Dehghani, Eric Deschamp, Eric Foster, Maurice Jones, Brian Kidwell, Lyndon Leicher, James Lohsandt, Kenneth Lynch, Ray Mercer, James Osborn, Mia Puthumana, Susan Scantlin, Mark Smith, Richard Strader, Kenneth Walby, Robin Warren

20 Years

Randall Ashley, Nancy Baker, Jerry Bell, James Burgess, Dennis Cline, Allen Hale, Charles Nyberg, William Sims, Edward Vaughn, Thomas Yates, Brian Ziegler

25 Years

Antonio Bryant, Michael Dawson, George Ellett, Randall Freeman, Michael Hurst, Gary McClanahan, Dennis Pence, William Polen, Charles Potter, Michael Roberts, Michael York

30 Years

Jeffrey Bailey, Jeffery Burgard, Michael Gibson, Marc Meador, Danny Williams

40 Years

Fred Caldwell

Long Term Safety Awards

25 Years

George Ellett, Charles Potter, Michael Hurst, Dennis Pence, Michael York

30 Years

Jeffery Burgard, Jeffrey Bailey, Fred McCombs, Marc Meador, Wally Shelton,

40 Years

Fred Caldwell

2005 Keystone Award

Joel Blobaum, Daryle Brewster, Gerri Doyle, Phyllis Edelman, Mike Frizzell, Craig Holde- man, Nicole Jackson, Brian Kidwell, Matt Killion, Dave MacDonald, Pat Moseley, Chris Redline, Warren Roberts, Jim Shipley, Mark Sommerhauser, Mark Stock, Stacey Thomas, Ray Webb, Warren Zeller

Governor's Award for Quality & Productivity

Mike DeBrot*, Don Gentry, Dianna Kidwell**, Kenny Lynch, Jason Sims, Mark Sommerhauser, Ray Webb

* Also received award for 2005 Excellence in Transportation

** Also received awards for National Transportation Public Affairs Workshop, NAGC Blue Pencil, NAGC Gold Screen & 2005 NAGC Blue Pencil Competition



Fred Caldwell collected 40-year awards for service and a spotless safety record during the November 9 luncheon. Debbie Strampher accompanied Fred to the event.

News from Across the District

The National Partnership for Highway Quality awarded Kansas City Scout a Bronze Award for public communications during its annual Making a Difference Awards ceremony in November. Scout was cited for its overall public education and outreach program. It was the seventh award for Scout in the last 13 months, and the fourth time Scout's public outreach efforts have been honored.

Congratulations to Angie Bolton, senior office assistant at the Warrensburg maintenance building, and her husband, Larry. They are the proud parents of Levi Walker, who was born Nov. 20. Levi weighed 6 pounds, 11 ounces and measured 19 inches; he joins two brothers at home.

Condolences: Our prayers are with Nancy Powell, senior traffic systems operator for Scout; Area Engineer Darryl Lamson; Nevin Lee, field mechanic for Henry County; and Right of Way Manager Tim Holman; Nancy's mother, Darryl's father, Nevin's grandmother and Tim's grandfather passed away in November.

Awards Update: Harold Reeder of Business & Benefits is the latest recipient of the district's One Team Award. Harold was cited for his service as the "go-to-person" for definitive information and administration of benefits for district employees.

More Awards: District 4's Above & Beyond Award was presented to Project Manager Randy Johnson, Assistant Right of Way Manager Walt Wiercinski, and Design employees Nicole Noah, Ben McCabe and Chris West for their practical design efforts on the Route 45/Route K project.



Ed Nichols

After 28 years with MoDOT, Platte City Maintenance Supervisor Sam Love (center) performed his last magic trick on District 4 by disappearing from the everyday workplace. A sendoff luncheon was held in his honor at the Country Buffet on October 27. Sam said his future plans were to vacation for a couple months and watch it snow from home.

Corporate Ladder

Welcome to District 4

Senior construction inspector Nidal Al-Khalidi (transferred from District 7)

Crew workers Jesse Dunkle, Ronald Gassen, Wayne Harrison, Nelson Jordan, Darin McGinnis, Loren Moore and Damon Rinehart

Promoted

Transportation planner Jeff Cremer (transferred from Central Office)

Intermediate traffic technician Corey Hansen

Senior crew workers Jeffrey Bathgate, Torrey Canaday and Howard Donahue

Intermediate crew workers Sonia Austin and Glenwood Simpson

Maintenance specialists David Eppright and William Joseph Harris

Assistant right of way manager Walt Wiercinski

Motorist Assistance Operator Paul Herzig

Senior materials inspector Rick Wyrick

Mailbag

Bill Guyer of Lee's Summit e-mailed this note on Nov. 30:

Just wanted to let you know how impressed I was with the work that was done clearing the highways last night (11/29) and this morning (11/30). The effort displayed far exceeded my expectations and deserves to be recognized.

Thank you very much.

econnections sources

Construction Bev Chrisco, 6341

Design Flo Noear, 0455

Regional Counsel LeAnn Francis, 6382

Administration Judy Magruder, 6309

General Services Toni Terry, 0050

Human Resources Belinda Fite, 6321

Right of Way Melbra Taylor, 6351

Traffic Dawn Phillips, 0401

Editor Joel Blobaum 6327