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THE ENTIRE DEPARTMENT STANDS TOGETHER IN MOURNING THE LOSS OF HIGHWAY TECHNICIAN LEE RIZOR, WHO WAS KILLED IN A TRAGIC COLLISION WHILE PERFORMING HIS DUTIES WITH ODOT. HE WAS 27 YEARS OLD.

An employee with the Delaware County Garage, Lee had been with ODOT for five years and was an active member of the OCSEA Delaware Chapter 2100. Outside of work, Lee was an avid sports enthusiast who coached youth football, girls’ youth basketball and soccer. His greatest achievement was watching young athletes grow and succeed. Lee thoroughly enjoyed outdoor activities such as truck pulling, four wheeling, back road cruising, and fishing on Lake Erie or his local pond. Preparing a feast on the grill or in his new smoker for friends and family was “the essence of life” to him.

Described as an amazing and devoted family man, Lee is survived by his wife, Mary; their two children, five-year-old Lane and 10-month-old Layla; his parents, Lee and Beth; his sister, Shelby; and numerous other family members and friends.

Noting the tragedy, Director Jerry Wray wrote to the people of ODOT, “We are reminded that our highway crews risk their lives every day by just doing their jobs. May Lee Rizor rest in peace.”

A bank account has been established for the Rizor family. Anyone wishing to make a donation can send their contribution to: Rizor Family Benefit Fund, First-Knox National Bank, P.O. Box 70, Mt. Gilead, OH 43338.

Construction + Planning = Growth
Joel Hunt, Central Office

ODOT UNVEILED ONE OF ITS LARGEST AND MOST AGGRESSIVE CONSTRUCTION SEASONS THAT WILL BEGIN OR CONTINUE THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEARLY 1,000 PROJECTS STATEWIDE, WITH MORE THAN 100 TO IMPROVE THE INTERSTATES.

The department will begin or continue work on 10 mega projects, each worth more than $50 million. The most prominent of these will include the eastbound Innerbelt Bridge in Cleveland, the largest and most expensive mega project in the state. Including the demolition of the current and aging structure, the project has an estimated cost of $330 million.

Other continuing major projects include the westbound Cleveland Innerbelt Bridge, the Columbus Crossroads Interstate 670/Interstate 71 Interchange reconstruction, the Jeremiah Morrow Bridge in southwest Ohio and the Ironton-Russell Bridge replacement in southern Ohio.

The new mega projects beginning this season include a $53 million pavement replacement project on Interstate 271 in Summit County; a $71 million “North Side Fix” in Columbus, the reconfiguration of ramps at the Interstate 270/U.S. 23 interchange; and the reconstruction of two ramps and two northbound express lanes on U.S. 23. There is also the $57 million reconstruction of Interstate 75 in Allen County and a $70 million reconstruction of another section of Interstate 75 in Allen County.

ODOT expects to wrap up work on the Interstate 75/475 interchange upgrade in Lucas County, the reconstruction of Interstate 90 in Ashtabula County, and the construction of the Nelsonville Bypass on U.S. Route 33 in Athens and Hocking counties.

This year, work to widen Interstate 71 will continue in northern Morrow County while new projects in northern Delaware County and southern Morrow County will begin. I-71 has been under

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Volunteers tackle litter in northeast Ohio
Amanda Lee, District 12

Litter. It’s a completely avoidable problem. Yet motorists continue to throw their trash out the window or fail to secure their loads and spill debris on the roadway. It is for these reasons that more than 60 northeast Ohioans gathered early on a chilly April Saturday to help clean up various interchanges along the east shoreway near downtown Cleveland. These volunteers were part of the annual State Roadway Cleanup sponsored by Keep Ohio Beautiful, ODOT and the Ohio Turnpike.

Despite the temperature, the volunteers kept smiles on their faces and stayed true to their determination to help clean up as much litter as they could. In just two short hours they picked up 179 bags of trash! More than 20 of those were filled with items that will be recycled.

Keep America Beautiful selected Ohio’s Roadway Cleanup in Cleveland as one of their seven nationwide locations to showcase their National Day of Action. Volunteers were encouraged to tweet and share pictures on Twitter using #KeepAmericaBeautiful to show others around the U.S. we care about keeping Ohio beautiful.

A group from Oklahoma City, OK tweeted them @ODOTCleveland: “Love it. We’re picking up here in OKC today, too.” It was truly a National Day of Action filled with volunteers who have a passion for keeping the environment free of litter.

On average, ODOT spends over $4 million each year picking up nearly 400,000 bags of trash from highways and interchanges. The cost and time involved for crews to remove litter could be used for much-needed equipment or highway repairs.

COMING SOON: A NEW & IMPROVED TRANSCRIPT

Beginning next month, the Division of Communications will roll out a new format for the statewide newsletter that reaches you. Based on feedback we’ve received from many of you across the state over the past few months, the new Transcript will include shorter, more objective articles on a wide variety of topics to help keep you informed of major news across the state. It is hoped this part of the newsletter will achieve a more “newspaper-like” feel.

In addition to the news section, Transcript will include more reoccurring features, including a monthly column entitled “Ask the Director.” This column will give ODOT employees a chance to ask important questions and get answers from Director Jerry Wray himself. Instructions for submitting questions will be coming soon.

We think you’ll like the new format, and will find the monthly segments to be helpful and something to look forward to. It is all being offered as part of a larger effort to improve internal communication within the department. Together, let’s stay informed about ODOT so we can work harder on ODOT!
Getting Work Done
Ron Poole, Central Office

IT HAS BEEN MORE THAN 25 years since ODOT adopted the Equipment Management and Transportation Management systems (EMS/TMS) for tracking and managing labor and inventory. Now ODOT is moving on to a faster and more flexible technology: Starting in late November, the department will begin using the Equipment, Inventory, and Materials System (EIMS) for all materials, equipment and labor tracking functions.

EMS/TMS generate paper records that have to be filled out and filed. The EIMS system will eliminate paper records, and includes the use of mobile devices that will allow ODOT employees to enter information in real time for work performed in the field.

AgileAssets, the vendor providing EIMS, has met with a large number of ODOT end users to learn about the department’s needs. ODOT members travelled to Idaho and Louisiana to learn from other agencies who adopted EIMS to learn more about the effectiveness of the system.

The initial November rollout will include maintenance, fleet and facilities management as well as accommodate non-maintenance areas like planning, engineering and construction using the system to record their activity based time. EIMS will assist ODOT employees in making better decisions about managing resources.

Are you ready?
Keri Moser, Guest Writer, Central Office

A FAMILIAR CONVERSATION THAT we’ve all heard in a cafeteria or a hallway:
Fifty-Something Employee to co-worker: “So, how long you got?”
Coworker: “Five years and three months, you?”
Fifty-Something: “Three years, one month. And I am so ready!”

The countdown to retirement is on everyone’s mind, but it takes more than just putting in your 30+ years to be ready.

Startling numbers in the 2010 Retirement Confidence Survey revealed that 27 percent of Americans report having less than $1,000 in savings, 43 percent say they have less than $10,000 set aside, and more than half (54 percent) have less than $25,000 saved. With a large portion of ODOT’s current workforce expected to retire in the next five years, a lot of folks are starting to ask if they are really as ready to go as they think.

So what can ODOT employees do to prepare? Use their employee benefit resources:

STECU The State Transportation Employee Credit Union can help with restructuring debts and setting up Individual Retirement Accounts. For those ready to retire now, STECU offers ConnectPlus retiree benefits packages. All you have to do is retire. That’s it.

OPERS They provide monthly pensions and can provide employees with the information on exactly how much a person earns each month after retirement. They offer a number of helpful seminars throughout the year as well.

DEFERRED COMP A representative can help employees start a savings strategy. Techniques such as “dollar cost averaging” can help employees acquire effective investments.

Get yourself ready and on the road to a retirement free of financial stress. You’ve earned it.

To learn more about these services, contact: OPERS at 1-800-222-7377; Ohio Deferred Compensation at 1-877-644-6457; or talk to a representative with the Credit Union at 1-800-434-7300, option 5.

One of the new EIMS mobile devices.
ODOT selected for national snow and ice control award

Pieter Wykoff, Central Office

At the American Traffic Safety Services Association’s Ohio Chapter Safety Conference recently, ODOT Director Jerry Wray highlighted ODOT’s commitment to snow and ice control:

“The public is less tolerant of failure in snow and ice control than in any other highway function. One of our department’s guiding principles is that we will be the standard of excellence for winter maintenance. A snowstorm affects the entire community and often the entire state. Unless a storm is handled capably by our maintenance forces, it can upset the daily routines of individuals, adversely affect business, and endanger public safety and public servants.”

This commitment has now been recognized by the American Public Works Association (APWA), a not-for-profit, international organization of more than 28,000 members involved in the field of public works. ODOT was the only state department of transportation to receive the 2013 Excellence in Snow and Ice Control Award at the APWA North American Snow Conference this April.

ODOT submitted a 19-page nomination report to the organization, outlining the materials and equipment, driver training, community outreach, technical systems and environmental issues the department works with in the course of battling Ohio weather conditions.

“This is important to the people of ODOT,” said Deputy Director of Operations Sonja Simpson, whose division helped prepare the report. “It’s a nice affirmation to receive this award. Being recognized nationally is an extremely positive thing.”

Assistant Director of Field Operations Mike Flynn calls ODOT’s snow and ice control program the department’s signature activity. Since the 1990s, the department’s approach to snow and ice has evolved to become a holistic, systematic, and highly organized statewide plan of attack against the elements. But the most important reason ODOT has become so excellent at snow and ice is the 3,000 or so drivers who pilot over 1,600 plow trucks during Ohio’s winter.

“Our drivers feel personally responsible for their routes, which is a good thing,” noted Flynn. “Their families and friends drive on those routes daily. It’s a dangerous job that requires extreme concentration during times of limited visibility while you deal with motorists who are not paying attention to road conditions.”

Since the award, Flynn has been thinking about what the department should do next. He is already looking ahead to new challenges in snow and ice control.

“The APWA award is not the end of our journey,” he said. “It is a launching point for even greater innovation. Thanks to the dedication of our people, we are going to continue our pursuit of excellence and set high marks for others to follow.”

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The Excellence in Snow and Ice Control Award is presented to the
Ohio Department of Transportation

April 2013
Florida Governor Rick Scott once said reviewing a government budget is much like going through the attic in an old home.

He was being kind. Most of us would rather deal with the splinters and spiders of the average attic than try to make sense of most large scale budgets. But budget plans can also tell you a great deal about an organization and the goals its members want to achieve.

Director Jerry Wray recently went before the Ohio General Assembly to justify the transportation budget. The 255-page, two-year plan is valued at $7.5 billion. It is funded primarily through the state and federal motor fuel tax. Broken down by year, about $2 billion of an approximate $3 billion will go into the department’s highway construction program. In other words, for every three dollars ODOT spends each year, two of those dollars go into contracts to build and maintain our state’s transportation infrastructure.

The result is the creation of one of the finest transportation systems in the world, all of which are important to Ohio’s economy and to job creation in our state. As Director Jerry Wray said to the Ohio House Finance and Appropriation Committee, “Our department mission statement is this: to provide easy movement of people and goods from place to place. . . . It is that simple. ODOT’s currency is time, safety and money. We create and maintain an efficient, effective transportation system that gets people and goods where they want to go in a timely and safe manner.”

Former Senator Byron Dorgan once said: “Budgets are all about choices.” With that in mind, here are some of the priorities, or choices, in the Fiscal Year 2014–2015 transportation budget:

**TURNPIKE CHANGES**
This will allow the Ohio Turnpike Commission to issue bonds backed by future toll revenue and use that money to build critical transportation projects primarily in Northern Ohio. The bonding proposal is expected to add as much as $1.5 billion to both ODOT’s highway and the Turnpike construction budget.

**SPEED LIMIT CHANGES**
The bill includes a provision to allow the ODOT director to raise speed limits on rural interstates from 65 to 70 miles an hour. All new speed limit signs will replace current signs on July 1.

**INCIDENT MANAGEMENT DESIGNEE**
The new language allows additional personnel to be given the authority to clear highway accidents in instances where the traditional authorities are unavailable. This change will allow for the more efficient clearing of a highway after an accident and will also help ease issues that arise in large urban areas when accidents may delay traffic for hours during peak travel times.

**ODOT OFFICE OF AVIATION USE OF AIRPORT ASSISTANCE FUND**
The Office of Aviation currently inspects Ohio’s 160 public-use airports that are both privately and publicly owned. Other airport and public safety responsibilities this office handles include issuing commercial airport certificates, registering all temporary and permanent airports and heliports, and collecting and updating information on more than 800 public- and private-use airports and heliports for Homeland Security purposes.

This law change will allow no more than 10 percent of aircraft license taxes and fines that are deposited to the credit of the state treasury in the airport assistance fund to be used for the operating costs of ODOT’s Office of Aviation as well as capital improvements to publicly owned airports.

Governor John Kasich signed the bill on April 1st during ceremonies in Cleveland and Columbus. The bill will take effect July 1st.
Stepping up to the plate
Pieter Wykoff, Central Office

Normally, you would not start a story about a basketball coach by saying he steps up to the plate. However, Andrew “Drew” Williams is so much more than just a basketball coach. He steps up to the plate at home, where he and his wife of 13 years, Kelly, are raising their children: Cameron, Donovan, Sean, and Savannah. All four are under 11 years of age.

Williams also steps up to the plate at ODOT, where he serves as the administrator for the Division of Planning’s Office of Technical Services. He supervises a staff of 32 people who specialize in infrastructure management, traffic monitoring, and transportation information management. They maintain data on traffic and road inventory to help the department make critical decisions about investing resources.

Finally, he steps up to the plate at Brookhaven High School in Columbus, where he has served as an assistant basketball coach for nearly two decades. His status as assistant did change quite dramatically ten years ago, when then-head coach Bruce Howard collapsed in front of his team and later died. It happened during a nationally televised game against a Florida powerhouse in the division.

“That was crazy,” he recalls. “We had 14 kids about to play in...
what for them was probably the most important game of their lives up to then and they’re all just staring at their coach lying on the floor.”

It was left up to Williams to fly with the Brookhaven Bearcats back to Ohio after the game and coach them the rest of the season. His current head coach, Hal Robinson was hired the year after Howard’s death. Robinson praises William’s discipline and quiet strength.

“We don’t have too many people like him,” he said. “He’s been a steady influence on me. The larger Columbus community is fortunate to have someone of his diversity and faith.”

Williams credits the support of his marriage for making it possible to do all of the different things that make up his life:

“My wife allows me to do this,” he states simply. “She understands that basketball is my passion and developing young kids is my passion. It’s not just about the game. It’s also getting them to focus on the future, getting them to get that education they will need to succeed in life. Many of the kids on our team come from broken homes, yet most of them go on to play college ball and graduate from college.”

Some, like Ron Lewis, go on to play for the Ohio State University. Others, like Jamell Cornley, go on to play for other Big Ten schools like Penn State. Some even make it into the pros. Chris Johnson starred at the University of Dayton before being signed by the Memphis Grizzlies.

Jeff Cumberland is currently a tight end for the New York Jets. He played both football and basketball for Brookhaven.

“Sometimes you get the opportunity to mold these young men. I took Cumberland home at night and fed him dinner when he had no place to go. I drove him to the football coaches at the University of Illinois. I promised them he would work his tail off. He did,” Williams says.

Most of these young protégés don’t forget Williams as they become adults. He says he is constantly texted from his former players. When they return to Columbus, they stop by Brookhaven to say hello.

“I grew up in a single-parent home because my father passed away when I was young. I understand what they’re going through.”

Williams grew up in Cameron, North Carolina, population 151. He attempted to play basketball at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University but it was tough to keep up with his studies while being a member of the team. He later left to join the Navy, which he credits for teaching him discipline.

He returned to North Carolina A&T and graduated as an industrial engineer in 1988. He was recruited by ODOT’s Croft Merit, who ran the department’s Engineer-In-Training program. Williams has been with the department for almost a quarter of a century.

“Cold Ohio was not on my radar screen,” he says. “The first time I saw snow, I stayed home. That’s what we did in North Carolina.”

Williams likes to point to Brookhaven High School’s school motto, We Are One, as an inspiration.

“This is my way of giving back. I have been very blessed. A lot of these kids have special needs. You can’t change the whole world, but if you give back to a few of them and they stick with the program, you can make a difference,” he says.