Epoke comes to Belmont County

A DAY IN THE LIFE
of weather guru Chuck Hecht

THE DOUBLE WING-PLOW TRUCK
Perfect truck team meets goals; new trucks hit the roads
Joel Hunt, Central Office

True to its word, the Perfect Truck Improvement Team completed every task set out in its December 2013 action plan:
1. A multiple-award contract for the 2015 Dump Truck Run went out in spring 2014.
2. ODOT purchased dump trucks from multiple manufacturers, including 127 Internationals, 12 Macks, 12 Freightliners and 12 Western Stars.
3. At least one dump truck from each manufacturer will be delivered to all 12 districts by the end of 2015.

ODOT’s 28-member Perfect Truck Improvement Team consists of HTs and mechanics and was formed in 2013 to determine what they think makes the perfect truck. The group’s chief concerns with the existing fleet were that some trucks are slow to start from a stop, some don’t have enough power to push snow and some have insufficient acceleration to merge into traffic.

“TMs, HTs and mechanics need to have a truck that does the job,” said Assistant Director Dave Coyle. “It might mean we have one manufacturer with different configurations.”

ODOT invested $2.7 million more this year to purchase trucks from multiple manufacturers. “We’re putting a lot of effort in this and we want to get it right,” said Director Wray. “In the end we want the best value for the money.”

Coyle said ODOT wants to include other manufacturers, like Peterbilt. However, they need to change their cab design first.

It will take a period of four to five years to collect the appropriate amount of data to determine which chassis is the best cost to ODOT. Initial cost, performance and maintenance costs will be some of the factors considered.

Local News

Epoke comes to Belmont County
Becky Giauque, District 11

ODOT is considering the statewide use of the Epoke Bulk Spreader after seeing successful results in the city of Cuyahoga Falls and ODOT’s Summit County garage in District 4. The device is designed to apply salt and brine over multiple lanes in a single pass. Now, District 11 is using the first Epoke in eastern Ohio this winter.

The spreader grinds salt and mixes it with brine to create a slurry that is spread on the road. This process maximizes the effectiveness of every load of salt and brine, requiring less material for deicing applications. Since the Epoke system focuses on spraying several lanes at once, less labor hours are also needed to treat stretches of roadway.

The Epoke is on loan expense-free from Bell Equipment in Gahanna for a trial run on Interstate 70 in Belmont County.

Statewide News continued on top of pg 6
DOT NEEDS TO HAVE MORE DIVERSITY AMONG ITS EMPLOYEES.
There are few people of color who work in some of the divisions and the districts.”

I agree. In many areas of the department minorities and women are underrepresented.
This is a concern and will continue to be an area of emphasis as we move forward. Ideally, the demographics of the department would represent the demographics of our state, or in the case of the districts, their region. We need to encourage both Central Office and the districts to make sure they offer opportunities to all people who are qualified for the job. In order to do that, we will be creating a Division of Inclusion, Diversity and Opportunity to focus efforts on this issue. In addition, a diversity recruitment committee has already been chartered and has been at work addressing the issue.

Understand it is not enough to be diverse, we need to strive for a culture of inclusion.
Inclusion means each member of the team is valued, respected and supported. In other words, diversity is the mix; inclusion is getting the mix to work well together. It is one of our guiding principles. Inclusion should be reflected in our culture, practices and relationships.”

— Director Jerry Wray

ANNUAL SURVEY EXPECTED IN SPRING
The 2014 Quality of Work Life survey will be distributed in April 2015, after snow and ice season has concluded. Survey goals include a Work Life Index score of 75 percent and a response rate higher than 50 percent.

UPWARD FEEDBACK TEAM MEETS
The committee of highway technicians responsible for bringing manager evaluations to employees met in December to discuss results from the summer surveys. Results indicated managers should focus more on involving employees in work planning and other items.

ePERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS DUE IN JANUARY
The deadline for exempt employee evaluations is January 30, and managers can utilize either the ePerformance system or paper evaluations. Any experiencing issues with the new ePerformance system should contact human resources for help.

I-71 WIDENING COMPLETE IN TIME FOR HOLIDAYS
Six lanes of traffic opened on Interstate 71 between Columbus and Cleveland just before Thanksgiving. For the first time in decades, traffic flowed without incident over the holiday weekend.

DISTRICT 1 OPENS NEW MAINTENANCE CAMPUS
A consolidated campus opened for both Allen County operations and the District 1 garage and facilities departments. Housing the operations together will save the district office on utility and maintenance costs. See story on page 4.
LocaL NewS, cont.

New tools in site
Rhonda Pees, District 1

A NEW GARAGE FOR THE Allen County ODOT maintenance crew is now in operation this snow and ice season. The facility will feature one of the largest salt storage domes in the district, with a capacity of 4,000 tons and a state-of-the-art brine-making unit.

Defiance and Van Wert counties will add a left-rear mounted wing plow to their fleets. Trucks equipped with a left wing can effectively push snow off the passing lane on four-lane routes. The trucks will also be equipped with a 12-foot belly plow—two feet longer than a standard plow—which is effective in moving snow into the path of the rear wing.

A prototype truck bed insert will be piloted in Allen County this winter. The insert, developed by ODOT employees, will feature a V-shaped brine tank inside the rear of the truck bed which can hold more than 900 gallons of brine. Two nine-inch augers in the bottom of the bed convey salt out the back of the truck.

The design of the insert provides greater stability as the tank and materials are contained lower inside the truck, reducing its top-heaviness.

District 4 double wing plow truck
Brent Kovacs, District 4

A SHTABULA COUNTY employees have created a snowplow that can clear two lanes in one pass and have better visibility than a traditional truck. Their vehicle comes equipped with a wing plow on both sides of the standard tandem truck and a belly plow underneath. With the help of air over hydraulics, the truck can also spread salt on either the left or right lane. With no plow mounted on the front of the truck, the headlights are mounted on the bumper, greatly increasing the visibility for the driver.

Local News continued at bottom of pg 6
As District 8’s weather guru, Chuck Hecht provides district personnel updates and analyses of long-range weather patterns. Using data and information from consulting firms, he formulates his analyses and updates of changing weather conditions and sends them to ODOT personnel preparing for and responding to weather-related incidents.

“This info is a critical component of ODOT’s tool bag,” said Hecht. “When Mother Nature pulls night and weekend shifts, so do I, monitoring and sending out updates as needed.”

Hecht joined the department in 1987 as a test lab asphalt inspector. He has a long-held interest in the field of meteorology, taking introductory and intermediate level courses as a student at Wright State University. In 2005, he parlayed that interest into volunteering to be the District 8 point-of-contact for an outside weather consultant for ODOT. He helped ensure that timely weather updates were passed along to each of the district’s counties.

When Central Office member Abner Johnson became ODOT’s in-house statewide weather coordinator, Hecht worked with him to communicate weather info across the department. Now, with Johnson’s recent retirement, Hecht has become ODOT’s interim weatherman. It is his duty to provide updates and long-range forecasts to the remaining 11 districts, as well as various counties, townships, and other local agencies.

“Abner had quite a list,” says Hecht. “What started for me as a volunteer position has kind of morphed into a greater role.”

When not working for ODOT, Hecht enjoys fishing in local lakes or the Canadian waters of Lake of the Woods in Sioux Narrows, Ontario. He enjoys spending many hours with his outdoor smoker, cooking ribs, brisket, and pulled pork barbecue.
**STATEWIDE NEWS, cont.**

**Backing accidents**

*Joel Hunt, Central Office*

For six years, District 4 has required its employees to back state vehicles into parking spaces instead of pulling into them. The change has reduced accidents by 50 percent.

“You only have one hazard when backing into a parking space, but when you back out of one you risk hitting a person, another vehicle or other property,” said Robert Pallo, District 4 safety and health consultant.

To build on District 4’s success, the Division of Human Resources at Central Office asked for volunteers to pilot the program. Districts 3 and 11 stepped up and implemented the program in late 2014.

According to Pallo, drivers should first select a parking space where vehicles can be driven forward when leaving.

“If that’s not possible, the driver’s should back the vehicle into a parking space. This allows the driver to back and park the vehicle while a clear view of the entire area exists, and before any conditions can change.”

**LOCAL NEWS, cont.**

**Project earns environmental honor**

*David Rose, Central Office and District 10*

During the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) annual meeting in Charlotte, North Carolina, the U.S. Route 33 Nelsonville Bypass received the 2014 President’s Transportation Award for Environment, the highest environmental honor for a transportation project in the nation. The 8.5-mile, $200 million project relieved a major congestion problem for U.S. 33 with a new four-lane bypass around the city of Nelsonville. To protect the natural resources of the nearby Wayne National Forest, ODOT invested $10 million to safeguard natural habitat and threatened species with wildlife crossings, fencing, special lighting, and construction of a 7.5-acre wetland.

District 11 Health and Safety Program Consultant Carrie Collins said there are many companies who incorporate the ideas behind this backing policy. This policy is for all vehicle types for parking outside of indoor storage facilities, and indoor garage parking, where backing may not be an option.

Pallo said backing in is unavoidable in certain environments. In these situations, drivers should ask for assistance (if available) and back immediately, though slowly and with extreme care, while checking all mirrors.

To increase the level of participation, supervisors must emphasize the importance of backing in, and lead by example.

“District 4 supervisors are taught to stop improperly parked vehicles and require the employee to back in immediately,” Pallo said.

Nationally, 14 percent of car crashes occur in parking lots, according to an Insurance Institute for Highway Safety study made in 2001 and 2002. Many of these are “backover crashes,” in which drivers hit another car while backing out.

Back-in parking training is offered to new employees as a part of orientation.
Pair take pride in craft

Joyce Miller, District 3

WHEN YOU talk with Ashland County Highway Technician Mike Reisinger, it is evident how passionately he feels about concrete.

He and his colleague, HT Aaron Martin, have become known to many in Ashland County as the ‘concrete crew.’ The two work side by side each day, pouring concrete and performing custom work for the needs of the county.

Forming footers, pouring headwalls, and creating custom-made catch basins are their specialties. With the expectation of the entire county maintenance team replacing 50 culverts last season alone, the two have had their work cut out for them.

Prior to any culvert replacement, the pair determines the drainage needs at the specific location and performs measurements before returning to their shop. The biggest benefit from what they are creating is that their products are exclusive and custom-made to the requirements of every drainage system in the field.

Previously, the county would purchase pre-made catch basins or headwalls that would have to be reconstructed to fit the culvert pipe. Reisinger and Martin’s make their catch basins ready to be installed without needing further work. This provides a cleaner fit and finish to the final product.

“Both Mike and Aaron work as their own crew,” said County Manager Brad Mayes. “But they truly perform a job within another job by coming in and planning their work ahead of our culvert installations. They really produce a flawless concrete product—it is a true work of craftsmanship.”

Donovan Hartsel, another HT in Ashland County who has helped the concrete crew in the past, agreed. “Mike and Aaron really do a great job. Kudos to them. They kick out their work pretty fast,” he said.

“The nature of my work depends on them,” Mike Heffelfinger, Ashland County HT 3 explained. “They get their stuff done quickly and have never, ever held me up when I’m replacing a culvert. They do a wonderful job, and we rely on each other tremendously.”

Reisinger and Martin’s work has been noticed throughout the district, and their services have been requested to perform work in other counties. Most recently, in Lorain County, the team has worked to construct a new concrete pad for the additional brine tank expected later this season.

Before coming to ODOT a few years ago, the pair poured concrete together in the private sector. “I love working with concrete,” said Reisinger. “From the straight lining to finishing and just the variety of opportunities.” ✽
The envelope, please?
Ron Poole, Central Office

Forget the other award shows this season. Here is the true honor role for those who gave generously of their time, energy and money to good causes in 2014. Maybe next year, George Clooney.

The “Triple C” award went to all of ODOT for raising $210,253.04 overall for the 2014 Combined Charitable Campaign.

The “Holiday Helpers” awards were split among several offices supporting families and children during the holidays. Districts 1, 2, 10 brought gifts, food and supplies and made generous donations. District 3 adopted several families and donated generously. District 9 employees “adopted” 20 children and the residents of the Williamson Group Home for Veterans. Adopting families is a tradition for District 5. They started early with bi-weekly summer cookouts. District 12 adopted three local families.

District 8 had three counties all adopted families through the Veteran’s Administration, while District 11 raised money through holiday events to benefit children and families at a local homeless shelter. Central Office’s Division of Finance adopted a family through a local school.

The “Feed the Need” awards were about relieving hunger. District 1 contributed 6,000 meals and 110 pounds of peanut butter to their food bank, while District 10 donated to both their food bank and Operation Feed.

The “Warm Hearts” awards went to districts 1, 4, 8, and 9 for donating several bags worth of warm clothing and blankets to those with need.

The “Best Santa Ever” awards went to districts 1, 4, and 6 for their participation in Toys for Tots, with District 3 buying toys for patients at Columbus’ Nationwide Children’s Hospital.

“Fighting the Good Fight” awards go to those who supported still more worthy causes: to District 6 for their contributions to People In Need, District 1’s initiatives against cancer, districts 7 and 8 for donating to veterans and children, District 11 for their blood drives and other fund raisers, and District 10 for their support of the Make a Wish Foundation.

No matter the amounts or reasons, they’re winners all.

The Division of Finance at Central Office adopts a family for Christmas every year. This year, they collected enough cash and gifts to cover every item on their adopted family’s wish list.