State unphased by salt-supplier shortage
Pieter Wykoff, Central Office

ODOT recently had to go the State Controlling Board to seek permission to spend just over $18 million to secure 171,600 tons of road salt for the coming winter. The department needed a waiver of the typical bidding process, as salt suppliers like Morton and Cargill would not make offers for salt contracts in 21 Ohio counties. In some cases where bids were made, the prices were as high as $165 per ton.

Instead, ODOT contracted with Midwest Salt of Fort Wayne, Indiana for $105.25 per ton. The company is a salt broker with plans to import the product by ship. The salt will be left at ports in Toledo, Lorain and Ashtabula. ODOT will then transport the salt to its salt barns, making half or so of the supply available for purchase by local governments.

“We have secured the salt and it’s on its way,” says ODOT Deputy Director for Operations Sonja Simpson. The increase in the price of salt can be attributed to last winter’s storms and the law of supply and demand. ODOT used over a million tons of salt last winter. Typically, the department uses about 650,000 tons annually. During the past winter, ODOT received requests from 123 local governments for 9,000 tons of salt.

“We are always willing to help those in need during an emergency,” says Assistant Director of Field Operations Mike Flynn. “We’re all in this together.”

Employees evaluate managers through new program
Alexandra Buerger, Central Office

This summer, employees in county facilities across the state participated in a pilot program called Upward Feedback. Garage and outpost crew members completed surveys about the problem-solving and interpersonal skills of their transportation managers. Employees filled out the optional surveys as managers completed self-evaluations. The purpose was to identify any gaps in perception between employees and their supervisors.

Initial data indicates that employees gave their managers the highest marks for emphasizing safety in the workplace. The lowest average score was given in the area of managers’ communication with their employees. Executive leadership has plans to expand the Upward Feedback program to all areas of the department.

“Now that we’ve completed the pilot with much of the county workforce, we’re able to identify and carry out necessary tweaks to the process,” said Mike Flynn, assistant director of Field Operations.

Director Jerry Wray also touched on the program at this summer’s Annual Meetings.

“Upward Feedback is not meant to catch a manager doing something wrong, or to ‘ding’ anyone,” he said. “It’s to help identify how we can assist managers in becoming better leaders, and also to recognize the many excellent managers we have at ODOT.”
SK THE DIRECTOR

"GET RID OF MANCON. WE can do our own parts. Let’s work as a team, no contracting. Mancon has made getting simple parts harder, and equipment is down longer than before.”

“ONE OF OUR GOALS IS TO continue to look for efficiencies and best business practices in order to be a more professional, productive, and effective organization. In keeping with this goal, prior to letting a contract for a parts suppliers, a detailed study was performed to determine whether it made sense from both an efficiency and a financial perspective. The study included a detailed financial analysis which included an examination of costs and productivity related to: carrying large amounts of inventory, failure to dispose of obsolete inventory, loss of inventory, high transaction costs, multiple mandatory contracts, failure to properly return and receive credit for core charges, and failure to return improperly ordered parts. After careful analysis, we estimated that ODOT would save approximately $7 million annually if we moved forward with the parts project.

As part of the study ODOT also conducted extensive benchmarking with state departments of transportation and other public agencies around the country including the City of Chicago, the Virginia Department of Transportation and the Minnesota Department of Transportation. Those DOTs and public agencies all reported successes and savings from their vendor managed supply chain inventory projects. Ultimately, we determined that the department should expect to receive positive results and our mechanics would be able to use much more of their time repairing and maintaining equipment. The decision was made to let a parts contract, which Mancon won.

Implementation began in the fall of 2012 and those who had jobs in this area were reassigned to other value-added work. Once full implementation was in place, a cost analysis was completed in June of this year. The analysis identified that although we did not achieve the anticipated savings we did achieve actual savings of $5.6 million. We expect more savings going forward based on efficiencies resulting from Mancon’s efforts related to volume based purchasing.

The analysis also revealed that ODOT employees have spent an additional 80,765 hours in direct time to equipment since the Mancon contract was executed. With the mechanics able to focus their efforts on repairs instead of ordering or picking up parts, I believe the fleet is in better condition and will continue to get better as we perform more preventative maintenance and our replacement cycles are fully in place.”

— Director Jerry Wray

THE ODOT NEWS

FAST FIVE

1. TMC PRAISED IN PUBLICATION
   ODOT’s Traffic Management Center (TMC) was featured in Traffic Technology International magazine. The article highlights ODOT’s use of data to measure performance and applauds the low cost of creating the efficiently-run TMC.

2. NEW SMART PHONE APP AVAILABLE
   The new “ODOT Work Zone Pocket Guide” app is now available for anyone needing to set up work zones in Ohio. Roadway Engineering and Traffic developed the app, which provides a quick reference on traffic control in work zones.

3. WORK BEGINS ON NEW DISTRICT 3 FACILITY
   The Crawford County Full Service Maintenance Facility project broke ground at its new site. The $6.6 million project is made possible through a partnership with the Toledo-Lucas Port Authority.

4. DIGITAL SIGNAGE SYSTEM GETS AN UPGRADE
   The informational monitors in facilities statewide will receive replacement hardware to keep the system running smoothly. Regular safety tailgate talks and research projects will cycle on screen once they are fully functional.

5. BRIDGE PROGRAM EXPANDS
   The Ohio Bridge Partnership Program will add 10 local bridges to its list of structures to be repaired or replaced, committing the original $120 million to now 230 bridges statewide.
Local News

Beauty with a purpose
by Nancy Burton, District 6

This past summer, ODOT and the Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections planted sunflowers from the Ohio River to Lake Erie along Interstate 71. And the people of Ohio noticed. “We were surprised by how quickly they bloomed and the positive comments we received from the public,” said Mitch Blackford, District 6 highway management administrator. “As folks were driving down to Cincinnati or up to Cleveland, the district was getting calls from people who kept saying ‘What a cool project.’”

But the eye-candy value was just a side benefit. The sunflowers’ primary purpose was to provide food for bees. The bees land on the flowers and collect nectar, pollen, or both. The nectar makes the honey and the pollen gets mixed with the nectar which feeds the bee larvae in the hive. Along the way, bees pollinate other flowers on or away from the road.

The result: more bees, more beautiful roadsides and a healthier ecosystem.

ODOT isn’t done with this new approach. Watch for more news next year, when other districts plant living snow fences, daffodils, prairie plantings and bamboo in front of noise walls.

District 7’s dialogue on work life
Mandi Dillon, District 7

District 7 has created a bi-weekly Quality of Work Life Bulletin that gets sent out through email on payday Fridays. The purpose is to keep everyone informed on the results of the Quality of Work Life Survey and continue the conversation for improvement in the district.

The bulletin invites employees to write in with questions and addresses both negative and positive comments. It features updates on major issues and changes. Employees are even asked to call District Deputy Director Randy Chevalley directly if they have a question that hasn’t been answered in the bulletin. Each edition includes a link at the bottom where employees may submit a suggestion on the District 7 intranet page.

The hope is that this continued communication will help employees stay informed on what’s happening in their district.

Construction of Cleveland’s new westbound George V. Voinovich Bridge, the first of a pair to replace the 1959 Innerbelt Bridge, has received an Award of Merit for Highways/Bridges in Engineering News Record magazine’s (ENR) Midwest’s Best Projects Competition. The program recognizes the best construction projects and the companies that designed and built them in the U.S. and Puerto Rico.

“The competition’s jurors reviewed scores of entries,” said John Gregerson, regional editor for ENR Midwest, “putting your project in very rare company indeed.”

Panelists selected the winning projects on the basis of quality, innovation, safety and the ability of their teams to overcome unique challenges. The categories ranged from Government Buildings and Health Care to Education, Renovation and Transportation. An airport runway, zoo exhibit and a Holocaust memorial were among the other projects recognized. All the winners will be honored at an awards breakfast in Chicago on Nov. 20. The projects will also be profiled in the November edition of ENR Midwest.

Bridge honored by Engineering News Record magazine
Jocelynn Clemings, District 12
Sink holes and rock falls and landslides, oh my!
David Rose, District 10/Central Office

Last summer, as District 10 Geotechnical Engineer Andy Moreland was driving along U.S. Route 33 in Athens County, he “felt” something that wasn’t supposed to be there. Something that the everyday motorist would never have given a second thought—a simple dip in the road.

“When I felt the sag, I pulled over and did a quick visual inspection,” said Moreland.

Upon returning to the office that day, Moreland dug up old mine maps. The maps showed there were indeed abandoned mines under the road.

“Once we confirmed there were mines there, we moved quickly to survey and monitor the roadway for movement,” he said.

Since then, with help from the Office of Geotechnical Engineering, the district advanced a first-of-its-kind mine exploration project to accurately locate and mitigate the mine voids under U.S. 33.

For the past eight years, Moreland has been the district’s resident expert on slides, mine voids, sink holes, rock falls and all other things geotechnical.

“The geography of southeast Ohio is very challenging to maintaining and building a transportation system,” he said. “Unlike other areas of the state, District 10 is very rugged, has numerous rivers and streams and is heavily forested.”

However, the beautiful landscape of southeast Ohio has a dark side.

For example, during a major flood in 2005, a portion of State Route 124 along a river in Meigs County was nearly washed away by flood waters. The district closed that section of road until funding was available to realign the route. The 1.4-mile relocation project was completed in 2010 and cost $7.5 million.

This year alone, District 10 had seven emergency slide repairs, one emergency rockfall hazard mitigation and one emergency mine subsidence mitigation. This work was in addition to the normal contract work of five slide repair locations and one rockfall hazard mitigation project.

District 10 is planning for the mitigation of an abandoned mine under U.S. 33, a realignment of State Route 266 and six geo-hazard projects for next year’s construction season.

“I really enjoy what I do,” said Moreland. “Every day is different. You never know what the next phone call will bring. You are always being challenged and learning something new with each project.”

Moreland resides in Little Hocking with his wife, Ginger, and two daughters.
Statewide News, cont.

In a tradition spanning 15 years, ODOT employees from around the state met at the Ohio Expo Center on Sept. 4 for the department’s Team Up, TOP Awards and Director’s Cup Roadeo.

“Team Up ODOT gives employees a chance to share information and learn from the innovations of other ODOT employees,” said Daveen Goodman, administrator of the Office of Employee Development and Lean.

Attendees visited more than 60 display booths and equipment demonstrations to showcase innovative business practices, new technologies and improved safety awareness.

Director Wray joined Ohio Civil Service Employee Association President Chris Mabe in presenting the 2014 TOP Awards to winners in 13 categories, including Outstanding Leadership, Extra Mile, Shining Star and Community Service.

“When the average citizen thinks about our department,” Director Wray remarked, “they think about the people who work in our county garages and who they see plowing snow or working to make our highways safe.”

Truck and loader operators who previously qualified at district events competed in the Director’s Cup Roadeo. A classroom test and safety inspections of their vehicles were part of the competition. Ron Thiel of District 6-Marion took first place in the truck competition and Dustin Kraft, District 12-Geauga, won the loader competition.

Melanie Carter, left, and Terry Cradlebaugh, Office of Employee Health and Safety at Central Office, won the Fiscal Responsibility Award at Team Up by measurably demonstrating what it means to be a good steward of the taxpayers’ dollars. In 2013, Melanie and Terry saved the department over $850,000 in workers’ compensation claims. They attribute the cost reduction to many factors including accident prevention and safety awareness.

2014 Director’s Cup Roadeo Participants

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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Truck</th>
<th>Loader</th>
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<tr>
<td>D1 Truck</td>
<td>Tom Mellinger</td>
<td>Frank Daley</td>
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<tr>
<td>D1 Loader</td>
<td>Naylan DeVaux</td>
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<td>Chuck Theis</td>
<td>Jason Naus</td>
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* Category winners
District 2 to the rescue!
Theresa Pollick, District 2

On Saturday Morning, Aug. 2, half a million residents of Toledo, Lucas County, and beyond woke up without water. It was still flowing freely into sinks, basins and bathtubs; but a startling alarm was being sounded from every media source. Family, friends and neighbors all heard the news: Don’t drink the water, it’s toxic.

A Lake Erie algae bloom released a class of toxins called microcystin into the drinking water. These toxins can cause liver damage if consumed or skin rashes via direct contact. Since they cannot be eliminated through boiling, residents in the affected area had to find alternative sources of water.

The reactions were immediate. Local grocery stores were out of bottled water by 7 am. Understandably concerned about what to do, people ran to stores for water across northwest Ohio, Michigan and Indiana. Many had nowhere to turn to get one of the basic needs of life. Worst of all, no one knew when the water would be safe to drink.

As one of the Emergency Management Agency’s (EMA) main transportation resources, ODOT crews are involved in many emergency incidents. The department provides its signature service of ice and snow removal during winter storms, and helps communities dig out the debris from tornadoes and floods. So when Ohio Governor John Kasich declared a state of emergency in Lucas County, ODOT highway management crews in District 2 were placed on standby.

The Ohio EMA was able to convert a dairy facility at a prison into a large source of clean water. They also located water stored in Gallipolis from a past water incident. By that Saturday noon, ODOT began organizing a plan with the EMA to transport the water to those who could not get it at their local stores.

The Lucas County ODOT Garage was designated as the distribution hub for the large water shipment deliveries. That afternoon, the Ohio Department of Corrections and ODOT District 10 delivered a portion of the water to the Lucas County ODOT garage. District 1 provided equipment to help the operations. It was up to ODOT District 2 personnel to work with the city of Toledo and surrounding communities to find the hauling equipment and people to move the water into the community.

The deliveries continued over several days. ODOT crews from Lucas, Northwood and Wood assisted in transporting water throughout Lucas County during the situation.

The Information Technology, Business and Human Resources and Public Information departments also maintained efforts behind the scene until the crisis, at last, ended. Their work was instrumental to the success of this important relief operation.
A real ‘Iron Man’
Mandi Dillon, District 7

MOST PEOPLE can’t imagine competing in a 2.4-mile swim, a 112-mile bike ride, and a 26.2 mile run with no rest breaks. It is a true endurance test for any champion—or maybe even an ODOT employee.

District 7 Construction Engineer Scott LeBlanc took up the challenge and participated in the Ironman Triathlon at Lake Placid, N.Y., in 2011. The annual contest is the second oldest in America, and although he was already an outdoor athlete, it would be a first for LeBlanc. He said he made the decision when he had just turned 40 and overheard friends from church discussing the event.

“I looked at my life, which has been truly blessed,” LeBlanc recalled, “and wanted to do something that would really stretch me physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.”

He started training about 10 hours a week in December 2010, alongside three partners who were Ironman veterans. During the race, contestants can only stop to change clothes, and the overall event has a cut off time of 17 hours. And there is more to the contest than winning: any athlete who can complete each of the three stages within certain time frames is considered an “Ironman.”

On the day of the event, LeBlanc and his three friends lined up with 2,400 other competitors to start the grueling race. His final time of 13 hours, 52 minutes satisfied his personal goal and earned him the Ironman title. But more than that, LeBlanc reports the process of training and competing strengthened his relationships with friends and family, his faith and his life.

“From an overall experience perspective, it was great,” said LeBlanc. “I was not only stretched, I truly grew.”

Scott LeBlanc