

# T TRANSPORTATION NEWS

February 2001 Volume 26 Number 6

## Retirement: Dreams can come true

**T**ex and Dot have recently decided to start planning for their retirement. In doing so, it seems as if temptation is calling for Tex.

One Saturday morning, Tex and Dot go into a car dealership. At this point in his life, Tex feels that a brand new sports car is more important than living comfortably in retirement.

Tex is thinking, "I am going to get this new sports car because I want to look good when I am riding down the street. I can just see my hair blowing in the wind with my foot pressing that metal. There would be nothing that would come between me and the road."

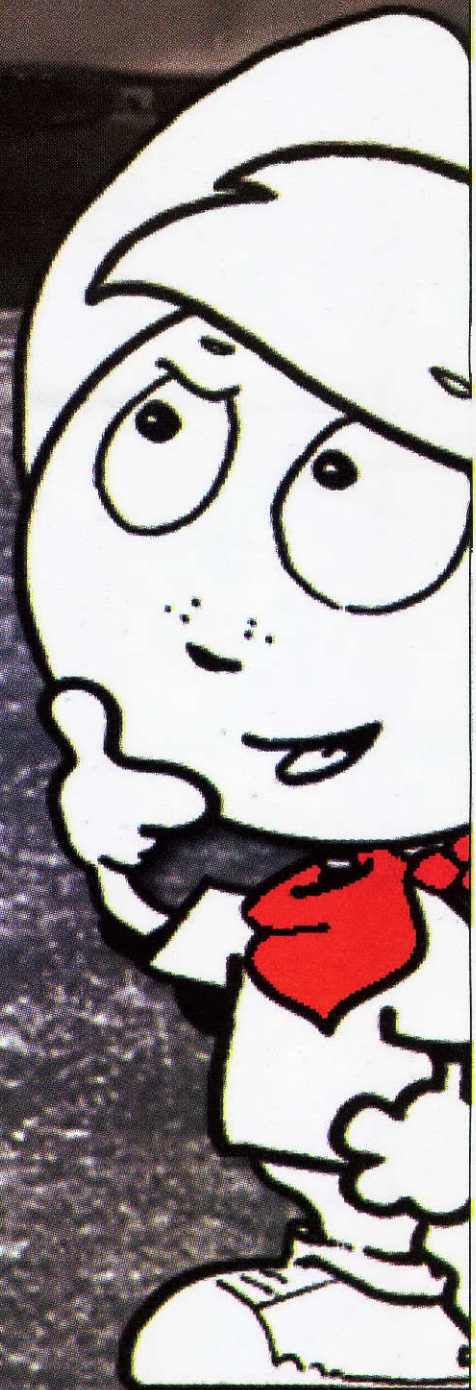
For her part, Dot is thinking about the future. To her, prudence is a virtue. She tells him,

"Tex, you need to come back to reality. Why would you put yourself under that much debt when you are trying to plan for retirement?"

"If you get this new sports car, you have to factor in maintenance, gas and insurance. What will you have left to put back in savings?"

"Tex, don't get me wrong. There is nothing wrong with getting a new car. But get one that won't cost you an arm and a leg. Don't get one that may cost you the comfort and security you deserve when you retire."

And so it goes. Tex and Dot are fictional characters, but if their conversation sounds familiar, it's because they and others in TxDOT are thinking about retirement plans. ★



**Tex, Dot look at retirement/Pages 8-9**

Winter storms wreak highway havoc, Pages 3-5



## Straight Talk

# Legislative contact: know rights, responsibilities

Now is the time when Texas legislators pay added attention to the needs of citizens and to their demands for the best transportation systems available.



**Wes Heald**

It's also a time when these same legislators pay added attention to one of the key groups involved in the effort to provide transportation excellence — that's us, the Texas Department of Transportation.

Along with others who are part of the department's administration, I am in the midst of my second legislative session. I had the pleasure of going through this experience for the first time two years ago.

During the next several weeks, I expect to spend quite a few hours providing information to the various committees and subcommittees as they work on legislation to be enacted for the next two years.

As you may know, there are legislative proposals for virtually all operational areas of our department. Examples range from the collection of state motor fuel taxes, to design/build, to environmental mitigation, to transportation financing, to electronic services for department customers.

It's difficult to go into detail on any of

these proposals because of the way that they develop into legislation. Proposals of today may be changed tomorrow and may look very much different as adopted by the Texas Legislature.

Some things don't change, though.

For instance, when lawmakers request information about TxDOT business, employees are expected to respond promptly — through the proper TxDOT offices.

Another instance of something that hasn't changed: Employees may not contact legislators with personal issues using TxDOT resources or on TxDOT time. Doing so constitutes lobbying. This is a violation of the law.

As the time for each session of the Legislature comes around, it is good to recall our rights as citizens and to remember our obligations as public servants.

I am not saying that state employees can't let their legislators know how they feel about an issue. To be clear, nothing restricts employees, acting as private citizens, from contacting elected representatives.

However, doing it properly is critical. We must all be able to draw the line between departmental and personal interests.

For example, employees may write a letter of personal opinion on their own stationary and send it on their own personal time. An

employee may not, however, write such a letter on TxDOT letterhead, nor fax it on TxDOT equipment, nor on TxDOT time.

In addition, employees should not express personal opinions when representing TxDOT. When you identify yourself as a TxDOT employee, you're our official representative and your comments must be restricted to official TxDOT positions.

The department's Legislative Affairs Office (LAO) is best suited to respond to legislative requests. While responses to simple questions (project start dates, the dollar amount of an award, or basic department statistics) are normally best handled as promptly as possible, any responses to legislative inquiries must be reported to LAO.

What might appear routine could actually be part of a larger matter, so prompt reporting to LAO is in everyone's interest.

The department's working relationships with legislators are very important. As this session unfolds, we will provide legislators with the information they need to appropriate funds so we can continue to provide transportation systems that we all expect and deserve. ★

*Wes Heald is executive director of the Texas Department of Transportation.*

## Employees show generosity during campaign

AUSTIN — Preliminary figures for the 2000 State Employee Charitable Campaign have been reported and TxDOT has shown itself a leader among state agencies.

Wes Heald, department executive director, outlined results of the campaign among TxDOT employees who pledged donations through payroll deduction and by direct contributions. The

annual campaign is a partner with local United Way campaigns. It is conducted among Texas state workers, usually during the last quarter of the year.

Heald noted that reports of donations have not been finalized and that such figures likely won't be available until late March.

He reported that TxDOT people pledged donations to the

campaign in excess of \$195,000. The average donation from TxDOT employees was estimated at about \$65. More people are participating in the campaign every year, Heald said.

He noted that "Such generosity — of time and treasure — makes the department a leader among state agencies."

In a note to directors of TxDOT districts, divisions and

offices, Heald said, "I hope (employees) will join with me in the pride that comes by being part of this organization. Every day is better when we are among people of generosity — such people lift all of us. By such donations, we help heal and nourish our communities, and we encourage commitments to caring among others with whom we share this world." ★

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### Got news?

Did your district newsletter run a story you think other TxDOT employees would enjoy reading? Do you know of a co-worker with an interesting hobby? We want your story ideas. To contribute, contact your district public information officer. He or she can pass it along to us. Or you can contact Editor Michelle Releford by phone at (512) 463-8609.

### Submission info

- Photos and copy (articles, columns and letters) must be submitted by the second Friday of the month.
- District employees should discuss potential submissions with their public information officer.
- Photos and copy should be sent as e-mail attachments to MRELEFO as Microsoft Word files.
- Photos sent electronically should be in .jpeg (or .jpg) format.



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# Winter storms!

## ❄️ War with weather: department keeps people, goods moving

The last "white" Christmas of the millenium swept across 11 northern TxDOT districts from Odessa to Atlanta. And it was no dream.

Ice and snow along with fallen ice-coated debris blanketed roadways. Power outages hindered TxDOT crews and inconvenienced many residents in East Texas. Ice kept traffic stalled for 11 hours in West Texas.

TxDOT employees prevailed in the war with the weather to keep people and goods moving across the state. Here are some of their stories:

### ❄️ Atlanta

The first ice storm passed through the area on Dec. 12, 2000, knocking down trees and limbs onto homes, highways and power lines. Electrical service to most homes and businesses was knocked out.

Maintenance crews had barely cleared the roadways when a second, more devastating ice storm blew through on Christmas and continued through the next two days, again knocking out power to almost all homes and businesses.

Trees and electrical lines were coated with up to two inches of ice in areas of Bowie County. More trees fell under the extreme weight of the ice, crashing down on homes and vehicles, blocking highways and destroying many miles of electrical lines throughout the area.

"I only know of just two roads in our maintenance section that did not have to be cleared of any trees or limbs lying across the traffic lanes," said Brad Haugh, Texarkana maintenance section supervisor.

"This is the worst I have ever seen it. The whole city lost power and local officials passed emergency declarations setting curfews from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. and putting a price freeze on all merchandise," Haugh said.

❄️ Maintenance crews had barely cleared the roadways when a second, more devastating, ice storm blew through on Christmas and continued through the next two days.



Photo by Barbara Seal, Childress District

**Childress District kept the snowplows running during the holiday storms. Maintenance crews not only had to deal with the weather, but also traffic.**

Since the city had no electrical service, there was no running water and the offices had to run on power from backup generators.

"Because our fuel pumps were running off the generator, we were able to assist the county and local cities by supplying fuel for their trucks and equipment until their power was restored," Haugh said.

The Texarkana office was without power for days and many employees were still without power to their homes two weeks later. According to Haugh, it may take one to two months to clear all the debris.

During the clearing of the roadways, a passing car caught a downed power line and whipped the line into an employee's leg, breaking it just below the knee.

The process of clearing rights of way and restoring power to the area was hampered once again when a snowstorm blew in on New Year's Eve. It dropped 5-7 inches of snow on the area. It was the most snow the area had recorded in 15 years.

Jerry Sharp, assistant maintenance supervisor for the Linden Maintenance Section in Cass County, has been with TxDOT for 37 years. This winter has been the worst he can remember, he said.

"Almost every highway had down trees and we were real busy trying to keep the highways open and assisting stranded motorists," Sharp said. "We were without electrical power at the office for five days and used auxiliary power to run the fuel pumps and

lights, but we had no heat."

On Jan. 8, President Bill Clinton issued a disaster declaration for Bowie, Cass and Red River counties due to the extent of damages to homes, utilities, property and livelihoods caused by the storm.

### ❄️ Amarillo

Most of the TxDOT employees helping dig out of the Christmas snowstorm of 2000 weren't even born the last time the Amarillo area had seen a snow like this. More than 20 inches of snow fell within a 24-hour period beginning Christmas night. That almost broke the record set in 1934.

While most roadways remained open, U.S. 287 north of Amarillo was closed for about 27 hours. This blocked the popular route taken by skiers from south Texas to the slopes of Colorado and New Mexico.

"They could have skied along the frontage roads," said Mike Taylor, Amarillo District director of operations. "We had folks stranded for hours on the highway because traffic had skidded out of control and blocked the highway. Snowplows, wreckers — even National Guard Humvees — couldn't get through to start moving traffic again."

Potter County Maintenance Office Manager Kim Baker said she worked a 30-plus-hour shift in the office during the storm.

"I get at least 200 calls a day. Some of them are nice. Someone always wants to tell me how they plow snow in Colorado and

Ohio," she said.

One of the TxDOT snowplows had to bring an ambulance in to Amarillo from Guymon, OK.

### ❄️ Childress

Rain combined with 20-degree temperatures produced ice the minute the water hit the ground in the Childress District and crews were called out as early as 4 a.m. Christmas Day.

With a solid layer of ice, workers were limited to sanding bridges, hills and intersections, and aiding the many cars sliding off roadways.

The next day, it started snowing. Snow piled up to 18 inches in some places.

"We had to get even more aggressive," said Bart Sherrill, Childress Traffic Section supervisor.

"TxDOT crews that were already exhausted from working the day before virtually non-stop started running the snowplows."

The storm hit all 13 counties of the district and resources were "stretched to the limit" to keep roads passable. As holiday travelers were affected on I-40 and parts of U.S. 287, the district shifted into the "extreme storm" level of the Childress Snow and Ice Control Plan.

At this level, crews are assigned to keep priority roadways open.

"I hated to have to abandon our local roadways, but we almost lost I-40 and U.S. 287, so

❄️ See WINTER STORMS, Page 4

## ❄️ WINTER STORMS

Continued from Page 3

I had to shift resources," said Terry Keener, Childress District director of operations.

As the storm continued into the week, maintenance crews working around the clock were exhausted. Therefore, employees from all areas including design, construction and administration were called to patrol roadways, cover the radio and help mechanics.

Together, Childress District employees kept the traffic moving.

### ❄️ Abilene

In Mitchell County, crews started their trucks at 8 a.m. Christmas Day and worked 12-hour shifts to distribute much needed rock salt and gravel on bridges throughout the county. According to Scott Free, maintenance technician, nearly all of the bridges were covered.

Free said 16 employees, working two per truck in four trucks, were using Meltdown 20 as a supplement to the rock salt and gravel.

Farther east, Leon Donham, Nolan County maintenance supervisor, had a similar story to tell. Although they didn't have snow to plow, a thin coat of clear ice covered much of I-20 through his county.

"The problem we were encountering," Donham said, "was people could see the center stripe through the ice and thought everything was fine."

Throughout this time, employees rescued many travelers out of ditches and helped emergency personnel pull people from overturned vehicles.

According to Donham, one DPS trooper told his sergeant that he was clocking traffic at 75-80 mph. The sergeant suggested to the trooper to "just hang around and you'll be meeting them personally in a few minutes."

"Driving too fast" was the major cause of the accidents, Donham said.

### ❄️ Odessa

A mixture of freezing rain and sleet made area highways resemble skating rinks, overwhelming emergency response units and TxDOT work crews.

There were 30 "fender benders" within a 30-minute period on Loop 250 in Midland late Christmas afternoon, prompting police to ask that the highway mainlanes be closed.

"We would be working one accident when another driver would try to brake for our emergency lights and go into a 360-

degree spin," said DPS Lt. Brian Bogart.

TxDOT crews were working furiously in both Midland and Odessa, sanding bridges and overpasses, and spreading de-icing compound.

In Midland, Ector and Martin counties, there were 246 accidents (all non-fatal) during the 48-hour period.

Although two roadways were shut down for nearly 40 hours, there was a consensus among residents that TxDOT crews did their best.

"It took me by surprise, both the ice and the closure of the loop," said Midlander John Cooper. "TxDOT did a good job. There was really nothing they could have done better."

Dennis Printz of Midland was also very pleased with TxDOT's performance.

"I definitely agree with their closure of the loop," said Printz.

"They all did a good job, given the circumstances," said Myra Jackson, a Midland resident who moved here from Boston. "The problem is West Texas drivers who don't know how to drive in it (bad weather)."

Just as the region was recovering from the first storm, another storm hit with the same type of freezing rain on the day after the New Year holiday.

Another rash of accidents on Loop 250 prompted TxDOT to close the mainlanes a second time for about 18 hours, but SH 191 remained open — thanks to the quick response of the TxDOT storm crews.

### ❄️ Brownwood

Ranger Hill is well known by any traveler who drives the I-20 corridor. It is the steepest hill on I-20 at an intimidating six percent grade for four miles, with no frontage roads except at the bottom of the hill. A desirable grade is normally between 3 and 4 percent.

On Christmas afternoon, Eastland County Maintenance Supervisor Clyde Braddock called his crew to roll out as the winter storm that had plagued Amarillo, Lubbock and Abilene began to move into the county.

Precipitation was falling along with the temperature as Braddock gathered a maintenance crew and put trucks on the road to start sanding structures and hills, all the time hoping the weather wouldn't get worse.

It got much worse. And to help Mother Nature along, Murphy's Law went into effect immediately. The winter storm was at its very worst along a 15-mile stretch of road just east of Eastland near Ranger. That stretch of interstate included Ranger Hill.

Conditions on the interstate

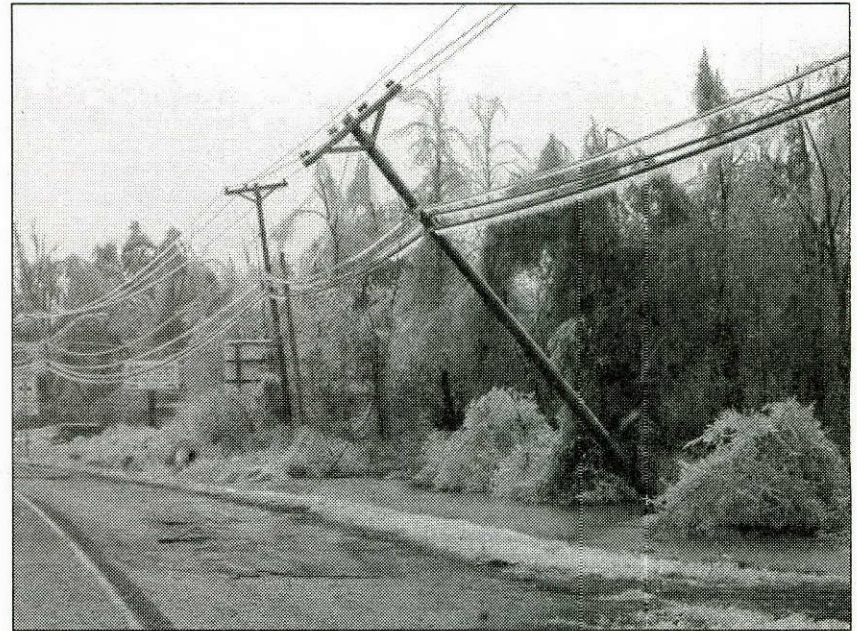


Photo by Brad Haugh, Atlanta District

**Ice in the Atlanta District coated not only roadways, but also trees, powerlines and communications lines. Bowie and Cass counties were the hardest hit and district crews cleared debris for weeks. As a result, many residents were without power or communications.**

continued to deteriorate with snow flurries, ice and sleet but traffic was still moving until about 4 p.m. Dec. 27.

A small pickup skidded sideways while driving up Ranger Hill. All westbound traffic halted. The truck was moved, but the 18-wheelers in both lanes of traffic were stopped at the bottom of the hill. They could not get enough traction to pull themselves to the top. Traffic began to back up.

Eastland County maintenance crewmembers sanded the hill more vigorously than before so wreckers could reach the lead trucks and help pull them up the hill. There was no room at the bottom of the hill to turn the sand trucks around, so they had to be backed down the hill over the same treacherous road, spreading sand as they went.

The operation to free the westbound lanes continued until about 11 p.m. In rural Eastland County only a few wreckers in the area were large enough to pull the trucks free. And traffic was backing up.

Before the westbound lanes were cleared, a truck in the downhill, eastbound lane jackknifed, stopping all eastbound traffic. I-20 traffic stood still. Snow was falling with accumulations of 8-12 inches. And traffic was backing up.

Thanks to the Fort Worth District maintenance crews who came in from the east and cleared the roadblock, eastbound traffic was cleared relatively quickly. However, the brakes on the trucks that had been sitting idle in the extreme cold had frozen. And traffic was backing up.

There were accidents — cars and pick-ups were sideways in the ditch. Luckily, no one was injured. Some motorists were stranded for up to 11 hours in their cars but they were never alone. TxDOT worked around

the clock to get the roads clear and traffic moving. Local citizens came to the rescue and helped stranded motorists by taking them to local churches, the new jailhouse, Ranger Junior College dormitories — anywhere that was warm and out of the weather.

"We hit Ranger, and there was traffic stopped as far as you could see," said Dale Wolters, who was traveling with his family from El Paso to Dallas.

"People were building snowmen all along the way," he said.

When he learned the backup was at least a four-hour wait, he four-wheeled off the highway and back to Ranger, where the family found shelter in a church overnight.

"There were 44 carloads of people at the church where we stayed," he said. "I was just glad to have someplace warm to spend the night."

### ❄️ Lubbock

"We got our streets cleaned (in Terry County) by Dec. 28, and we even sent our employees to Castro and Yoakum counties to help blade snow," said Johnnie Howard, Brownfield roadway maintenance supervisor.

"But, because this storm was so widespread, our resources were limited," he said.

The storm stretched from the top of the Panhandle to south of Midland/Odessa. The weather service called it the fifth largest storm in the history of the region. It was the layer of ice that fell first that made it particularly difficult to blade the snow, added George Dozier, Lubbock District maintenance manager.

"We'd blade four or five times in one spot, and we couldn't get the snow up," he said. "Then it would thaw slightly during the day, and refreeze at night, and

❄️ See WINTER STORMS, Page 5

## Appreciation: ★ 'Thanks for a job well done'

### ★ Icy in Austin

Thank you! Words that seem almost inadequate. Since I was a young boy in South Texas my dad always pointed out that if Texas did anything that was worth our tax dollars, it was the work of the men and women of the Texas Highway and Transportation department. In every part of the state I have lived, your department has always stood head and shoulders above all state agencies.

Now a 56-year-old Texan, handicapped by a stroke two years ago and able to use only my left arm to drive, I got up to a frozen world Tuesday morning, and said a little prayer as I left my home and headed into the office on MOPAC. Your professional and tireless crews had already treated the roads and highways and I got to my office safe and sound. My dad's words rang true back then and are still true today. I am very proud and thankful for the tireless efforts of your department on behalf of all of us.

Please convey my feelings to every employee of the Highway department. It is the only organization of state government I don't mind sending my tax dollars to finance. Now, if we could get that kind of dedication by other state agencies.

**Raoul Trejo**  
Austin

*This letter was addressed to John W. Johnson, commission chairman, and Charles W. Heald, executive director.*

### ★ Canadian Christmas

My department and I would like to take this opportunity to tell you and others how much we appreciated the TxDOT employees that are under the supervision of Mr. Mark Dorris stationed in Canadian, Texas.

These men started on Christmas morning and (worked) relentlessly for three days clearing the highways of Hemphill County and making them safe for the citizens of Texas. While the majority of Texans were sitting down to a big Christmas meal with their families, these men were eating cold sandwiches and operating snowplows. This shows

the dedication they have for their jobs and community. And I believe that it is a call beyond their duty, working so hard during the holiday season.

We hope you will acknowledge their efforts. Our hat is off to them. They are a credit to their families and community and we are so proud to count them as citizens of Hemphill County, Texas. And tell them a big thank you from all of us for making our job safer.

**Dean Butcher, sheriff**  
Hemphill County

*This letter was received from Mark Tomlinson, Amarillo District Engineer. Mark Dorris is the Hemphill-Roberts maintenance supervisor.*

### ★ Emphasis on safety

*Editor's note: These are notes from a phone call received by the TxDOT Public Information Office.*

A gentleman named Bill Davis of Alexander City, AL, called. He was traveling from New Mexico the day after Christmas and wanted to share his experience.

He said he left early that day due to the weather and the farther east he got on Interstate 20 from El Paso, the worse the weather became.

He said he began to see our trucks almost immediately after leaving El Paso and that he couldn't drive more than 20 miles without seeing a TxDOT truck all the way to Dallas. He said this was outstanding and he felt safe the entire drive, knowing if he got into trouble, one of our trucks would be along shortly. He said employees would flag one driver at a time to cross an icy bridge/overpass so they could make it safely. He said the people of Texas should be proud of TxDOT employees and that the taxpayers are getting their money's worth.

### ★ Hercules in Lamb County

I wanted to let you know what a good job I think you and your department did in clearing the roadways of the snow and ice over the past several days. I drive through several counties every day on my way to

work, and your efforts are to be applauded.

I realize what a Herculean effort is required to accomplish such a task, especially with everyone wanting every road cleared right away. You should be proud of your efforts and the efforts of your crew.

Thank you for a job well done.

**John S. Roley**  
Littlefield

*This letter was received by Keith Munden, Lamb County maintenance supervisor, Lubbock District*

### ★ Stuck in Quanah

I was traveling through Quanah on Christmas Day during the ice storm and my power steering pump went out on my vehicle. My wife, 18-month-old son, and I ended up spending the night in Quanah. I awoke the next day and located a car part between Vernon and Quanah. I tried every means to get the part delivered to me; every attempt failed. I decided to call the local TxDOT office in Quanah and spoke with a lady named Kay. I think she was the dispatcher for the day. I told her of my situation with my vehicle and about the part in Vernon. She said she spoke with her supervisor and contacted the supervisor at the Vernon office and they had both agreed to relay my part to Quanah. Two hours later my part for my vehicle was hand-delivered to my motel door. I cannot tell you how much I appreciate this. It goes to show that there are still people who really care for others.

Again, you do not know how much my family and I appreciate what was done for us at a very busy time of the year. I will always have a place in my heart for the Texas Department of Transportation and hope others have the same experience I have. Again, thanks from the bottom of my heart and have a great 2001.

**Kevin Scheller**  
Fort Worth

*Kay Vestal is Hardeman County office manager; Maurice Farris is Hardeman County maintenance supervisor; Junior Leal is maintenance technician in Vernon; Billy Taylor is Wibarger County assistant maintenance supervisor.*

## ❄️ WINTER STORMS

Continued from Page 4

we'd start all over again."

The snow lingered longer than expected.

"It took us two weeks to get rid of the white stuff," Dozier said. "And, even three weeks out we still had mountains of snow in parking lots where the plows had piled it up."

Lubbock District employees worked continuously night and

day to keep the roads open for travelers. Some maintenance employees put in as much as 80 hours overtime.

"That's dedication. All I did was get up and come into the office so I could get warm," Dozier said, referring to the power outage that affected many residents.

"These guys were out in the

cold all week long. We have some great employees in the Lubbock District, and they deserve a big thanks for making life just a little bit easier for the rest of us," he said.

More than one TxDOT district engineer echoes that statement — a big thanks to all who were called to duty during one of the worst winters recorded.★

**Contributing writers:** Barbara Seal, Childress District; Penny Mason, Lubbock District; Marcus Sandifer, Atlanta District; Tonya Detten, Amarillo District; Mary Beth Kilgore, Abilene District; Glen Larum, Odessa District; Sandra Parker, Brownwood District; Susan Williams, Fort Worth District.

### Storm Statistics

★ **Fort Worth Emergency Operations Center:** 9,120 calls answered Christmas Day; 3,420 calls answered New Year's.

★ **Childress District:** 2,600 hours overtime; 1,970 cubic yards of bottom ash; 1,259 50-lb. bags of salt; 1,545 50-lb. bags of Meltdown 20 and 6,750 gallons of liquid de-icer. Initial cost: \$450,000.

★ **Amarillo District:** The Christmas

storm cost the district \$1.1 million in materials, labor, fuel, snow removal contract, equipment and overtime. Snow and ice removal usually costs an average of \$1.7 million for the year.

★ **Abilene District:** Christmas storm: Salary and labor, \$103,382; equipment, \$38,100; materials, \$65,922; contract sweeping, \$1,615 and 166 workers performed 5,961 hours of work. New Year's

storm: salary and labor, \$46,695; equipment, \$23,114; materials, \$22,596 and 146 workers performed 2,952 hours of work.

★ **Odessa District:** 1,984 hours of overtime worked; 495 cubic yards gravel spread; 843 bags of salt spread; 48 tons of de-icing compound spread.

★ **Atlanta District:** 280,000 residents lost power.

# Recruiting teams 'rapid hire' prospects

By Bennie Uribe  
Human Resources Division

The economy is thriving. Qualified employees in certain skill fields are in scarce supply. Because of this, TxDOT faces fierce competition for professional talent. This competition comes from other employers, in both the public and the private sectors.

So, at the start of this year, TxDOT re-established recruitment teams.

For this reason, the department decided to take a more focused approach to college recruiting. Representatives from each participating TxDOT district, division and office form regional recruitment teams.

Through the teams, officials say, TxDOT has enhanced its recruitment efforts. They say this makes the department more aggressive in its approach. They add that the department's efforts should bolster TxDOT's presence on campuses and at career conferences.

Recruitment teams comprise employees in engineering, information technology, and

architectural job titles. These professionals, officials say, will be better able to relate to potential recruits interested in those career areas.

Recruitment teams cover five regions: north, south, east, west and central. Each region consists of a team leader and four to six team members. Each team member represents a TxDOT district, division or office.

The five regional team leaders work with one of the four Human Resource Division recruiters.

These recruiters coordinate participation of the recruitment teams at various events, including career fairs, conferences and on-campus interviews.

To date, such teams have recruited at 21 colleges and universities and have participated in more than 90 recruitment activities.

Human Resources also implemented the Rapid Hire Program early this year. This program aims to streamline the hiring process of college graduates. It works to meet immediate staffing needs in hard-to-fill posi-

tions. The program authorizes recruiting-team members to make immediate on-campus "conditional job offers" to qualified applicants.

Under the program, graduating-student applicants must meet the minimum qualifications of the position. They must be interviewed before receiving a "conditional job offer."

Human Resources maintains and issues "generic" job vacancy notices used by recruiters and hiring supervisors to begin the hiring process. Approved job titles include engineering assistant, programmer, architect assistant, and information systems analyst.

The Human Resources director can approve changes to these titles in line with the department's business needs.

The Rapid Hire Program has strengthened the department's competitiveness in the labor market. To date, the department has hired 78 employees through the program. ★

## Gallery



## Showcasing transportation in Texas

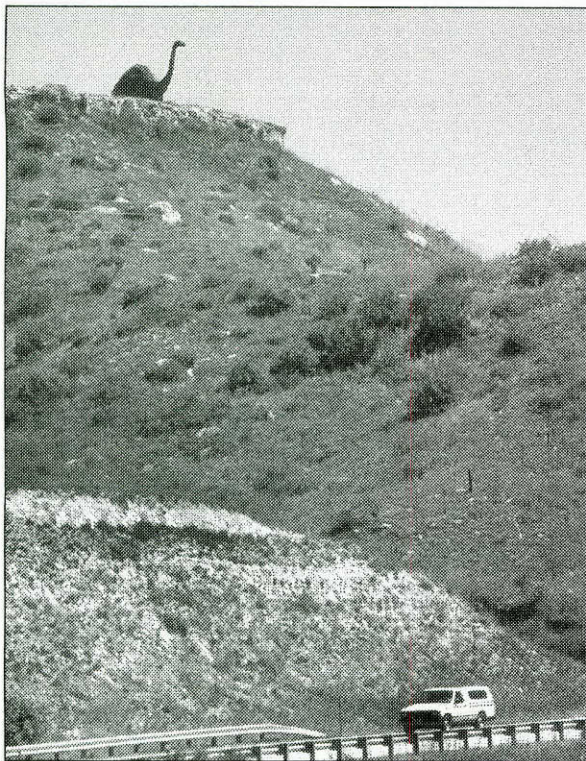


Photo by Michael Amador, Travel Division

**NEW FEATURE:** This gallery of photos is a new feature of Transportation News and aims to showcase transportation in Texas. While publication is not guaranteed, photos from TxDOT employees and retirees are welcome. Photographic prints will not be returned.

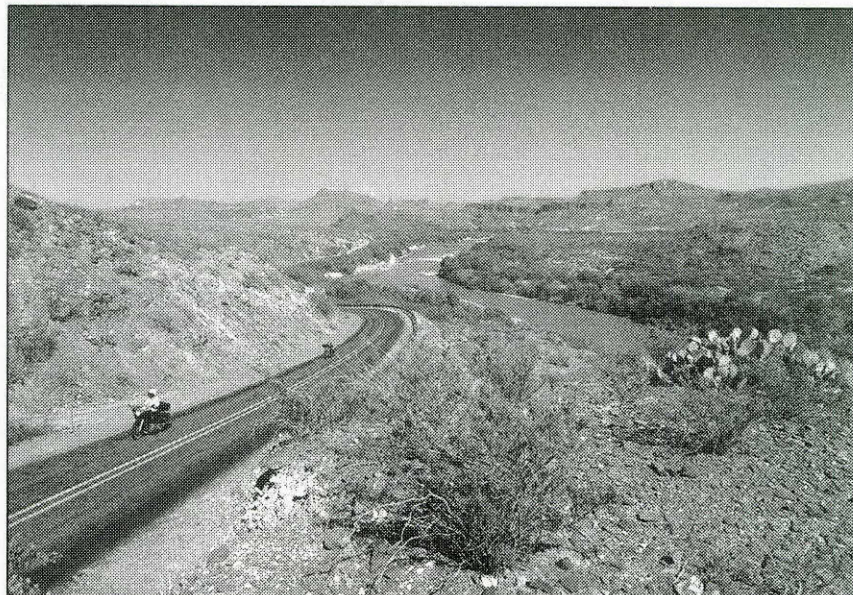


Photo by Stan Williams, Travel Division

**Far left —** A figure of a dinosaur watches over SH 83 south of Canadian in the Amarillo District.

**Left —** The road is wide open during rush hour on SH 170 east of Lajitas, El Paso District.

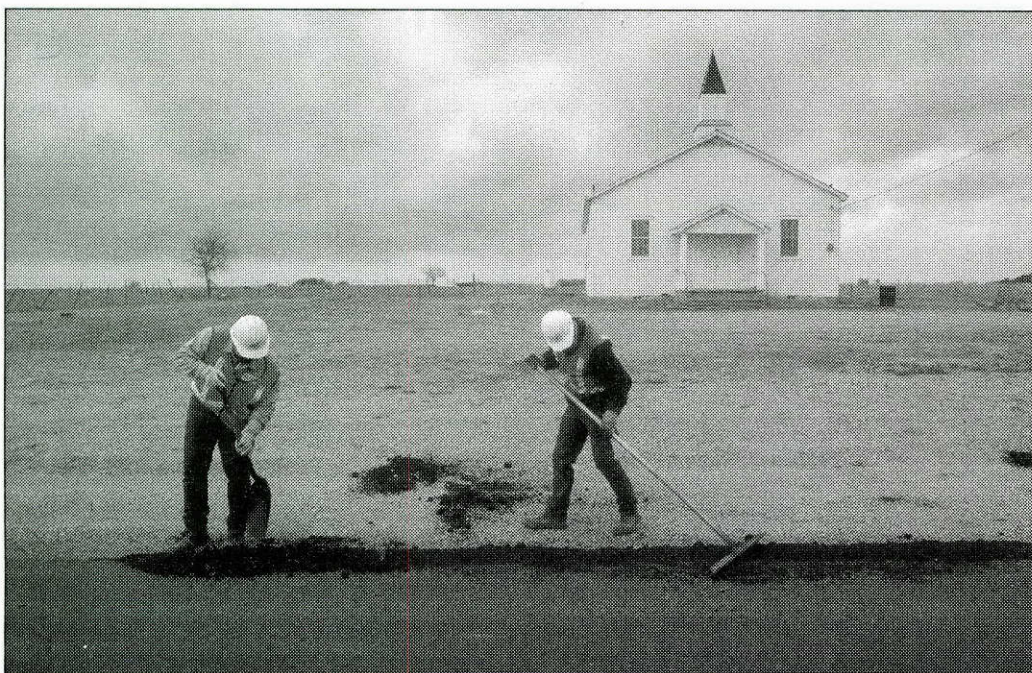


Photo by Michael Amador, Travel Division

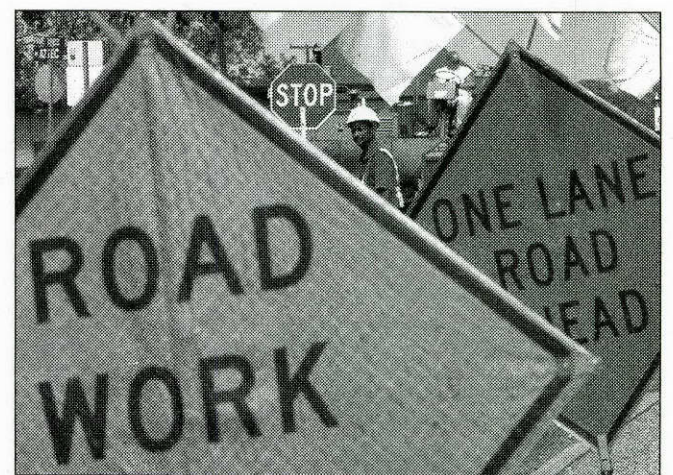


Photo by Michael Amador, Travel Division

**Left —** Maintenance workers smooth the edges of FM 1602 in Hamilton County, which is in the Waco District.

**Above —** What you can't see for the signs is the full-depth repair project that was going on in this photo, taken in Longview, Tyler District.

# TxDOT Master's Program: valuable lessons

## Want to improve your knowledge and your value to TxDOT?

Interested in pursuing a master's degree? TxDOT employees may be eligible to apply for the department's Master's Program.

This highly selective program assists employees in engineering and other specified professions who wish to pursue a master's degree on a full-time basis while remaining on the department's payroll.

Employees selected for this program receive funds for tuition, fees, books, and supplies, plus pay while pursuing a master's degree full-time and completing an assigned research project related to the department's functions.

Employees who participate in the Master's Program must meet the following conditions:

- be full-time employees;
- be in good standing with the department (performance standards being met, not on probation, etc.);

- have at least four years of progressive service with the department and possess a professional engineering license from the state of Texas if they are an engineer, or have five years of progressive service with the department if they are not an engineer;

- complete and file with the department, on forms prescribed by the department, a Master's Program Agreement that will set forth the terms and conditions of the assistance. These include, but are not limited to, the amount of the assistance and the requirements of continued eligibility, a statement of intent for continued employment with the department, and a declaration of intent to abide by terms set forth in the agreement;

- have an undergraduate degree that is approved as an appropriate base for the desired field of study by the Program Selection Committee;

- have met the acceptance criteria of the

appropriate graduate program at the participating university;

- be nominated by the employee's district engineer or by the division or office director;

- be selected by the Program Selection Committee based on qualifications, field of study, or work experience;

- meet the eligibility requirements by the start of the semester.

The next deadline for application is April 15 for the fall 2001 semester.

More information about the Master's Program can be found in the on-line Human Resources Manual, Chapter 7, Section 2, under "Master's Program."

Employees interested in applying should send an e-mail to Marilyn Dell. In the subject line, type GET MASTER (all capital letters). An application form will be provided automatically on GroupWise. More assistance is available at 512-486-5428. ★

## Graduates share highlights, advice on TxDOT Master's Program

Three TxDOT engineers who completed the department's Master's Program have plenty to say about the program's challenges and benefits. Here's a sample:

**"It (the TxDOT Master's Program) will take all of your focus and attention to finish."**

— Bryan Alan Wood

- Name: David Casteel
- Position: District Engineer / Childress
- Year graduated: 1991
- Degree: M.S., transportation engineering
- Advice to applicants: "Go for it. How could there be a better deal? You get your salary to improve your education and skills, which makes you more valuable to TxDOT."



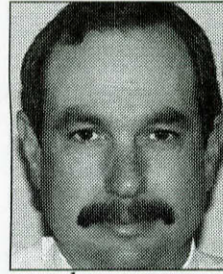
- Most enjoyed: "In my first years at TxDOT, I had one perspective – the district where I worked. The program allowed me to work on other project types with people with different perspectives. Gaining more varied experience, faster."

- Name: Lauren D. Garduño
- Position: District Engineer / Odessa
- Year graduated: 1994
- Degree: M.S., civil engineering
- Advice to applicants: "Tie down your research subject early in the program. If you are unsure of the research area to pursue, review the department's current research program for ideas."



- Most enjoyed: "I enjoyed developing professional relationships with the faculty of Texas A&M University. Enjoyed the opportunity to glean knowledge from the talented faculty and staff."

- Name: Bryan Alan Wood
- Position: Deputy District Engineer / Corpus Christi
- Year graduated: 1997
- Degree: M.S., civil engineering
- Advice to applicants: "Consider this choice carefully. The Master's Program is a tremendous opportunity and tremendously rewarding, yet is very demanding. It will take all of your focus and attention to finish."
- Most enjoyed: "There are so many things you can learn at the university. However, I most enjoyed doing field research that was applicable for a needed area in civil engineering."



### Frequently Asked Questions

**QUESTION:** Do I lose any benefits while in the program?

**ANSWER:** While in the program, employees continue to receive their salary and benefits including vacation, sick leave, holidays and longevity. Employees selected for this competitive program also receive funds for tuition, fees, books, and supplies, while pursuing a master's degree full time and completing an assigned research project related to the department's functions.

Compensatory time is not earned while in the Master's Program. An employee may want to use earned compensatory time before entering the program.

**QUESTION:** How many years of experience do I need to apply for the Master's Program?

**ANSWER:** If the applicant is an engineer he/she must have at least four years of progressive service with the department and possess a

professional engineering license from the state of Texas by the beginning of the first semester of school. If the applicant is not an engineer, he/she must have five years of progressive service with the department.

**QUESTION:** Is the Master's Program for engineers only? Are there other fields of study?

**ANSWER:** The Master's Program is open to engineering as well as other areas of study. The application lists several suggestions for areas of study, such as business, public administration, computer science, and community and regional planning.

**QUESTION:** How do I select a research project?

**ANSWER:** One must select a field and research project, which must be approved by the selection committee. The Research Technology and Transfer office maintains a list of current TxDOT projects. An employee may develop a proposal for a research topic. The university selected must be

able to support the proposed research project.

The Director of the Training, Quality and Development Section of the Human Resources Division can provide an evaluation of the proposed program of study prior to the employee's application submission or prior to the meeting of the selection committee and may assist with elective substitution to replace a participant's proposed electives.

**QUESTION:** What is my obligation to the department after I graduate from the Master's Program?

**ANSWER:** An employee must agree to work for the department for three years, starting 30 days following the date the employee receives his/her degree.

**More information:** Human Resources Manual, Chapter 7, Section 2, Master's Program. Or e-mail or call Marilyn Dell (512-486-5428). ★

# Retirement:

## Does yours measure up?



**By Quevarra M. Moten**  
Public Information Office

AUSTIN — Soon after he had left the White House, President Calvin Coolidge had to fill out a form confirming his membership in the National Press Club. After writing his name and address, he moved on to the space marked "Occupation," in which he wrote "Retired."

Next came a space for "Remarks." Coolidge paused for a moment and then wrote, "Glad of it."

Retirement can be something to look forward to. Unfortunately, when someone doesn't plan, the future tends to look a little gray. The confusion of 401(k) and 457 plans, and all the many ways employees can invest money, can become overwhelming. The choice of whether it is better to take a high risk or low risk can start to rack the brain. Employees will find that by planning, some of those extra worries can be set aside.

A recent U.S. Senate subcommittee report on aging in America found that Americans don't plan well enough for retirement.

The report said that, upon reaching retirement age, 45 percent of Americans depend on relatives and 28 percent rely on welfare and Social Security benefits. The report also said that 22 percent must continue working. It notes that four percent can meet their own expenses, and one percent has money beyond their living expenses.

**"Every one of us is going to reach retirement age whether we're prepared for it or not," said Nancy Crocker, TxDOT's coordinator of deferred compensation programs.**



Photo by Quevarra Moten

It would appear then that only one of every 20 people eligible to retire is fully prepared to do so.

Many experts in financial planning say that planning for retirement doesn't have to be viewed as a chore. Instead, they say, such planning can be seen as comfort for the future.

There are no specific answers as to why people don't plan for retirement. However, one reason may be that people are confused about how to save and how to invest for retirement. That's the view of Nancy Crocker. She works in the TxDOT Human Resources Division as coordinator of deferred-compensation programs.

Crocker said, "Everyone should plan ahead. We are all going to retire one day."

Crocker leads the way for district coordinators and wants employees to know that she is available to them. She understands just how confusing all of the retirement information may seem. Some helpful resources that Crocker recommends include:

- [www.texasaver.com](http://www.texasaver.com)
- and the Employees Retirement System of Texas.

She also refers people to Security First Group (SFG), which administers the plan for TxDOT employees.

"I want employees to know I am here for them," Crocker said, "and that I enjoy working with them."

Crocker said employees must first decide what plan works best for them. Questions to consider include:

- What can an employee afford to invest?
- Will Social Security cover living expenses?
- Do employees want to see their dollars work more for them?
- Will employees be able to afford their medical expenses?

To an employee weighing a regular savings account against a 401(k) or a 457 plan, it may be good to consider that dollars placed in the 401(k) or 457 plan are tax-deferred.

This means that employees don't pay taxes on this money until they withdraw it.

The 401(k) and 457 plans give employees many different options in which they can invest their money. Options include stable value accounts, money-market funds, bond funds, and foreign-equity funds.

With such options to consider, employees must feel comfortable to seek answers to all their questions. There are individuals standing by to provide information that may help employees make these decisions. Employees should expect such conversations to remain confidential.

When deciding whether a 401(k) or 457 plan is best, employees should first contact a retirement coordinator or Crocker for information. Such people can answer questions regarding the two plans and they can detail other options that may be available.

Secondly, a coordinator will direct the employee to a SFG counselor. This adviser will meet with the employee to process all paperwork and will answer any more questions that may arise.

Whether someone chooses to invest in a 401(k) or a 457 plan, financial planners say that employees should remember that just a little savings can go a long way — no matter which investment plan an employee chooses.

Taking \$150 out of a paycheck each month for 18 years can give an individual \$32,400 that could help fund a college education or provide extra support should a disability occur and the person is not able to work.

If a 401(k) or a 457 plan is not the best option, Crocker said, always remember to save a little something for a rainy day.

Sometimes people put off planning for retirement because they think they have years before they must start planning. Before they know it, though, retirement is upon them. Then it may be too late for planning.

"The longer you save, the more you will have for your retirement years," Crocker said.★



# Dot offers pointers on retirement strategy



Lately Tex and Dot have been reading, researching and thinking about their retirement. It won't happen tomorrow, but it's never too early to start, they figure.

Here are some tips that Tex and Dot have learned in their quest to be ready for retirement. They recommend these ideas to others who may be thinking about the financial future:

- Figure out what you really want. What are some of the things that really concern you the most? Example: college education or vacations.

- Get started — soon. Some people wait until the last minute to start planning and then say the system doesn't work. Prepare today.

- Avoid diversions. Your budget may be tight. Make some sacrifices. Bring your lunch to work. Carpool to save on gas.

- Create a smart plan and stay with it. Hard times do come. Always look for an alternative route besides withdrawing your retirement savings.

- Make your investment work harder. How can you invest more without paying more taxes? Research your investments.

- Don't miss money-making opportunities. You have but one life to live; make the best of it.

Both Tex and Dot agree: "Remember, it is never too early to start thinking about retirement. If you are starting a little late, make the most of tomorrow by preparing for it today." ★

## TexaSaver Program offers financial options

Security First Group administers the retirement plan for employees of the Texas Department of Transportation. It has prepared a booklet on the *TexaSaver Program*, which permits employees to make investment decisions as part of retirement planning.

The 21-page booklet, available through the department's Human Resources Division, compares features of the 401(k) and 457 plans. There are many similarities between the plans, and some key differences. Additional details are available in the booklet. Some highlights:

### 401(k) Plan

**Eligibility:** Part-time and full-time state employees can participate.

**Maximum annual deferral for participation in one plan only:** 25 percent of 401(k) eligible compensation or \$10,500 per year, whichever is less. This ceiling is adjusted each year per the cost-of-living index. This amount is for the year 2000.

**Investment products:** Eleven core mutual funds, a fixed-interest account, a self-directed brokerage account.

**Financial hardship withdrawals:** Yes, for unreimbursed medical expenses, purchase of a primary residence, tuition expenses, funeral expenses, prevention of a foreclosure or eviction.

**Rollover to purchase additional service:** Yes, 401(k) funds may be used to purchase additional Employees Retirement System service.

### 457 Plan

**Eligibility:** Part-time and full-time state and higher-education employees can participate.

**Maximum annual deferral for participation in one plan only:** 25 percent of 457-eligible compensation or \$8,000 per year, whichever is less. The ceiling amount is adjusted each year per the cost-of-living index. The amount is for the year 2000.

**Investment products:** Eleven core mutual funds, a fixed-interest account, a self-directed brokerage account.

**Financial hardship withdrawals:** Yes, for unreimbursed medical expenses, casualty loss, or sudden and unforeseeable emergency.

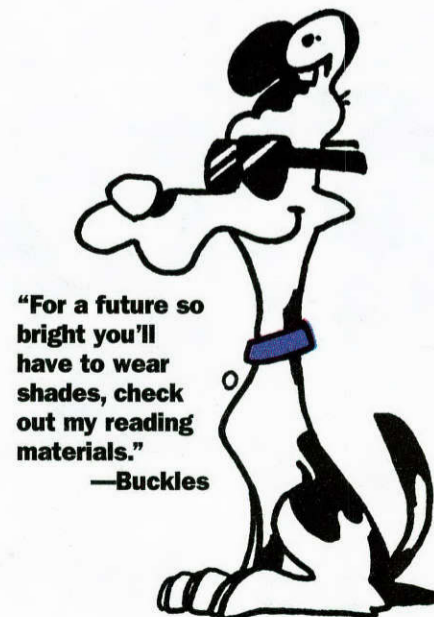
**Rollover to purchase additional service:** Not available.

## Resources plentiful in search for advice on planning

Many resources are available to help people who are planning retirement. The following are listed as places to begin. Other available resources include the Human Resources Division, public libraries, book stores, private financial planners, and other retirees.

- "Making Your Benefits Work For You," available through the Human Resources Division.
- "Retirement on a Shoestring," by John Howells.
- "Retirement Revolution," by Robert Spindel.
- "Retirement Clues for the Clueless," by Elwood Smith.
- "The Retirement Sourcebook," by Mary Helen.
- "Retirement: Your Best Years Have Just Begun," by Maggie Fritz.

- "Retirement Handbook: A Complete Guide to Enjoying Life," by Robert T. Bennett, and Catherine A. Bennett.
- "The Retirement Handbook: How to Maximize Your Assets & Protect Your Quality," by Carl Battle.
- "Retirement: The Get Even Years," by Fred Sahner and Cliff Carle.
- "The Retirement Startup Kit: Your Complete Guide to a Worry-Free Retirement," by Pamela-Denise Quince and Doulos Publishing Co.
- "Quicken Planner" ([www.quicken.com](http://www.quicken.com))
- "401 Kafe" ([www.401kafe.com](http://www.401kafe.com))
- "American Savings Education Council" ([www.asec.org](http://www.asec.org)). ★



## TxDot Roundup

### Mexican engineers travel 'Pharr' away from home

They had a list of things to accomplish on their recent two-day visit to the Pharr District. Among their goals: learn the inter-related functions and future plans of each entity.

Sergio Fuentes, a civil engineer, is deputy director of infrastructure for the State Highway Network of Nuevo Leon, Monterrey, Mexico. Explaining the purpose of his group's visit to the Pharr District, Fuentes said, "Initially we wanted to make contact with the Pharr District to study their projects."

"Upon arriving," he said, "we realized we can learn from each other to make for a better infrastructure system by utilizing all available resources."

**"Upon arriving, we realized we can learn from each other to make for a better infrastructure system."**

— Sergio Fuentes, Monterrey, Mexico

The 23 civil engineers from the state of Nuevo Leon included representatives from the federal and state level, members of civil engineering associations, and private contractors.

Staff members from district operations, right of way, planning, design, construction and maintenance gave presentations.

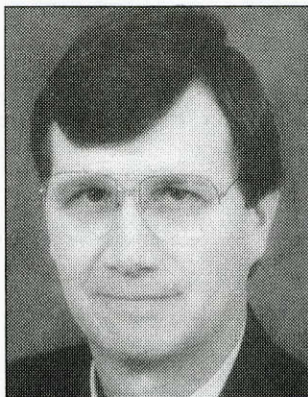
Afterward, district lab and sign shop personnel showed off their skills.

The group then toured a concrete plant, and major projects from La Joya to Brownsville, TX.

"Our plans are to construct a major (arterial) to the Monterrey airport," Fuentes said. "Your U.S. 83/U.S. 281 interchange project in Pharr will serve as a model for our future planning and designing of this project."

### Traffic engineer wins award for intelligent traffic innovation

Mel Partee of the Traffic Operations Division received special recognition from Intelligent Transportation Systems Texas for his efforts in developing TxDOT's Advanced Traffic Management System (ATMS).



Mel Partee

The award recognizes "outstanding leadership in planning, design, and deployment of intelligent transportation systems (ITS)."

ATMS is TxDOT's version of ITS, which allows remote monitoring of freeways for problems and the remote redirection of traffic as required.

Al Kosik, P.E., head of the Traffic Management Section, said, "Mel and his group have worked long and hard to provide an efficient economical system, and I'm glad to see them get this recognition."

### Johnson names workgroup to eye transportation goals

Transportation Commissioner John W. Johnson announced a work group will give the commission input to develop goals and priorities to address future mobility challenges. The group is made up of elected officials, business leaders and transportation experts from around the state.

Fourteen members have been named to the group including: Betty Armstrong, Navarro County commissioner; Charlie Ball, Dell Computer Corp. executive; Tim Brown, Bell County commissioner; Dennis Christiansen, Texas Transportation Institute; Joe Graff, Maintenance Division section director; Michael Morris, director of transportation, North Texas Council of Governments; Katy Nees, deputy executive

director North Texas Tollway Authority; Mary Owen, Tyler District Engineer, Carol Rawson, deputy director of Traffic Operations Division; Carroll Robinson, Houston City Council; Amadeo Saenz, Jr., Pharr District Engineer; Windy Sitton, mayor of Lubbock; Joe Krier, San Antonio Chamber of Commerce; Mike Walton, Center for Transportation Research. Charles Heald, TxDOT executive director, is the ex-officio member.

The work group will have until the end of April to establish the goals and report to the commission.

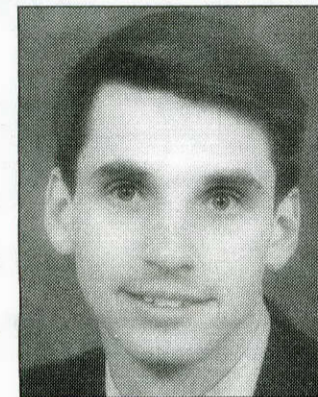
### Brinkmeyer wins Texas Safety Award

Greg Brinkmeyer, of the Traffic Operations Division, was presented the Texas Safety Award from the Texas Chapter of the American Traffic Safety Services Association at its annual meeting in September. Brinkmeyer manages the Policy and Standards Branch of the division's Traffic Engineering Section.

As part of his duties, he works closely with districts, vendors, and contractors to improve safety in highway construction and maintenance work zones.

The Texas chapter of the association presents the Texas Safety Award every two years to the state employee who has made a significant contribution to roadway safety.

Lewis Rhodes, the association's executive director, noted that "Greg makes every effort possible to bring all parties together to improve work zone safety for both TxDOT and contractor personnel involved in roadway construction."



Greg Brinkmeyer

## Achievements, leadership, quality recognized

AUSTIN — The January meeting of district engineers, division and office directors brought accolades and awards:

**Journey Toward Excellence:** the department's annual quality award has honored employees since 1995 for leadership, commitment to and participation in the improvement of TxDOT services, products and processes.

■ **Work Group/Team Award:** Warehouse Regionalization Team, General Services Division; Precious Cargo Program Development Team; Dallas District; Time Sheet Automation Team, Lubbock District.

■ **Individual Category:** Michael P. Lehmann of the San Antonio District.

**AASHTO President's Transportation Award for Highway Safety:** national award for innovations in transportation systems and programs.

■ **Precious Cargo Program** won the Highway Traffic Safety Award.

**AASHTO Quality Team Recognition Awards:** recognizes exemplary achievement in process and system improvement.

■ **Exemplary Partner Award, Highest Level:** Time Sheet Automation Work Group and Y2K Traffic Control Remediation Team, Traffic Operations Division.

■ **Pathfinder Award, Second Level:** Warehouse Regionalization Team, General Services Division; and Precious Cargo Program Development Team.

■ **Trailblazer Awards, Third Level:** Maintenance and Operations Contracts Team, Maintenance Division.

**WASHTO Quality Support Fund Program:** recognizes exemplary achievements in quality programs with monetary awards.

**National Quality Initiative Awards:** recognize outstanding achievements in quality improvement by the nation's state and local highway programs.

■ **Gold Level, Risk Taking Category:** Maintenance and Operations Contract Team

members Roger Williams of the Maintenance Division; Jay Nelson, Dallas District Engineer; Richard Skopik, Waco District Engineer; Larry Colclasure, director of transportation operations; Paul Montgomery, director of maintenance; and Mike Heise, assistant director of maintenance, all of the Waco District.

■ **Silver Level, Partnering Category:** Precious Cargo Program Team members Mark Ball, Terry Sams, Linden Burgess, Jeanne Roddy and Michelle Releford, all of the Dallas District.

■ **Silver Level, State Quality Initiative Category:** Road to Recycling Project Team members Rebecca Davio, Shawn Devereaux, Sam Reyes and Tony Tijerina, all of General Services Division.

■ **Bronze Level, Breaking the Mold Category:** Helicopter-Mounted Laser Survey Team of Lufkin District. ★

## TxDot Roundup



Photo by Michael Amador, Travel Division

**Star Award winners: Barbara Ward (left) manages the Longview regional office. Mary Davenport is a customer service manager at the Vehicle Title and Registration Division.**

### Vehicle Title & Registration honors its 'Star' employees for 2000

Two Vehicle Title and Registration (VTR) managers won Star awards during the division's fall managers meeting.

"My manager told me I was here to answer questions about exempt license plates," said Mary Davenport, recipient of the Headquarters Star Award.

"I'm really grateful that my peers see me as *someone they respect*," she said.

Davenport has been with TxDOT since 1977 and jumped to VTR in 1980 before becoming a customer service manager in the division's Special Plates Branch in 1998. In the nomination form, Davenport was described as being a true professional who always had time for her fellow employees.

The VTR Field Operations Star Award went to Barbara Ward, regional manager of the division's Longview office. She began working in VTR's Fort Worth office in 1970, moving to Longview in 1988. She was promoted to her current position in 1995.

"I had no idea this was coming," Ward said shortly after her name was called. "All of you (VTR staff) helped me win this. I've really enjoyed working with you."

### Division celebrates renovated building with open house

For about two years, Vehicle Titles and Registration (VTR) Division staff at Camp Hubbard dodged work crews and conducted business while noisy equipment sent unusual sounds through the halls. But most employees say the inconveniences were worth it. At Austin headquarters, VTR employees are now housed under one roof following a massive renovation project at Building One.

"When I first came to this division in 1993, I made it a goal to provide an appropriate work environment for all employees," said Jerry Dike, VTR director. "We had some people with less than 50 square feet of space. It was embarrassing, and something in desperate need of attention."

Dike's goal of housing his employees in adequate quarters finally came true in mid-December when he and Executive Director Wes Heald cut a red ribbon to officially dedicate the building.

### Fort Worth District promotes Construction Career Days

In 1997 a group recognized there was a shortage of skilled workers in the highway construction industry. The idea of marketing the construction industry, and career opportunities within it, is the catalyst for what today is designated the Construction Career Days.

The Dallas/Fort Worth area will host the 2001 Construction Career Days Feb. 27 - March 1 at the Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport.

"Prior to Construction Career Days, the construction industry had a poor image. In 1997 a statewide survey given to high school seniors showed construction rated 498, out of 500 choices, as a career field that students wanted to enter.

The survey also showed that in Texas only nine percent of graduating students go on to achieve a college degree. This allows the opportunity for the Construction Career Days event to attract high school graduating students," said Humberto Martinez, associate director for professional development, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

The Fort Worth Independent School District has approved this year's event and will partner with the Associated General Contractors of Texas, Texas Engineering Extension Service, TxDOT and FHWA.

"We hope to implement career options in the construction field for graduating high school students and to share with them a day visiting construction companies, with a chance to actually crawl onto a piece of heavy machinery and actually have hands-on time to operate it," said Fort Worth District human resource employee Tony Huggins.

### TxDOT names John Jasek as Waco area engineer

John R. Jasek was promoted to Waco area engineer in the Waco District. This area office provides oversight for all TxDOT activities within the 1,042 square miles of McLennan County.

Jasek is a 1990 civil engineering graduate of Texas A&M University. He started his career as a summer-hire in the Yoakum District, at the LaGrange Area Engineer Office in 1987. He became a full-time employee of the Waco District as an engineering assistant in the Waco Area Office following his graduation in 1990.

In 1995 he was promoted to assistant area engineer and served two years in that position in the Gatesville Area Office. He participated in the beta testing for SiteManager, which is the American Association of Highway Transportation Officials software program for automated construction record keeping. In 1997 he transferred to Belton as assistant area engineer until August 1999 when he returned to Gatesville to serve as area engineer.

### Texas highways grace the big screen

In a hit movie of the season, "Cast Away," TxDOT gets thanks in the closing credits. The beginning and ending "crossroads" sequences were filmed on a couple of Panhandle highways, according to Tonya Detten, Amarillo public information officer.

The Amarillo District traffic office and the Hemphill County maintenance office helped with the traffic control plan and small details for the sequence. ★



Photo by Mary E. Kilgore, Abilene District

**All Aboard!** Frigid winds and driving rain didn't curtail members of the Abilene district office, led by Pat McKennon, left, from joining a group of Abilene civic leaders on a ride on a Union Pacific passenger train. This trip, from Abilene to Clyde and back, was a promotion of highway-railroad crossing safety in West Texas. McKennon is the district's railroad coordinator. Also pictured (L to R) are: Steve Roth, construction inspector; Scott Mitchell, district maintenance supervisor; Brenda Mitchell, district traffic safety coordinator; and Melissa Webb, engineer assistant.

# Letters

### Quick action, first-aid skills defuse emergency situation

Several days ago, my son Charles was visiting his friend across the street. His friend's granny was there for the holidays, I suppose. Charles called me on the phone, and in a frantic voice said, "Mom, granny is acting like she can't breathe or something. Please come over and see if there's anything you can do." I told him I didn't know CPR, but I would be right over. I did go over and mostly tried to comfort her just in case she was aware of us as we tried

to talk to her. I prayed and told her that someone was on the way to take care of her. Then there they were, angels unaware: Billy Nutt doing CPR. My son Charles was relaying directions to him on the phone from the dispatcher.

The other angels were each at their jobs giving directions.

I felt so helpless until these men showed up. I feel they should be commended for the work they do. I understand they are required to learn CPR just in case a situation arises like this so they will know what to do.

The men that came to our rescue were Billy Nutt, Steve Oney, John Hines and Matt Burns. They not only tried to resuscitate the woman whose life was on the line, but they also gave comfort to the family so they would know that help was being administered, and the ambulance was coming shortly. Please, if there is anything you can do to show our appreciation to them for the job they did, we would appreciate it.

**T**hen there they were, angels unaware."

—The Olds family

The lady was 81 years old and she did not live but several more hours. Let this be a reminder to people in construction areas. Slow down and obey the signs because that angel in the orange vest might be the one to save your life one day.

If I left out a name of any one of the men, their supervisors know who they were.

**Charles Olds & family  
Jonesville**

*This letter was sent to Transportation News. The crew who assisted was from Marshall maintenance office: Steve Oney, roadway maintenance crew chief; Billy Nutt, maintenance technician; Matt Burns, maintenance technician; and John Hines, maintenance technician. The crew was working near the scene of the emergency.*

### Praise for off-duty employee who stopped to help

You know that Danny Jennings is a unique individual; he is special in my book.

I was driving to San Antonio and was south of Waxahachie when my left rear tire blew out. I was trying to figure out how to get the tire tool and jack loose when Danny pulled up to see if I needed help. He was on his way home from work when he saw me stop. He had to drive past me and turn around to return. Not only was he on his own time, but he had to go out of his way to help.

My spare was flat! Danny aired it up. He jacked my little truck up, changed the tire, and had me going before I would have been able to get the tools out much less figure out what to do about no spare.

He saved me anguish as well as a major delay.

He more than upheld the spirit of Texas

courtesy, and I bet it's not the first time someone has written you to commend Danny. Please give him a sincere "Well Done" for me.

Danny, thank you again!  
**Darrall Vaughter  
Dallas**

*This letter was addressed to Hank Campbell, supervisor, Ellis County area office. Danny Jennings is a transportation maintenance supervisor for the Ellis County maintenance office.*

### Use of radio saves the day for pair with trailer problems

My wife and I would like to express our many thanks for the fine job done by Paul Martinez and his staff when our trailer broke down west of Haskell on Oct. 17.

We were in a bad spot with limited visibility in both directions, and on a rainy day as well.

We were greatly relieved when your men arrived with their telephone radio patch system that enabled us to call our towing service.

Then, somewhat to our surprise and great relief, your men insisted on staying with us, protecting us from passing traffic in both directions until a tow truck arrived from Lubbock.

I think it was their professional attitudes and concern for our safety that impressed us the most.

Please give Paul and his crew our heartfelt thanks.

**Carter Harrison  
Arlington**

*Paul Martinez is a Kent county crew chief. Don Boland, Kent County maintenance section supervisor for the Abilene district, received this letter.*

## The Good Life

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Retirement date (month/year) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ How many years of TxDOT service \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ ST \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ District/Division/Office/Section \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Postion at retirement \_\_\_\_\_

We'd like to hear from you. Tell us and your TxDOT friends about your recent activities, travel, hobbies, or other interesting information about yourself. Start here. Use another sheet of paper, if necessary.

\_\_\_\_\_

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In line with the special coverage in this edition (pages 8-9) we welcome your comments about retirement planning. We're interested in your experience, in your wisdom, and in the lessons you've learned. We may use them in a future issue.

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Mail to:  
 TxDOT Public Information Office  
 Transportation News  
 125 E. 11th St.  
 Austin, TX 78701-2483

## More Letters

### Weary traveler thanks TxDOT for quick tire change

I am writing you on behalf of Mr. Len McCoy and Mr. Richard E. Cook.

On Tuesday, Dec. 19, my wife Greta Curtis, was driving to Dallas from Austin and experienced a blowout to the right rear tire of our Chevrolet Tahoe.

Within minutes, Mr. McCoy and Mr. Cook arrived on the scene in a TxDOT truck and immediately offered to change the tire.

Neither of these gentlemen would accept any gratuity and were very gracious in tending to the problem of the flat tire.

With all of the traffic, road rage, accidents and construction occurring on Interstate 35, it is amazing that there are still thoughtful people who are out there in a time of need.

Our sincerest thanks for their assistance. We wish you all the happiest of new years.

Sincerely,

Mr. and Mrs. William (Margaretha) H. Curtis, Capt. USNR Ret., member, Texas Ranger Foundation

*This letter was received by Bill Pierce, Waxahachie Area Engineer. Len McCoy is a motor vehicle mechanic and Richard Cook is a transportation maintenance technician.*

### Dallas neighborhood thankful for timely project completion

It was just a year ago that Royal Lane was completed by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) in conjunction with the City of Dallas. This short stretch of road finished the widening of Royal Lane from a county lane to a six-lane thoroughfare from the eastern Dallas city limit to the western city limit. The Glen Oaks Townhomes, a community of 94 homes, had been preparing for this dramatic change to the entrance to our homes since 1986. For the past 12 months, we have been remodeling that entrance. We have now completed that process with recreated berms, a new hedge, landscaping, new signs, and a security fence with limited access gates.

As we finish our entrance, we wanted to pause to thank certain members of your staff who seemed to go above and beyond in their care and concern for our small community. First, David Lott and his assistant, Fernando de la Garza, were very prompt in their response to our concerns. Each not only returned calls, but "walked the ground" with us, so that we could be sure we were getting

**"Cars and trucks whizzed by at high speeds and the guys showed no fear as they got the Jeep ready to tow. It really made me think how dangerous their job is, but at the same time I greatly appreciated their quick assistance."**

— Dan Perge, Dallas District

what would be best for us. Next, the design department, starting with Mindy Carmichael in 1986, and continuing with Surga Mathews and Kimberly Lindberg who were very helpful in designing a new entrance that would allow us to lose as little land as possible, build limited access gates within code, and still soften the integration of this major thoroughfare with landscaping. Finally, we were impressed with your on-site inspectors who were very diligent in maintaining quality control. In this regard, we wish to cite Tony Seals and Paul Haas who seemed to watch everything.

We are forwarding a copy of this thank you letter to Sen. John Carona of the Texas Legislature, and also to Councilman Alan Walne, Dallas City Council. We wish to thereby make a record of a government's ability to work efficiently with community members in trying times by having quality public servants such as those cited above.

If there is anything further that we can do to recommend the above employees, please do not hesitate to ask. With kindest regards, I am very truly yours for the association.

Thomas L. Densmore  
Dallas

*This letter was addressed to the Dallas District Engineer, Jay Nelson.*

### TxDOT on the case to get refund of moving money

We want to thank you, Robert Beck, and the Public Assistance Section of the Texas Department of Transportation for your assistance in this matter.

Also, we would like you to know that when I first complained to (the moving company) and informed them I was sending a complaint notice to the Texas Department of Transportation, the lady at (the moving company) laughed and said, "Go right ahead." Bet she is not laughing now.

Again, many thanks for your help. You and the entire department are doing a great job for Texas!

Marilyn and Arthur Rankin  
Canyon Lake

*This letter was sent to Mike Ellis of the TxDOT Public Assistance Section in Austin. Other employees credited with providing assistance were Homer Vasquez and Suzie Ward of Motor Carrier Division's Compliance and Enforcement Branch. They helped the Rankins receive a total refund of \$1,016.58, which was the amount the mover had overcharged them.*

### Dallas Courtesy Patrol rescues TxDOT employee

Thank God for Courtesy Patrol. On Nov. 17, your employees did a great job in assisting me with a stalled Jeep from the TxDOT vehicle pool. In particular, Jesse Jacquez, Shanne Mingus, Lucio Morales, and Scott Duncan were outstanding. They provided superb, timely, quick, and efficient assistance. I was driving back from a public meeting last night with Richard Gehring and as we were about a mile west of the district complex on I-30, the Jeep stalled. I immediately pulled the Jeep over on the shoulder and stopped. We couldn't start the Jeep, so I took the keys, put the hazards on and we ran to the complex. I immediately called Courtesy Patrol and Jesse very calmly informed me that a truck would come by within 10 minutes to

pick me up so we could tow the Jeep to the district shop. Well, before you knew it, they were there and immediately took care of everything. As they were hooking up the Jeep to get towed, I stood on the side, off the shoulder and watched them because I didn't even feel safe standing on the shoulder. Cars and trucks whizzed by at high speeds and the guys showed no fear as they got the Jeep ready to tow. It really made me think how dangerous their job is, but at the same time I greatly appreciated their quick assistance. As a TxDOT employee, being stranded and then shortly after being helped by the Courtesy Patrol, made me really grateful for the outstanding service Courtesy Patrol provides for all the traveling public. Thank you and keep up the great work.

Dan Perge, assistant supervisor of advanced planning, Dallas District

*This letter was sent to Steve Poole, supervisor of Courtesy Patrol, Dallas District.*

### Texas employees impress New Mexico travelers

My letter comes to you from Clayton, N.M. I would just like to let you know what a great employee you have. His name is Juan (Flores). He helped my husband change a flat that we had on I-10 near Iraan, Texas. He was very polite and helpful, accepting no compensation. This is real Texas hospitality! Please tell him thank you for us again!! There was also another young man with him, I want to say his name was Derek (Wright). He went out of his way also. A job well done by both young men!

Mr. and Mrs. Applegate  
Clayton, New Mexico

*Juan Flores and Derek Wright work in the Iraan Maintenance Section.*

### Changing of flat tire eases stress for couple racing to see son

Thank you very much for your assistance in helping us fix a flat tire along Interstate 35. Last Nov. 6, we were on our way to Waco to watch our son perform in a state marching contest.

Due to the late arrival of a chartered bus for the band, we were delayed leaving Richardson. Even so, we had plenty of time to get to Waco to see the 12:15 show. As we drove south along I-35, just north of the Milford exit, we realized that we had a flat tire.

Not only were we "fighting" the clock, but Gary has a heart condition that makes it difficult to lift and "tug." Just as we were trying with great difficulty to release the lug nuts, a Texas Department of Transportation truck pulled up behind us to offer assistance.

Two very nice men (I'm sorry we didn't get their names) got out, and without hesitation, began changing the tire for us.

It is nice to know help is still available. Thanks, TxDOT, for helping a fellow Texan. By the way, Berkner High School band placed 7th in the state marching contest. We did get to see them perform.

Barbie and Gary Coleman  
Richardson

*Sent to Jay Nelson and Bill Pierce of the Dallas District. Roland Imel and Richard Cook assisted Mr. & Mrs. Coleman. Both of these employees are transportation maintenance technicians with Ellis County maintenance.*

# Service Awards

## Abilene District

**35 years**  
James B. Magill Jr.  
**20 years**  
Marlon D. Newberry  
**15 years**  
Cheryl G. Jones  
Joel T. McCright  
Gary R. Miles  
Norman A. Whitworth  
**5 years**  
Phillip R. Escobedo  
Clifton K. Holden

## Amarillo District

**35 years**  
Larry B. Black  
Jerry L. Raines  
**20 years**  
Roy D. McGlohon  
**15 years**  
Dale A. Herbst  
Larry D. Pool  
**5 years**  
David L. Britten  
Lester G. Smith  
Santiago Tercero

## Atlanta District

**20 years**  
Samuel Thomas  
**15 years**  
Leslie T. Davidson  
Marcus E. Sandifer  
Keith D. Shelton  
Rickie L. Shields  
Glenda A. Solley  
**10 years**  
Donald M. Caldwell Jr.  
**5 years**  
Reid A. Hall

## Austin District

**20 years**  
Linda D. Grunke  
Lester R. Jackson  
Marshall W. Voigt  
**15 years**  
Vernice C. Ansley  
Thomas A. Bockholt  
Hollin D. Haberman  
Larry W. Hargraves  
Alan D. Hudson  
Joe G. Lantrip  
Cecilia A. Stalmach  
Thien T. Nguyen  
James E. Petty  
John R. Wagner  
**10 years**  
Christopher C. Hehr  
**5 years**  
Mark F. Herber  
Jerry E. Hibbeler  
Stephen M. Schmidt  
Victor M. Vargas

## Beaumont District

**20 years**  
Lynette D. Cardwell  
**15 years**  
Robert K. Balfour  
Stephen C. Sell  
Gary L. Soileau  
**10 years**  
Richard P. Guillory  
**5 years**  
Edward M. Anderson  
Donald V. Dillard  
James E. Goodwine  
Mary L. Stovall

## Brownwood District

**30 years**  
Wayne Sharp  
**20 years**  
Ralph Q. Atchison  
Robert E. Rice  
Alva C. Witcher Jr.  
**15 years**  
Jeffery T. Jones  
**10 years**  
Gordon L. Harkey  
Katherine S. Kunkel  
Willie L. Williams  
**5 years**  
Daniel J. Moss  
Tonya M. Tarrant

## Bryan District

**20 years**  
James D. Herzog  
Janice W. Robbins  
**15 years**  
Leroy D. Batts Sr.  
Arlee G. Boring  
Sherrell K. Fox  
Betty R. Gregurek  
Bonnie F. Reed  
Henry C. Schroeder  
**10 years**  
Danny R. Gurka  
Jerry D. Pope Jr.  
Randy G. Schoppe  
**5 years**  
Paul W. Hammons  
Daniel J. Kuciamba  
Micheal D. Smith

## Childress District

**20 years**  
Lynn H. Smith  
**15 years**  
Carolyn M. Carrick  
James E. Langford  
John H. Liles  
Robert L. Nichols  
Benny E. Osburn  
Barry L. Smith  
Randy G. Swearingen  
Keitha B. Tiffin  
**5 years**  
Douglas S. Adams  
Floyd W. Belcher Jr.  
Natalie D. Casal  
Terry L. Hendrix  
Shari A. Thomason

## Corpus Christi District

**35 years**  
Jose Ybarra  
**25 years**  
Roger D. MacKie  
**20 years**  
Paul D. McWilliams  
**15 years**  
Noe L. Cabazos  
Robert A. Contreras  
Kip R. Dove  
James D. Mitchell  
Lorna Z. Morgenroth  
William S. Randall  
James D. Sexton  
Gonzalo Trevino Jr.  
**5 years**  
Roberto Pulido Jr.

## Dallas District

**40 years**  
Ronnie O. McManus  
**30 years**  
Ted L. Anderson  
Michael A. McDougald  
**20 years**  
Norman C. Erickson  
Merita C. Hanna  
**15 years**  
Ronnie E. Carter  
Danny S. Clanton  
Bobby H. Cunningham  
Robert W. Delaney  
Jimmy W. Dennis  
Larry J. Gilbert  
Travis W. Henderson  
Doris B. Little  
David K. McBride  
Glenda D. Miller  
Ralph C. Miser  
Melba M. Moody  
Andrew R. Oberlander  
Joseph R. Pruett  
**10 years**  
Tommy L. Johns  
Timothy D. Staples  
Lynn D. Strahan  
Erma D. Wisham  
**5 years**  
Jimmy D. Bingham  
Bobby J. Keith

## El Paso District

**15 years**  
Edgar E. Fino  
Jose L. Reyes Jr.  
Jose G. Sanchez

## Fort Worth District

**30 years**  
Michael N. Carter  
**20 years**  
Bobby L. Triplett  
Robert L. Kinney Jr.  
**15 years**  
Randall L. Bowers  
William O. Igbinovia  
Henry E. King  
Robert M. Lance  
Gary M. Langley  
Douglas A. Miller  
Rohit T. Parikh  
Barton S. Wilson  
**10 years**  
David J. Bullard  
**5 years**  
Amy K. Langley  
Curtis F. Loftis  
Paul A. Worlow III

## Houston District

**30 years**  
Louis R. Leblanc  
**20 years**  
Carlos F. Camacho  
Larry O. Felder  
Katherine B. Harrison  
Guillermo I. Moran  
Bernard J. Murphy  
Johnny D. Salcido  
Bobbie B. Shelnett  
Ronald D. Turner  
Victor E. Vann  
Michael W. Williams  
**15 years**  
Milliam Allen  
J. B. Burks  
Rosina A. Busa  
Ricky W. Christopher  
Luis E. De Los Santos  
Juan C. Gonzalez  
James A. Heacock  
Lance Humbarger  
Leslie B. Jarosz  
Roy A. Johnson  
Dora T. Jones  
Clifford Leach  
David Munoz  
Earnest North Jr.  
Alex J. Pinyozy  
James M. Ross  
Rebecca O. Salazar  
Robert J. Stelchek  
Douglas G. Streetman  
Frank E. Taylor  
Richard A. Torres  
Morris M. Towns  
Jeanette J. Tryner  
Maureen M. Wakeland  
John R. Weeks  
Jose A. Yrigoyen  
**10 years**  
Freddie L. Franklin  
Dalia M. Maradeo  
Marco A. Rodriguez  
Beecroft A. Shittu  
**5 years**  
James D. Falcon  
Adolph H. Garcia  
Lokesh Khosla  
Joyce J. Leitko  
Gwendia A. Phillips  
Mauricio Sanabria Lopez  
Cindy S. Smith

## Laredo District

**20 years**  
Francisco J. Hernandez  
**15 years**  
Hector Chapa  
**5 years**  
Lorenzo T. Galvan III

## Lubbock District

**20 years**  
Bobby L. Payne  
**15 years**  
Donnie V. Blakely  
**10 years**  
Eugene Reed  
**5 years**  
Glenda F. Ellis  
Adam E. Gonzales  
Laura K. Sanders

## Lufkin District

**35 years**  
David L. Pitts  
**30 years**  
Nancy R. Allen  
Joe H. Buller  
David K. McCoy  
**20 years**  
Carl W. Home Jr.  
Autry L. Walton  
Larry E. Wilson  
**15 years**  
Paul A. Burch Jr.  
Roger W. Flanagan  
Cecil J. Frost Jr.  
**5 years**  
David L. Russell

## Odessa District

**30 years**  
Jerry D. Lefevre  
**20 years**  
William E. Brown  
Jack W. Evans  
**15 years**  
Agustin T. Aguirre  
**10 years**  
Ramon V. Rodriguez  
**5 years**  
Alfredo G. Herrera  
Manuel Ortiz  
Daniel E. Ramos  
Hector H. Tarango  
Cody B. Woodard

## Paris District

**20 years**  
Paul L. Helms  
Lee M. McDonald  
**15 years**  
Kathy G. Dyer  
Michael R. Williams  
**5 years**  
Jonathan D. Champe  
Jason L. Chennault  
Jack Mulder

## Pharr District

**20 years**  
Luis Adan C. Canales  
De La Fuente  
Palmira R. Gutierrez  
**15 years**  
Leonel Dominguez  
Patrick A. Gonzalez  
Raul A. Lozano  
Saul R. Munoz  
**5 years**  
Rene Anzaldua  
Rene R. Castro  
Reynaldo P. Elizondo  
Carlos J. Garza  
Higinio E. Gonzales  
Rodolfo Lopez Jr.

## San Angelo District

**30 years**  
Elzy E. Beam  
**20 years**  
Julian Gonzales  
Kenneth R. Harrison  
**15 years**  
Donald A. Peterson  
**10 years**  
David J. Sepulveda  
**5 years**  
Joe M. Campos  
Jose J. Favela

## San Antonio District

**35 years**  
Kenneth R. Roemer  
Lawrence C. Smith  
**15 years**  
Iris B. Mosley  
Aubrey E. Sanderson Jr.  
**10 years**  
Richard R. Crow  
**5 years**  
Ronnie R. Barron  
Rodney K. Cantu  
John C. Chamberlin  
Jennifer Q. Evans  
Robert R. Grantham  
Theodore J. Olsovsky  
George S. Ruiz

## Tyler District

**20 years**  
Billy R. Bailey  
Michael C. Blaser  
Manuel M. Escueta  
Harold D. Gilley  
**15 years**  
Peggy S. Craft  
Glenn H. Green  
Jerry D. Sims  
Mark A. Sturrock  
**10 years**  
Derwin B. Bolton  
Stacie E. Holcomb  
**5 years**  
Albert Longoria  
Delaina L. Mayer  
Matt L. Mitchell  
Daniel S. Sanchez

## Waco District

**35 years**  
Linda T. Roming  
**20 years**  
Kathryn S. Hartin  
**15 years**  
Kenneth K. Krause  
**5 years**  
Ines H. Arriola  
James C. Roberts  
Dennis R. Weiss  
Sherry L. Williams

## Wichita Falls District

**30 years**  
Joe H. Nelson III  
**15 years**  
Guy A. Bindel  
James S. Reed III  
Bobby L. Walker  
**5 years**  
Paul E. Bennett

## Yoakum District

**35 years**  
Edwin H. Vonhaefen Jr.  
**15 years**  
Aaron K. Gaertner  
Brian C. Schoenemann  
Alan W. Sharp  
Yoakum District  
**5 years**  
Epifanio Ruiz Jr.

## Administration

**40 years**  
Charles W. Heald

## Audit Office

**20 years**  
Robert W. Cates  
**15 years**  
Samuel V. Crawford

## Aviation Division

**15 years**  
Alan E. Schmidt  
**10 years**  
William B. Fuller

## Bridge Division

**10 years**  
Kenneth L. Mullin

## Construction Division

**35 years**  
Elizabeth E. Wilder  
**30 years**  
Alice C. Daws  
**20 years**  
Shelia W. Stifflemire  
**15 years**  
Heberto Gonzalez Jr.  
Barbara A. Mallon

## Design Division

**25 years**  
Joyce K. Martinets  
**15 years**  
Douglas S. Vollette  
**5 years**  
Hua Chen

## Environmental Affairs

**Division**  
**15 years**  
Jesus G. Gonzalez  
Alfred J. McGraw

## Finance Division

**20 years**  
Irasema H. Sanchez  
**15 years**  
Larry D. Baumann  
Cheryl L. Mazur  
**10 years**  
Sarah G. Clawson  
Dorn E. Smith  
15 years

## General Services Division

**20 years**  
Lubeca M. Mims  
**15 years**  
Sandra D. Nichols  
James H. Parkhurst  
Michael D. Quimby  
**10 years**  
Howard K. Bullard  
Donald J. Lewis

## Human Resources

**Division**  
**30 years**  
Ruth M. Frost

## Information Systems

**Division**  
**35 years**  
James A. Demmer  
**20 years**  
Jimmy H. Cruse  
Barry L. Scott  
**15 years**  
Linda K. Hart  
Sandra J. Matthews  
Dorceia J. Smart  
**10 years**  
David C. Flathmann  
Brian K. Fuller  
Glenn C. Laxson  
Danny A. Meek  
Soheila R. Thum

## Legislative Affairs Office

**10 years**  
Tonia N. Ramirez

## Maintenance Division

**10 years**  
Andrew W. Keith

## Motor Carrier Division

**15 years**  
Marilyn S. Ward  
**10 years**  
Mark H. Fetzer

## Motor Vehicle Division

**5 years**  
Christopher C. Aker  
John R. Dufour

## Occupational Safety

**Division**  
**10 years**  
Harold E. Mitchell  
Jerral W. Wyr

## Public Transportation

**Division**  
**15 years**  
Bobby R. Killebrew

## Right of Way Division

**15 years**  
Richard L. Ferguson  
**5 years**  
Lucinda E. Soto

## Traffic Operations

**Division**  
**10 years**  
Gary D. Counts  
Abdul Q. Khan  
Donald A. Ninke  
Ray D. Rutledge  
**5 years**  
Monica H. Sanchez

## Transportation Planning &

**Programming Division**  
**15 years**  
Charles H. Nations Jr.  
Susan L. Templeton  
**10 years**  
Glen E. Bates

## Travel Division

**20 years**  
Margelete Faulkner

## Vehicle Titles &

**Registration Division**  
**25 years**  
Evelyn H. Deal  
**20 years**  
Edith C. Green  
**10 years**  
Mary V. Garcia  
Janet L. Reece  
Cynthia E. Robinson

## Retirements

### SEPTEMBER

#### Dallas District

Clarence B. Laza  
Engineering Technician III  
29 years

#### Houston District

Jerry W. Tipton  
Printing Service Technician IV,  
16 years

#### Tyler District

Carroll D. Luker  
Trans Maintenance Tech. II  
19 years

#### General Services Division

Sheila Smith  
Program Administrator II  
33 years

### OCTOBER

#### San Antonio District

Ernest L. Sanchez  
Engineering Technician III  
28 years

Nolan H. Reinhard  
Engineering Technician III  
32 years

#### Tyler District

Daniel L. Mandeville,  
Engineering Technician IV, 16  
years

### NOVEMBER

#### Beaumont District

George W. Cox  
Engineering Technician II  
23 years

W. D. Mellen  
Engineering Technician I  
30 years

Edward F. Seymour Jr.  
Manager IV  
40 years

#### Dallas District

Dexter Hollabaugh  
Engineering Specialist  
41 years

David A. Scott  
District Purchasing Specialist  
32 years

James E. Nash, Jr.  
Engineering Specialist II  
30 years

#### Fort Worth District

Ernest R. Carr  
Maintenance Technician IV  
22 years

Malcolm Z. Blackwell, Jr.  
Engineering Technician IV  
30 years

#### Wichita Falls District

John M. Heltzel  
Engineering Technician III  
32 years

#### Information Systems Division

Tahar T. Boukhris  
Systems Analyst V  
32 years

Richard H. Krueger  
Systems Analyst II  
18 years

### DECEMBER

#### Bryan District

Bonnie F. Reed  
General Service Tech III  
15 years

#### Dallas District

James L. Evans  
Engineering Technician V  
14 years

Donald R. Mayfield  
Engineering Specialist II  
39 years

Lee J. Barnfield  
Engineering Technician III  
30 years

#### Fort Worth District

Richard D. Swanner  
Maintenance Supervisor III  
31 years

Raymond J. Edmundson  
Automation Administrator  
30 years

#### Houston District

Ervin Ramirez  
Program Administrator IV  
30 years

#### Laredo District

Ernesto G. Ibarra  
Roadway Maint Crew Chief  
28 years

#### Pharr District

Santiago R. Zuniga  
Engineering Technician III  
22 years

#### San Antonio District

Benigno G. Villarreal  
Engineering Technician III  
39 years

Gerald J. Adamietz  
Engineering Specialist II  
39 years

Douglas R. Echterhoff  
Engineering Specialist II  
39 years

Jerome J. Lindig  
Engineering Technician I  
31 years

Adolfo R. Lopez  
Maintenance Supervisor III  
20 years

Max D. Below  
Trans Maint Specialist I  
33 years

#### Tyler District

Don W. Lay  
Engineering Specialist III  
29 years

Jerry T. Hobbs  
Trans Maintenance Tech IV  
16 years

#### Yoakum District

Raymond L. Dittich  
Motor Vehicle Technician III  
31 years

Clifford L. Rugeley  
Engineering Technician III  
30 years

#### Construction Division

Harold Albers  
Engineer V  
37 years

Charles L. Moore  
Engineer Technician V  
33 years

Clarence M. Bryan  
Engineer IV  
26 years

#### General Services Division

George F. Miller  
Manager  
33 years

#### Human Resources Division

Karen D. Williams  
Training Specialist II  
27 years

#### Information Systems Division

Carl F. Krueger  
Systems Analyst III  
32 years

#### Travel Division

B. Julie Provost  
Administrative Technician II  
8 years

### JANUARY

#### Abilene District

Jimmy G. Redwine  
Trans Maint Technician III  
18 years

#### Dallas District

Joe B. Thompson  
Manager III  
39 years

#### Information Systems Division

Sharon B. Fitzpatrick  
Director II  
19 years

#### Travel Division

Jane P. McNally  
Information Specialist II  
16 years

Linda F. Kneeland  
Manager II  
30 years

## In Memoriam

### EMPLOYEES

#### Abilene District

James E. Proctor  
Trans Maintenance Spec IV  
died November 9, 2000.

#### Austin District

Joe Robert C. Nino  
Trans Maintenance Tech IV  
died November 8, 2000

Bobby C. Fitzgerald  
Trans Maintenance Tech IV  
died January 4, 2001.

#### Odessa District

Edwardo L. Natividad  
Engineering Specialist II  
died November 25, 2000.

#### Construction Division

Kathleen M. Jones  
Information Specialist II  
died November 8, 2000.

#### Information Systems Division

Stephen B. Olona  
Systems Analyst IV  
died November 21, 2000.

### RETIRES

#### Abilene District

Edgar A. Rogers  
Maint Construction Foreman III  
retired in 1982, died  
September 10, 2000

William L. Lambert  
Maintenance Technician III  
retired in 1979  
died August 31, 2000

Joe E. Stevens  
Maintenance Technician III  
retired in 1986  
died September 24, 2000.

#### Amarillo District

William V. York  
Engineer IV, retired in 1972  
died June 11, 1997

George G. McElroy Jr.  
Maintenance Technician III  
retired in 1981  
died October 25, 2000.

#### Atlanta District

Lenna R. Bowden  
Skilled Laborer, retired in 1967  
died November 24, 2000

Bobby D. Prator  
Engineering Technician V  
retired in 1991  
died November 8, 2000.

#### Austin District

Marion M. Hall  
Engineering Technician II  
retired in 1993  
died October 7, 2000

Jimmie G. Hamilton  
Maintenance Technician III  
retired in 1986  
died October 31, 2000

#### Beaumont District

Oscar L. Smith  
Engineering Technician IV  
retired in 1976  
died October 13, 2000

Alfred M. Boulware  
Trans Maintenance Specialist I  
retired in 1995  
died September 21, 2000

Kenneth C. Carter  
Maintenance Technician II  
retired in 1989  
died October 9, 2000

Marquiss L. Tolar, Maintenance  
Technician III, retired in 1977,  
died October 9, 2000

#### Childress District

Lynn O. Jackson  
Engineering Technician V  
retired in 1975  
died September 23

#### Corpus Christi District

Jose R. Cuevas  
Maintenance Technician II  
retired in 1996  
died October 16, 2000

Oswald R. Parsley, Maint Tech II  
retired in 1983  
died October 28, 2000

Samuel B. Ridgway  
Maint Tech II, retired in 1976,  
died August 9, 2000

Juan Franco, Maint Tech II  
retired in 1991  
died October 4, 2000.

#### Dallas District

William B. Alderman  
Field Engineer  
retired in 1972,  
died August 6, 2000

Irene C. Carlson  
Engineering Technician III  
retired in 1987  
died September 14, 2000

Joel D. Hallmark  
Maintenance Technician II  
retired in 1983  
died October 19, 2000

Joe P Maddox  
Engineer IV  
retired in 1980  
died October 8, 2000.

#### El Paso District

Louis P Evans Jr.  
Construction Inspector  
retired in 1983  
died January 2, 2001

Israel Velasco Sr.  
Maintenance Construction  
Foreman III, retired in 1972,  
died December 23, 2000.

#### Fort Worth District

Herman D. Shaw  
Engineer IV, retired in 1974  
died November 11, 2000.

#### Houston District

Buford E. Wilson  
Maint Tech, retired in 1979  
died November 6, 2000

Melvin L. Bledsoe  
Maintenance Construction  
Supervisor II, retired in 1987  
died October 16, 2000

Gene H. Spencer  
Maint Tech III  
retired in 1992  
died September 12, 2000

Shirley K. Whiddon  
Admin Tech II, retired in 1993  
died October 14, 2000

John Tibaldo  
Maintenance Construction  
Foreman III, retired in 1984  
died October 5, 2000

Taft Turner  
Maintenance Technician I  
retired in 1973  
died October 20, 2000

#### Lufkin District

Earl McNulty  
Maint Tech, retired in 1981  
died November 17, 2000

Monroe F. Williamson  
Maintenance Technician  
died October 2, 2000.

#### Lubbock District

Alvin L. Howell  
Roadway Maintenance  
Supervisor IV, retired in 1991  
died October 12, 2000

Henry C. Lonis  
Maintenance Technician III  
retired in 1975  
died November 23, 2000.

Hollis R. Abernathy  
Maintenance Construction  
Supervisor III, retired in 1978  
died October 19, 2000

Meguil Montemayor  
Maintenance Technician III  
retired in 1993  
died October 9, 2000

#### Odessa District

Vernon W. Bromley  
Engineer Technician III  
retired in 1985  
died November 13, 2000

#### Pharr District

Felipe Rodriguez  
Shop Supervisor III  
retired in 1987  
died November 30, 2000

#### San Angelo District

Dan A. Harrison  
Roadway Maintenance  
Supervisor IV, retired in 1993  
died November 21, 2000

Silas M. Loeffler  
Senior Maintenance Foreman  
retired in 1963  
died November 2, 2000

#### San Antonio District

Freddie E. Dippel  
Engineering Technician IV  
retired in 1987  
died September 24, 2000

Martin Rico  
Eng Tech I, retired in 2000  
died October 14, 2000

Floyd N. Tyler  
Asst. Foreman, retired in 1984  
died November 13, 2000

Raymond R. Metcalf  
Engineering Technician V  
retired in 1992  
died September 15, 2000

#### Tyler District

Billie P Christian  
Accountant III, retired in 1989  
died November 2, 2000

#### Waco District

Ivory T. Jeffery  
Maintenance Technician I  
retired in 1984  
died November 13, 2000

James C. Johnson  
Engineering Technician III  
retired in 2000  
died October 28, 2000

Wilbert Trojan  
Maintenance Technician II  
retired in 1983  
died November 11, 2000

Austin B. Cochran  
Maintenance Technician II  
retired in 1990  
died September 10, 2000

#### Wichita Falls District

Billy R. Green  
Engineering Technician V  
retired in 1987, died  
October 23, 2000

Alford Stephens  
Maintenance Technician III  
retired in 1983  
died October 27, 2000

#### Yoakum District

Garland A. Emerson  
Right of Way Agent III  
retired in 2000  
died November 2, 2000

Jimmy W. Kirby  
Engineering Specialist I  
retired in 1997  
died January 02, 2001

Vincent E. Liska  
Maintenance Technician  
retired in 1987  
died October 2, 2000

Floyd M. Porter  
Engineering Technician  
retired in 1991  
died October 17, 2000

**Vehicle Titles &  
Registration Division**  
William H. Billingsley, Auditor II,  
retired in 1985, died December  
12, 2000

Miriam S. Schwab  
Office Technician  
retired in 1987  
died October 18, 2000

# Fort Worth District impressions



Photo by Susan Williams, Fort Worth District

**Rachel Joy Colvin added color and style to the Fort Worth District's Regional Training Center with her gift of impressionistic paintings.**

## Colorful artist gives gift to district

**By Susan Williams**  
Fort Worth District

People who walk the hallways at the Regional Training Center (RTC) see that something new and impressive has been added.

Recently the Fort Worth District was endowed with two impressionistic paintings from local artist Rachel Joy Colvin.

Her talents in all the art forms is something incredible to hear about and to actually witness as one can see in her works now displayed at the RTC.

"I am 80 years young, and I contribute my good health to having lived my life doing something I truly love —

art," expressed Colvin.

Much of the credit of having received Colvin's art should go to Fort Worth District's Accounting employee Anne Wohlfiel, who shares membership in the Fort Worth Calligraphy Guild with Colvin.

"As I toured Rachel's studio, she commented that she was running out of space to store her paintings and needed to just give some away, so immediately I expressed that at my work site there just might be a place," said Wohlfiel.

From this conversation, the paintings have now found their new home at the Texas Department of

Transportation.

Colvin's background in art is varied and impressive. She has studied under some of the finest art instructors including Evaline Sellors at the Fort Worth Modern Museum of Art. Her accredited and astounding art forms include: stone and metal sculpture, photography, watercolor, charcoals, pastels and oils, and her most loved, calligraphy.

"In my lifetime I have experienced about every area of art. I have taken photographs of celebrities such as Lady Bird Johnson, Billy Graham, Bob Hope and astronaut James B. Irwin. (I was sent) loaded with cameras, on a three-month tour of South America to photograph missionaries at their work," explained Colvin.

"My family were all musicians with great singing voices. My work with calligraphy is like music — there is a flow — it is like playing the piano, you have to keep in tune," said Colvin. The paintings given are described by the artist as "fanciful maps." Colvin said, "After years of designing detailed maps in one of my jobs, I decided to be creative and these are some of my results." ★

# Human Resources upgrades software, begins statewide implementation

**By Paul Summerbell**  
Human Resources Division

Coming to a human resources office near you: PeopleSoft Human Resources Management System has been piloted and is ready for statewide delivery.

PeopleSoft is a computer based program that provides a single, central repository to store employee data. The software was purchased from PeopleSoft, Inc. and then customized to streamline TxDOT business procedures.

During fall 2000, the Tyler and Houston districts, along with the Human Resources and Information System divisions, tested the software with overall positive results. Feedback received from test participants was analyzed and application changes were made to better meet the needs of the end user. Thanks to everyone's participation in the pilot phase, the application is ready for statewide delivery, said Paul Summerbell, program administrator.

The initial use of this product in the department will automate some business practices used in recruiting and training employees.

"I find that PeopleSoft has enhanced our

office tremendously. We are able to speed up the process for hiring and effectively enroll our employees in classes," said Charlene Shirley, who works in human resources for the Houston District.

PeopleSoft simplifies the many steps performed to complete a business process and automates information distribution. Time is saved, paperwork is reduced, and information is more accessible.

"We do not have to spend a lot of time sending e-mails, memos, etc. requesting training or the hiring of new employees. Through PeopleSoft, the request goes directly to the person responsible in human resources to approve and send on," said Renee Patterson of Waller and W. Harris Engineers.

Statewide implementation beginning in February 2001 will be delivered in two phases using regional training sites. The first phase targets directors of administration, human resources officers, and training coordinators as primary users.

A second phase to distribute the application to managers and supervisors will be coordinated with each area after phase one ends. ★

## Calendar



### FEBRUARY

- 6-7** Bid Letting, Austin, CST
- 6-8** 2001 Bridge Engineers Conference, Austin, BRG
- 12-13** Regional Hot Mix Paving Conference, Dallas, CST
- 19** President's Day (holiday)
- 22** Commission Meeting, Austin
- 23-24** Improving Procurement Image Through Cost Savings, Austin, GSD
- 26** Traffic Safety Proposal Review Mtg, Austin, TRF
- 27-28** 2001 Construction Conference, Waco, CST

### MARCH

- 2** Texas Independence Day (holiday)
- 6-7** Bid Letting, Austin, CST
- 8-9** Successful Negotiation Strategies, Austin, GSD
- 12-13** Regional Hot Mix Paving Conference, Houston, CST
- 20-21** TxDOT Annual Surveyors Conference, Austin, ISD
- 20-22** WASHTO Subcommittee on Construction and Materials Annual Meeting, San Antonio, CST
- 21-23** General Public Procurement, San Antonio, GSD
- 23** Successful Software Service Acquisitions, Austin, GSD
- 27-28** Regional Hot Mix Paving Conference, Austin, CST
- 29** Commission Meeting, Austin
- 31** Cesar Chavez Day (holiday)

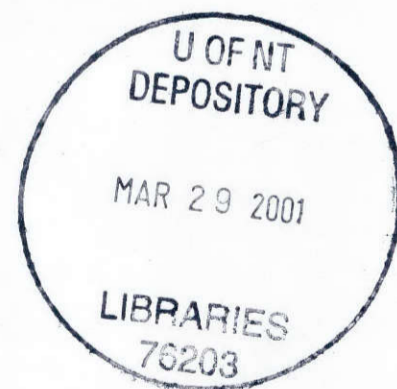
### APRIL

- 3-4** Bid Letting, Austin, CST
- 4-6** Texas Aviation Conference, Austin, AVN
- 9-11** Maintenance Engineers Annual Meeting & 2001 Maintenance Conference, Waco, MNT
- 13** Good Friday (holiday)
- 21** San Jacinto Day (holiday)
- 26** Commission Meeting, Austin

### MAY

- 1-2** Bid Letting, Austin, CST
- 9-10** Developing & Managing Performance Based Contracts, Austin, GSD

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