

Things change. Organizations evolve.
Adjustments take place.
Even at District 6.
Especially at District 6.
See story below.

6 BITS



Ashton Hill – Photo courtesy of Kirk Finn

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FOR EMPLOYEES OF ITD DISTRICT 6 | MARCH 2010 (VOLUME 10, ISSUE 1)

Reorganization

As shown in the chart on pages 4-5, District 6 has reorganized into four divisions: Maintenance Operations, Administration, Construction and Project Development.

The former Regions 1 and 2 have been merged into the Construction Division, headed by Wade Allen. He will oversee all District 6 construction projects in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). Previously he was Region 1 engineer.

Maintenance and Traffic have been moved into the Maintenance Operations Division, headed by Ken Hahn. Formerly Region 2 engineer, he will oversee all maintenance, including area and special maintenance crews, Shop and Traffic.

Dave Walrath will continue to oversee the Project Development Division, including Design, Right of Way, Location and Materials sections – but minus Traffic. *(continued on page 2)*

Vassar on board

Gov. C.L. “Butch” Otter has appointed Jan Vassar to a six-year term on the Idaho Transportation Board. She fills the vacancy created by the passing of Bruce Sweeney of District 2.



A former city manager of Lewiston, Vassar is the first woman appointed to the board. She has been a member of the Idaho Public Transportation Advisory Council since July 2007.



Pictured is the snowplow driven by Allen Rainsdon following an accident on Dec. 30. Allen was clearing snow and ice in midafternoon on Interstate 15 north of Roberts.

Rainsdon escapes serious injury

Snowplow operator Allen Rainsdon, of Dubois maintenance, escaped serious injury in a crash in late December.

Allen was shaken up but avoided serious injury on Dec. 30 when a minivan struck the back of his 10-wheel plow on Interstate 15 four miles north of Roberts.

He was clearing snow and ice from the northbound passing lane in mid-afternoon, when a tractor-trailer rig in the travel lane started to pass him on the right, which is legal.

Meanwhile, a Chevrolet Astro following closely behind the semi-

truck began to pass the truck on the left, entered the cloud of snow dust kicked up by the snowplow and collided with the rear of the plow.

Allen was not injured, while the driver of the Astro, identified by Idaho State Police (ISP) as Jason Michael Lee of Blackfoot, suffered slight injuries and was transported to the Eastern Idaho Regional Medical Center (EIRMC) in Idaho Falls for treatment.

(continued on page 6)

Phase 2. Public input

This is the third in a series of articles on how to complete a highway project.

Before you spend taxpayers’ money, you should get their input.

It is an important part of the job at ITD.

The official means of obtaining input on proposed projects is through the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), which lists planned projects for the next five years.

Citizens may comment on this STIP plan online at this ITD Web address: <http://itd.idaho.gov/planning/stip/index.htm>.

(continued on page 8)

Drake new coordinator

Randy Drake joins Kirk Finn as D-6’s second maintenance coordinator, that is, a transportation staff engineer assistant. He replaces Herb Drexler, who retired last year after 33 years at ITD.



Randy previously was coordinator of EEO/Safety/Training for nine years, prior to which he worked 14 years in Traffic. He joined ITD on June 18, 1978, as an operator in the Special Crew.

District 6 gets efficient new phones in VoIP rollout

Customer service.

Efficiency.

It's better now.

No more dropped calls.

Or inability to transfer.

No more waiting.

Just dependable service.

For happy customers...and employees.

Behold the new phone system, with improved functionality and features.

Such as 29 options for ring tones.

And flashing lights to indicate incoming calls, plus steady lights to signify voice mail.

Phones have 16 to 20 control buttons of different sizes and shapes, not counting the 12 buttons on the dial pad.

All this for users of the new phones at District 6 headquarters and at Sage Junction. *(continued right)*

Reorganization... *(from p. 1)*

Nancy Luthy will continue to oversee the Administration Division, including Personnel, Public Information, Supply Operations, Information Services and Front Office.

“Construction needed more flexibility, and maintenance needed more emphasis,” District 6 Engineer Blake Rindlisbacher says. “Being operations focused, it made sense to move Traffic under Maintenance Operations.”

Blake now will oversee Maintenance Operations, Administration, Planning and Project Management (2PM), and Records Inspection.

Assistant District 6 Engineer Karen Hiatt now will oversee Construction, Project Development, Environmental Planning, EEO/Safety, Training & EITs.

“On paper, this approach seemed best for improved efficiencies,” Blake says. “Time will tell.

“One thing I like about this district is its willingness to try new things.” ■



Construction TTP Scott Trubl's newly installed phone boasts 16 control buttons.

It is nice when service, efficiency, utility and economy come together!

Folks in the maintenance yards eventually may get the new phones – or some type of telephone upgrade – depending on technology development and funding availability.

VoIP – cheaper, more efficient

The phones are part of the VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) rollout.

You pronounce the acronym VOYP (like in voice or void).

Say it again and again. Be cool.

Computer geeks call the new technology “telephony.” Go figure.

VoIP means that phone messages travel over the ITD data network rather than over the public telephone system. Think the Internet, which is what it amounts to.

Actually, with VoIP, phones and computers share the same secure network, which is cheaper and more efficient.

VoIP makes calling other districts simply a matter of dialing the district

number and then the party's four-digit extension.

No more dialing 8121 plus the extension to reach a colleague in Coeur d'Alene, for instance.

To ring someone at ITD Headquarters in Boise, press 7 and then his or her four-digit extension.

Pressing 8 and the extension no longer works.

The hardest thing about calling within District 6 is that you have to press 6 prior to the four-digit extension.

But what's one more digit in the face of progress?

Note to employees at maintenance sheds: Place calls the way you always have. No new learning curve for you – yet.

This new system minimizes the need for conventional long-distance calls to other districts or to Headquarters, which are expensive.

Computer interface

The most impressive part of the new phone system is the futuristic computer interface for receptionists in the office.

“Attendant Console” enables Elaine Wolf, Linda Monk and Wendy Johnson to pick up, transfer, park and track calls, all from their computer monitors.

Who would have thought?

Incoming calls appear on primary receptionist Elaine’s screen, so she can drag them to intended recipients on her screen using her mouse.

She doesn’t need to lift her phone handset unless she wants to.

Receptionists actually have a dizzying range of options for handling calls.

Downside

The downside of the technology?

“None that I can think of,” says Dave Merriweather of the Enterprise Technology Services (ETS) Project Management Office, who headed up the rollout. “It’s up to the user to decide.

“We’ve purchased enough bandwidth to meet ITD’s needs for the foreseeable future,” he says.

This means ITD has purchased capacity on major fiber-optic lines of the leading network companies Qwest, Verizon and Syringa.

Such lines are “backbones” of the Internet, connecting Idaho to population centers around the globe. Contractors bury the lines in trenches, maybe the only *downside*...get it?

During training for the new system, Senior Transportation Planner Bill Shaw asked whether the new software can link to contacts in Outlook.

Yes, but this linkage takes significant design, integration and maintenance at considerable expense. ITD will look at such assimilation next year, pending approval of funds. ETS also will evaluate utility-type applications that can export/import an individual’s Outlook contact list into the phone.

Saga

Conversion from ITD’s private branch exchange (PBX) phone system to VoIP is now complete in all six districts, with ITD Headquarters next in line for the upgrade.

“PBX hardware was older in the districts than at headquarters,” says IT Program Systems Specialist Michelle Cobler, who assisted with the VoIP rollout.

District 6 Information Systems Coordinator Shawn Madsen says some the D-6 switches and other PBX components are 25 years old.

The district upgraded much of its PBX equipment in 1993, Shawn says.

“In 1998, we upgraded our system from analog to digital for improved functionality,” he reports.

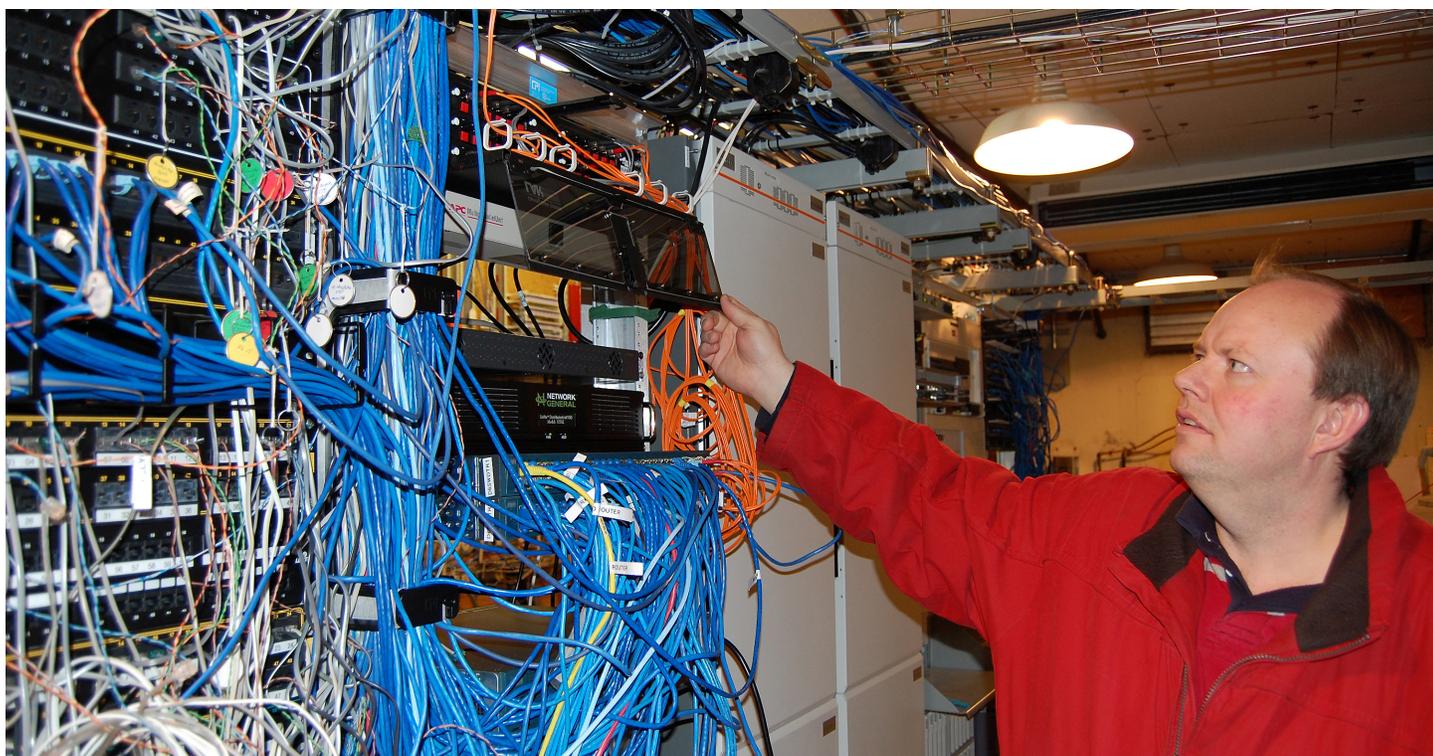
In the 1990s, ITD purchased Lucent Technologies phones, which have been replaced during the rollout because they did not have data connections required for VoIP. Phone signals now pass through users’ computers.

Cisco Systems Inc. manufactured the new phones, which are of heavy-duty construction. The quality of the units makes you wonder if you should have purchased stock in the networking-gear company (NASDAQ: CSCO).

The new phone system is purring along. Employees have about got it licked. Phone service is improved.

Advanced computer technology has changed the world.

And continues to do so, even in eastern Idaho. ■



Information Systems Coordinator Shawn Madsen inspects fiber and routers in the communications room of the District 6 office.

Chart of reorganization of D-6 into four divisions;

Former Regions 1 and 2 merge into Construction



The clunky old consoles are eight times larger than the new ones and do not include a phone handset or built-in microphone.

New radio consoles grace District 6 headquarters

New replaces old.

Small replaces big.

Stylish replaces old-fashioned.

I refer to the radio console upgrade at District 6 headquarters.

Rainsdon... (from p. 1)

The crash blocked the passing lane of northbound I-15 for two hours. The snowplow sustained slight damage, and the Astro sustained extensive damage. An ISP officer cited Lee for improper passing. ■



Astro damage following the collision.

Technicians Brett Jensen and Brad Maxwell of the Radio Shop replaced control consoles in maintenance and reception areas in January.

Now a svelte new console hangs on the wall between maintenance coordinators Kirk Finn and Randy Drake. Another one sits on the desk of clerk-receptionist Linda Monk.

The new consoles are one-eighth the size of the old ones, despite having a telephone handset and a built-in microphone that the 12-year-old consoles do not have.

These new consoles also have a traditional stand-alone microphone, which represents a third way to send and receive messages on the state radio network.

Brett and Brad will replace other radio-control consoles, at a cost of approximately \$3,000 each, in Supply Operations, the Machine Shop and the Salmon yard as resources become available.

Why radios instead of cell phones?

ITD uses both types of common communication systems.

Two-way radios are important for five reasons:

1. Low-frequency radio signals reach into canyons better than do high-frequency cell signals.
2. Broadcasts reach multiple locations simultaneously, so that anyone with a scanner (radio receiver with a wide frequency range) can hear them. Such general reception facilitates emergency reporting and coordination.
3. The state radio system receives emergency alerts, hospital availability reports and law enforcement updates more reliably than cell phones.
4. The State Communications Center (StateComm) provides central dispatch services.
5. System operations are inexpensive.

Radio signals that originate from a console at District 6 headquarters travel over copper wires to a control station in the Emergency Office Coordination (EOC) room in the office basement. This control station forwards the signals to a "repeater," which is a transmission tower atop a mountain, for relay to radio receivers

in buildings, trucks, loaders, pickups and cars.

To send a message from the radio-control console on Linda’s desk, depress and hold down the big red button located in the lower-right corner of the console; say the radio call number of the person you wish to reach and then say “from six oh” (6-0), which is the District 6 office call number; then release the button and listen for a response. After the response, depress and hold down the button to speak again.

You also can depress and hold down the button on the phone handset or the standalone microphone (long black button on the right side of the apparatus) to speak, releasing it to hear the response.

If the party you wish to reach is working in an area outside the Idaho Falls-to-Ashton region, press the area’s white button, which is labeled, before talking. This button activates a repeater on Mt. Baldy near Salmon to relay your transmission to radios in that area’s buildings or vehicles.

To reach someone in Custer or Lemhi County, first press the green Salmon control button and then the white Salmon button. These buttons transfer you to the Custer-Lemhi radio-control channel and then to Mt. Baldy, respectively.

To return transmission to eastern Idaho, press the Rigby radio-control



Brad Maxwell and Brett Jensen of the Radio Shop install the reception area console.

button, which transfers you back to the counties of District 6 other than Custer and Lemhi, namely Bonneville, Jefferson, Madison, Teton, Fremont, Butte and Clark.

Press and hold down the transmit button to talk; release the button to listen.

When you complete your conversation, say *WSY87*, which is the signoff tag.

Actually, *WSY87* is the license designation issued by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to the State of Idaho for the radio frequency used at District 6 in Rigby.

Specifically, the designation is the “FCC Callsign” to be acknowledged at the end of each conversation....

WSY87.■

For your information, Brett and Brad troubleshoot the state’s radio system throughout eastern Idaho, including its microwave backbone between District 6 and Boise. These technicians work for the Public Safety and Communication Department of the Idaho Bureau of Homeland Security.

District 6 provides the duo with space in the west side of the shop building northeast of the office. They work in this radio shop from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday and are on call around the clock.



Holiday Cheer

**110 employees
attend Christmas
party 12-16-09**

Rich Asbury

Phase 2. Public... (from p. 1)

Citizens also may request a CD or paper copy of the STIP document by e-mailing Mark McNeese at TPSTIP@itd.idaho.gov, calling him at (208) 332-7823, or writing him at the Idaho Transportation Department, P.O. Box 7129, Boise, ID 83707-1129.

In addition, Idahoans may contact transportation planners at district offices to give input.

In District 6, contact Senior Transportation Planner Bill Shaw at bill.shaw@itd.idaho.gov or 208-745-5608.

ITD welcomes public input anytime, anywhere. (continued right)



Updated annually, the STIP is the official means of obtaining feedback on ITD plans.

And rightly so.

“The people of the state of Idaho in creating the instruments of government that serve them, do not yield their sovereignty to the agencies so created.” (Idaho Code 67-2340)

Public input is for ITD engineers, designers, drafters, surveyors, inspectors, technicians, operators, mechanics, clerks, buyers, trainers, planners, managers – the lot.

But it also is for the Idaho Transportation Board.

The Idaho Transportation Board is an independent citizen group appointed by the governor to oversee ITD work and authorize project construction.

This seven-member board seeks to know if ITD recommendations have community support.

Citizen input, of course, strongly influences ITD’s job planning and funding.

“Projects with the greatest support tend to receive the highest priority,” Bill says.



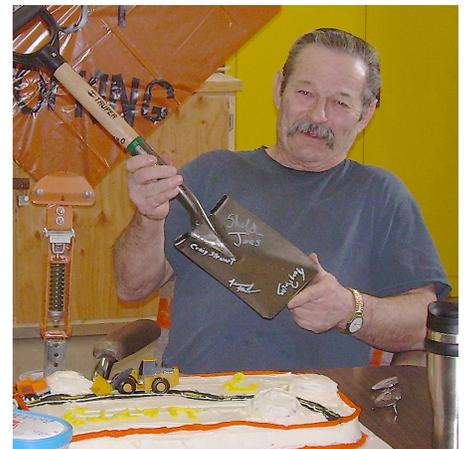
Citizen input shapes project planning.

District 6 officials also obtain public input by meeting twice annually with five transportation committees representing the nine counties in the district. The meetings are open to the public.

In addition, the district coordinates ongoing planning and construction activities with local officials.

When you spend public funds, you need public input.

Nothing less will do. ■



Bruce A. Smith retires

TTS Bruce A. Smith of Mackay maintenance has retired. He is on vacation until April 9, which will be his last day. He put in 20 years for ITD.

“The stress is completely eliminated,” Bruce says. “No more worrying about what time of the night the phone will ring.” (More on Bruce’s new life next.)



Elaine walks line

Normally graceful, clerk-receptionist Elaine Wolf tries to walk a straight line with her vision blurred by goggles imitating the effects of alcohol and drug abuse. Part of a presentation by Cpl. Chris Elverud of ISP on winter and general driving safety, the safety meeting on Dec. 29 was at District 6 headquarters in Rigby.