

# TRANSLINES EXPRESS

Feb. 5, 2020

## Altoona employee follows his instincts to rescue young boy



By Priscilla Petersen  
District Four

Thinking that a KDOT co-worker was flagging him down, Clayton Zimmerman pulled off the highway toward the bobbing beam of light.

It was around 2:45 a.m. on the frigid morning of Jan. 18. Zimmerman, an Equipment Operator at the Altoona office, was on his shift removing snow and ice from the U.S. 75 business loop at Altoona.

Instead of a colleague, the person frantically beckoning with a flashlight was the grandmother of a missing five-year-old boy. She had been sleeping, and then awakened to discover that her grandson wasn't in the house.

"I can definitely say my security guard instincts kicked in," recalled Zimmerman, who previously worked in security at an area manufacturing plant. At his prompting the woman called the Wilson County Sheriff. Meanwhile, Zimmerman got on his radio to alert Altoona co-workers Roger Houchin and Randall Nalley.

Watching for the boy, Zimmerman began working on the U.S. 75 loop toward the intersection with K-47. It was there that "I heard a child scream," he said.

He steered his truck into a convenience store lot and notified Nalley that he was leaving the cab. Outside it was

23 degrees, pitch black and wet.

"As I came around my truck, I noticed the boy was standing on the double yellow line of K-47," Zimmerman said. The child was clad in only shirt and sweatpants, with no shoes or socks.

"I felt kind of felt bad for the kid," he said. "I could tell he was scared and didn't know where he was at."

Suddenly, Zimmerman saw approaching headlights. He lifted the boy off the center line and carried him to safety. As luck would have it, the driver of the advancing vehicle was a sheriff's deputy responding to the missing child report.

Zimmerman said the child had been outside long enough to become hypothermic. He was soaked through his clothing and shook so much that he was unable to talk to the deputy. The county EMS was alerted, and soon the boy and his grandmother were on the way to a nearby hospital.

With the child back in good hands, Zimmerman climbed in his truck and worked the remainder of the shift. "It was kind of a shake up" to his nighttime routine, he admitted.

Thinking back on the rescue, Zimmerman had some wise words to share: "People will rely on you in stressful situations, and you have to be able to 'be on it.'"

"Always be on the lookout and always trust your instincts."

# Partnering summit strives to improve relationships, communication

By Kim Stich  
Headquarters

Improving relationships and communication between KDOT staff, contractors and consultants are important, according to State Transportation Engineer Burt Morey. KDOT's first Kansas Transportation Partnering Summit, which took place on Jan. 22 in Kansas City, was a significant step in working towards these goals.

"I would charge people to be thinking about our partners' perspectives and try to understand their viewpoints," Morey said. "Taking the initiative to understand why they're asking a question and helping them solve that problem would be tremendously helpful."

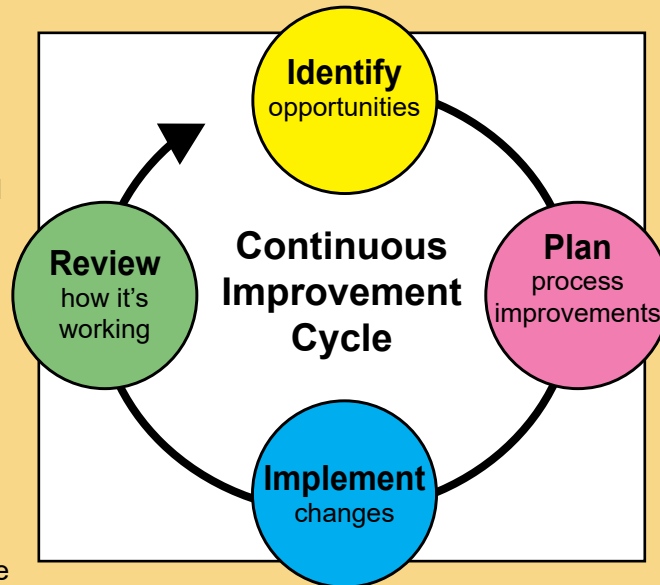
Before the summit, KDOT employees and numerous industry partners completed a survey. "The main issue was making decisions on projects at a local level. Advice from HQ may be needed, but I want to empower our folks to make decisions out in the districts in a more timely manner," Morey said. "We can't always make requested changes, but we can listen to their concerns and support them."

During the summit, breakout sessions on specification changes, decision making and the bidding process were discussed. Concerns about trust factors and poor communication were also brought forward and discussed during these sessions.

One way to address improvements on these issues is to put a continuous improvement process in place. The process involves evaluating a situation, making a recommendation, implementing the recommendation and then reviewing it again to confirm it's working. "As you do that, you interject more issues or concerns that can then be solved in the revolving process," Morey said.

People generally want to work together as a team on a project, Morey said. And finding ways to improve relationships will help bring together KDOT staff, contractors and consultants to drive Kansas FORWARD.

Morey and Director of Operations Larry Thompson plan to talk about survey results, ways to improve relationships, decision-making at the regional level and other topics at District meetings this spring.



## TRANSLINES EXPRESS

Published by the  
Kansas Department of  
Transportation

Office of the Secretary  
Eisenhower State  
Office Building  
700 SW Harrison  
Topeka, KS

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# Much-needed bridge project underway on K-147

By Lisa Mussman  
District Three

A bridge replacement project along K-147 in Trego County is getting underway this week. Crews are replacing the bridge over the Smoky Hill River at Cedar Bluff Reservoir, located 14 miles south of Ogallah.

The steel-tied arch bridge was completed in 1950 as part of construction on the Cedar Bluff Reservoir. The structural steel was fabricated by the Kansas City Structural Steel Corporation and underwent a test assembly at the plant before being shipped to Riga, Kan., by rail. According to records from the Bureau of Reclamation, the erection of the structure was “performed in an ingenious manner” and considered “worthy of description” for its time.

Supports were set up on either side of the spillway to support the arch truss parts during assembly, which was done upright as opposed to a typical flat construction. Nearly all of the riveting was also completed during the



*A historical photo shows the final truss being hoisted into place on K-147. Records indicate that it took part of only three working days to erect the steel trusses.*

ground assembly, except for the center splices of the top and bottom chords of the trusses. The trusses were then erected half at a time, a process that involved a joint effort between two cranes. One crane would hoist and place a half section of truss on to the bridge seat. That truss would then held in place by a second crane, while the first crane lifted the second half of the truss into position. Once both were in position, the center splices were joined and bolted.



*The bridge, as it looks today.*

The bridge originally featured a concrete deck, but would later be replaced in the early 1990s with a steel grid deck filled with lightweight concrete in an effort to improve load rating. Recently, the bridge began undergoing serious growth problems with the steel grid deck that have caused structural issues to the deck support beams. After a series of repairs followed up by routine inspections, it was closed in June 2019 because of safety concerns about its structural deficiencies.

Construction should be completed by late August. Wildcat Construction of Wichita is the primary contractor on the \$2.2 million project. Ryan Barrett’s road squad and Shawn Schwensen’s bridge squad designed the project.



# A nice, personal turn of events in U.S. 54 closure

By Tim Potter  
District Five

Part of being a KDOT worker tasked with stopping and redirecting traffic for a highway closure is hearing complaints from motorists.

They're understandably frustrated by the inconvenience of having to seek another route. Sometimes, they make their frustration very clear.

One of the KDOT workers helping with the U.S. 54 closure west of Pratt got just that.

The highway section between Pratt and Greensburg was closed because of a nearby butane leak discovered on Jan. 26. It was a safety hazard, officials said, because a butane leak can easily ignite. The KDOT worker was just doing his job, responding to something beyond his control.

But the complaint was followed by something downright positive – an apology and a thanks from the very person who made the complaint.

Here is the nice note KDOT got from the person:

“Just to forward a note to a guy working on the road closure at the Pratt location in Pratt. I was running late due to a doctor appointment and was stopped at the Pratt location to turn around and go to HWY 50 to get to Dodge. I was very nasty to the poor guy standing in the cold doing his job. They had the chore to go from car to car to tell them how to get where you were going. Super sorry to this guy. Thank you for keeping us safe! If I knew his name I would send a personal note. No excuse for my personal grumpy!”

And there you have it.



*Numerous KDOT employees assisted in the efforts to stop and reroute traffic around the closure on U.S. 54 west of Pratt. Photo by Tim Potter, District Five*

Gene Watts, the Pratt Area Superintendent, has helped oversee KDOT's response to the highway emergency. Watts acknowledged that road closures can bring some pretty heated complaints. But he agreed that the apology was a pleasant turn.

“We appreciate their apology,” Watts said. “We're doing the best we can to serve them, keep them safe in their travels.”

The U.S. 54 stretch opened on Jan. 30.

Michael Becker, one of the KDOT workers directing vehicles at the stop near Pratt on Jan. 29 said of the apology: “To know that somebody apologized makes us feel better. We're just doing the best we can with the circumstances.”

# Safety Alert - learn from guardrail incident

*Safety Alerts are designed to share information about an incident so others can learn ways to improve, which is an important part of Secretary Julie Lorenz' Be Safe initiative. The people involved are not identified.*

An Area crew and Subarea crews were replacing sections of guardrail along a highway on the afternoon of Dec. 12, 2019.

After completing the guardrail work, an Equipment Operator walked towards the backhoe to inform the Equipment Operator driving the vehicle to curl the bucket up so that the bucket would not damage the newly-installed guardrail pieces.

However, the driver had already turned his swivel seat to the front position facing main bucket. When he reached to the back of the vehicle, he accidentally hit the

swing for the boom and struck the Equipment Operator in the chest and neck area, knocking him to the ground. The Equipment Operator sustained internal bruising and mild concussion from the impact.



To prevent this from happening in the future, any vehicle or equipment that contains a swivel seat should have that seat set, locked and facing the direction of intended equipment use. In addition, the driver should confirm that the immediate area around the equipment is clear before moving.

All workers in the general area should be wearing hard hats and be at least five feet away from the boom while performing their work and have a designated person to communicate instructions to the driver.



*KDOT Geologist Neil Croxton photographed an area along K-181 in Mitchell County after receiving freezing fog.*



# Kansas personalized plates get new design

By Lisa Mussman  
District Three

A new design is breezing its way onto Kansas personalized license plates starting this month. The design, "Powering the Future," features a series of turbines set against a Kansas sunrise and pays tribute to the state's history and status of embracing wind energy. Kansas is ranked number one in the nation for wind energy production.

The Kansas Department of Revenue began issuing the plates on Jan. 15. Customers with the 2015 "Sunflower State" personalized plate may retain their plates as a keepsake, but must switch to the new design if they want to keep their current personalization.

Citizens with standard vehicle Kansas tags will not be affected by the design change.

In addition to offering personalized license plates, the Department of Revenue offers more than 40 distinctive license plate options, from collegiate pride to cancer awareness and more.



According to the Department of Revenue, the top five currently issued distinctive plates are:

In God We Trust	18,160
Kansas State University	12,054
University of Kansas	6,504
Breast Cancer Awareness	4,465
Pittsburg State University	3,687

For a complete list of available plates, check with your local county treasurer's office. To see KDOT's blog with more details, click [here](#).



## KDOT assists to update byway sign

The Frontier Military Historic Byway committee purchased new lettering for the Frontier Military rock at the entrance to the rest area on K-52, just east of U.S. 69 (Trading Post).

KDOT District Four employees Marty Volz and Robert Novotny, Equipment Operators at the Chanute office, installed the lettering for the words Historic Byway. The sign previously said Scenic Byway. This project was spearheaded by Patrick Martin with the Marais Des Cygnes National Wildlife Area.

# A slice of KDOT life: fighting frozen fog

By Tim Potter  
District Five

This time of year, KDOT crews are busy trying to stay ahead of the weather.

Here's a snapshot of a recent battle against frozen fog.

It's Friday morning, Jan. 24, at the District Five offices in Hutchinson, and supervisors see that the forecast calls for frozen fog that night and into the next morning. Extreme humidity, left by a barrage of rain and snow, is about to meet freezing temperatures.

So across much of south central Kansas, District Five crews set out to lay down a layer of brine – saltwater – a melting agent to help keep an icy glaze from forming.

They focus on what KDOT crews call “the criticals” -- the bridge decks that tend to freeze faster because they are not insulated by the ground. And the curves, crossovers and turnarounds -- where angling tires are more apt to lose traction on slick spots.

So that morning, in just one part of the multi-county effort, two KDOT trucks and their drivers work in tandem to spray brine in both directions on K-96 between



*Dave Alexander, Equipment Operator Senior, on a brine run on K-96 between Hutchinson and Wichita.*



*Christy DeSantis, Equipment Operator, back in the Hutchinson shop after spraying brine in advance of frozen fog. Photos by Tim Potter, District Five*

Hutchinson and Wichita.

The frozen-fog fighters: Dave Alexander, Equipment Operator Senior, with about 20 years of service to KDOT, and Christy DeSantis, Equipment Operator, with about two years of experience.

They each drive a big orange truck with flashing lights, one with a 2,000-gallon brine tank, the other with 1,600 gallons. She takes the inside lane. He, the outside. She goes ahead. He stays behind. Traffic passes in between.

Here and there, they stop and turn to catch the crossover and turnaround lanes.

Using controls in their toasty cabs, they spray brine intermittently as they roll along.

In Alexander's truck, a monitor shows the air temperature, 33 degrees, and road temperature, 39. It's around 11 a.m. All is calm. They keep working methodically.

You can see dull-white parallel lines, long ribbons down the highway, where the brine nozzles have sprayed directly down.

It's all part of an effort to keep motorists from spinning out.

The crews do what they can.

## Trivia!

### The rock band Kansas –

1. Kansas had a million-selling single – what was it?
2. How long did that song appear on the Billboard charts?
3. What town were most of the original members from?
4. This song was included on soundtracks for movies and television shows such as Anchorman: The Legend of Ron Burgundy, Happy Gilmore, Family Guy, Scrubs, South Park and more.
5. What New York location did Kansas sell out as the major heading act in the late 1970s?
6. In 1978, the band toured Europe for the first time and later that year were named members of this program.

## Work zone safety contest



KTA is hosting its fifth annual National Work Zone Awareness Week design contest for Kansas students in grades 8-12. The winning teen will win \$200 and their work will be published in *VYPE Magazine*, the high school sports magazine for central and northern Kansas. Details can be found at [www.kstumpike.com/contests](http://www.kstumpike.com/contests)

## KDOT announces Kansas airport improvement projects

Twenty-three projects have been selected by KDOT for Kansas Airport Improvement Program (KAIP) funding for the purpose of planning, constructing or rehabilitating public use general aviation airports.

KAIP receives \$5 million annually through the T-WORKS transportation program and requires airport sponsors to share in the project costs by paying a minimum of 5% of the total project. KDOT's Division of Aviation considered 113 project applications this year with a combined total project value of more than \$27 million.

"Transportation provides access to all things important in our lives and aviation is a particularly important mode of transportation for Kansas industry," said Secretary Julie Lorenz. "These airport improvements are a few of the many important efforts to empower aviation economic growth across our entire state. KAIP has shown great value through the years and will continue under the proposed FORWARD transportation program."

The selection board identified \$4.2 million of improvements to address the top 15% most impactful airport improvements across the state.

To see all the selected projects, click [here](#).

### Trivia answers

1. "Dust in the Wind."
2. More than 200 weeks.
3. Topeka.
4. "Carry on Wayward Son."
5. Madison Square Garden.
6. UNICEF Deputy Ambassadors of Goodwill.



# Cost Share Program begins second round

After a highly successful first round of KDOT's Cost Share Program last fall, a second round of applications are being accepted now through April 15.

The Cost Share Program is designed to provide financial assistance that leverages state funding with local and private funding for projects related to economic development as well as job growth and retention. It will provide funding to local entities for construction projects that improve safety, increase the total transportation investment and help both rural and urban areas of the state improve their transportation system.

A minimum of 15% non-state cash match is required. Additional consideration will be given to project applications that commit more than the minimum required match amount. A portion of this funding is part of the remaining one-time \$50 million approved this



fiscal year by the Legislature and Gov. Laura Kelly.

All transportation projects are eligible, including roadway (on and off the state system), rail, airport, bicycle/pedestrian and public transit.

For more details on the program, contact Michelle Needham, Cost Share Program Coordinator, or check the links on the front of KDOT's website [here](#).

An advertisement for the 26th Annual KDOT Transportation Safety Conference. The top part features a dark blue banner with the text '26th Annual' in a vertical yellow box on the left, and 'KDOT Transportation Safety Conference' in large white letters, followed by 'Capitol Plaza Hotel • Topeka, Kansas • April 21 & 22, 2020' in smaller white and yellow text. Below the banner is a photograph of a multi-lane highway with several cars driving. At the bottom, a yellow banner contains the text 'Register now! [kupce.ku.edu/transportation-safety](http://kupce.ku.edu/transportation-safety)' in blue and black text.