

TRANSLINES EXPRESS

March 3, 2021

How cold was it? Diesel turned to gel, crews challenged

By Tim Potter
District Five

Call it Frigid February: From around Feb. 6 through Feb. 17, KDOT highway maintenance crews worked long hours to clear ice and snow during record cold. Temperature readings reached around 20 degrees below 0. Wind chills reached around minus 30. It was so dangerously cold, KDOT encouraged the public to limit travel. Through it all, KDOT crews kept rolling and plowing.

Here are some of the KDOT crews' observations of the latest frigid stretch:

Marcus Leck, District Four Area Superintendent at Independence: They dealt with about 8 inches of snow and ice starting Feb. 14.

"This is the coldest snowstorm that I can ever remember working in 25 years." The frigid cold zapped moisture from the snow. The snow was so dry, it did not bond to the road. They used heat lamps to warm fuel dispensers to keep diesel from gelling. One morning, the outside temperature reading in Leck's truck read minus 20 degrees. "I can't even tell you how much



Winfield Area Superintendent Greg Dixon photographed a reading of minus 20 degrees outside, while he was stopped at a mixing strip.



A fuel filter with diesel residue turned to gel by the frigid cold. Photo by Marty Eshelman, District Five

diesel treatment we went through. But we kept our trucks running."

Leisa Mauch, District Five Area Superintendent at Pratt: It was so cold at the Kingman shop that diesel fuel gelled as it came out of the dispenser. Thickened diesel caused Kingman trucks to stall, so trucks from Pratt filled the gap. Mauch, with KDOT nearly 19 years, said it was years since she had encountered weather so cold it was causing diesel to gel.

Tom McCartney, District Five Area Superintendent at El Dorado: He praised his crews. "You're asking a lot of these people to go out under these extreme conditions and be productive." Because it was so cold that brine would freeze on the road or freeze and damage equipment, they drained brine out of their trucks and added antifreeze to protect equipment. He kept reminding supervisors to tell operators to alert someone

Continued on Page 3

Alert KDOT employee sees smoke coming from house, rescues homeowner, two dogs

By Priscilla Petersen
District Four

The morning of Feb. 19, David Ross was driving his state pickup along the U.S. 160 overpass at Columbus when he noticed smoke coming out of the roof of a house south of the overpass. Ross, who is the Highway Maintenance Supervisor at the KDOT Columbus Subarea, made a quick loop around the block to have another look, confirming that smoke was indeed pouring out of the house's seams. Then the rescue effort began.

"I was on the phone with 911" at the same time he was loudly banging on the front door of the house, Ross recalled. "I had beat until the door was about to fall off." Receiving no immediate response from inside, he opened the door and prepared to enter the home.

"I was nervous about going in," he said. Ross couldn't see flames in the house, but there was "lots of smoke."

Ross said there were two dogs in the house, and then an older man came out of the back room. "He had to have been napping," said Ross, who yelled at the man to "Come on, we got to get out of here!" With that, Ross and the man "got the two dogs and got out."

"It was hectic for awhile ... it kind of gets your adrenalin running," he remembered. In the meantime, the Columbus Fire Department had arrived at the scene. They took over, settling the man and his dogs in a vehicle outside the house. The fire, which had started in the attic, was extinguished although the home was badly damaged.

Ross said the man is now staying with relatives.



David Ross

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Published by the
**Kansas Department of
Transportation**

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Eisenhower State
Office Building
700 SW Harrison
Topeka, KS

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Anthony Subarea Supervisor Greg Hekel took this photo while he surveyed a frigid landscape during clearing of K-44 when it was temporarily closed.

Continued from Page 1

when they got out of their vehicles and back into their vehicles because of the danger of slipping and falling and becoming caught out in the frostbite-inducing cold.

Kim Brownlee, District Five Subarea Supervisor at Wellington: At one point, his crew worked 12-hour shifts several days in a row. "I'm proud of my crew." The cold was causing brake air tanks to collect water from condensation, so the air tanks had to be bled. If ever there was a time to layer up on clothing, this was it. "I preached staying warm."

Earlier, starting around Super Bowl Sunday, Feb. 7, some crews encountered freezing mist. Here are some of their observations:

Leck: After pretreating bridges the week before, they worked from Sunday afternoon, Feb. 7, to the following Wednesday afternoon. That Sunday, a frozen mist hit. "The thing about the mist is, it will go instantly from a wet highway to a sheet of black ice." In that less brutal stretch of cold, they were able to use granular salt moistened by brine to attack the ice.



Anthony Subarea Supervisor Greg Hekel took a photo of his truck's outdoor temperature gauge.

District Five: Area superintendents across the district dealt with ice caused by freezing drizzle or fog. Earlier on, they fought the ice with varying combinations of salt, sand, brine and beet juice. They encountered the same problem as others across the state: "It's so cold, it freezes back," said McCartney, Area Superintendent at El Dorado.

Greg Dixon, Area Superintendent at Winfield: "Our entire area was covered with freezing drizzle" at one point. Still, they managed to clear it.

Mitch Jenkins, Area Superintendent at Great Bend: His crews started out using beet juice because it is effective at lower temperatures.

David Lechner, Area Superintendent at Wichita: His crews began by applying a mix of beet juice and brine followed by salt granules – before rush hour if possible – with the hope that roadways would be dry before the "mega cold" hit.

IT effort improves security, reliability for KDOT

Congratulations to the KDOT Software Defined Networking Team that was selected as an Example of Excellence for the fourth quarter of 2020.

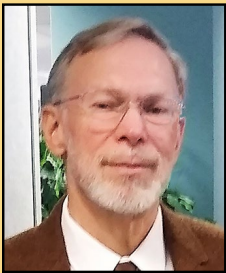
The team worked together on the new hardware/software solution that improves security, reliability and the ability to provide updates to KDOT employees using computers across the state.

IT Security and Networking team members at Headquarters upgraded software, reconfigured

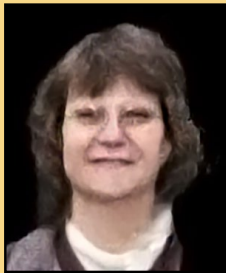
firewalls, deployed hardware devices and improved network design.

District team members spent more than 140 hours and drove 2,400 miles deploying the new SD-WAN solution to 50 KDOT locations in less than one month.

The team will be recognized for its efforts at a virtual ceremony on March 8. Members of the team are pictured below.



Rick Baker



Carol Baldry



Jeremy Belleau



Derek Bengtson



Bryan Drake



Robert Dressman



Jon Evans



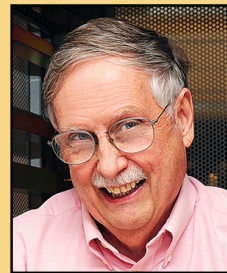
Colton Goeffert



Mike Hammes



Diana Johnston



Bill Kritikos



Will Lee



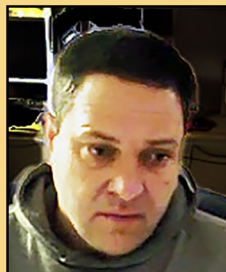
David Menefee



Tony Ortiz



Dianne Parker



Doug Schmitz



*Steve Woodbury
(retired)*

Take one step at a time to a solid foundation

By Troy Whitworth
Division of Safety Director

Feet are the foundation of the body. Good footwear will help you take care of that foundation and keep your body feeling great.

So, how do you know when to replace a boot or shoe? For me, it is when the heel or part of the sole starts wearing down unevenly. Look at the bottom of your shoes; are they showing some wear? If so, you may want to consider a new pair.

It's important to get new shoes that fit properly and provide adequate support. One way to do this - look at the shoes you already have. Stand barefoot on a piece of paper or cardboard and trace the shape of each foot. Now take each pair of your shoes and place them on top of the drawing. Your "comfortable" shoes will most likely match the outline of your own feet.

When you are ready to replace some of the shoes that feel uncomfortable or are worn out, here are some tips that may help.

- ♦ Shop for footwear in the evening. Your feet can expand with use during the day and may swell in hot weather. Wear the same type of socks that you intend to wear with them – it can make a difference on how shoes or boots fit.
- ♦ If you go to a store to purchase your footwear, have both your feet measured. I would recommend getting measured every time you buy new shoes or boots. If one foot is larger or wider than the other, buy a size that fits the larger foot.

- ♦ Stand in the shoes. Make sure you have at least a quarter to a half-inch of space between your longest toe and the end of the shoe.
- ♦ Walk around in the shoes to determine how they feel. If they are tight, don't think that the shoes just need to be "broken in," or that they will stretch with time. Find footwear that fit from the start.
- ♦ Make sure that the shoes you purchase are comfortable. Sizes can vary from one style to another and from one manufacturer to another. Feel the inside of the shoes to see if they have any material that might irritate your feet or cause blisters.
- ♦ Turn the footwear over and examine the soles. Are they sturdy enough to provide protection from sharp objects? Do they provide any cushioning? Try to walk on different surfaces to see how the shoes feel. Make sure that the soles provide traction and have some tread. Many of our folks that are in the field walk across uneven terrain, so a lace-up boot will provide much more ankle support than a pull-up boot.



Cheap shoes do not always equal good shoes.

Remember, you sometimes get what you pay for. You may be on your feet all day. Comfort is very important to help keep your feet happy and healthy. You also might alternate between old and new pairs of boots when breaking in that new pair. This will reduce the risk of blisters and help give your boots time to dry out completely between uses.

Keeping the foundation of your body in tip-top shape starts with your feet. It will help you get where you are going as quickly and efficiently as possible; for your family and mine.

Lamar billboards thank KDOT road crews

By Tim Potter
District Five

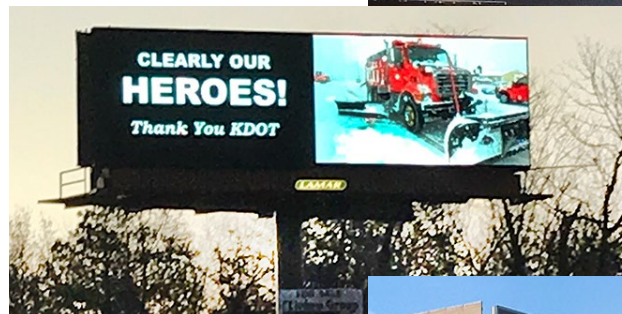
Brian Latta was sitting at home in Wichita during February's prolonged arctic chill when the idea hit him: Let's have billboards showing appreciation for KDOT workers who clear highways of snow and ice.

Latta could make it happen because he is General Manager/Vice President of Lamar Advertising Co. of Wichita. His inspiration: "I have always been impressed on how quickly the roads get cleared," Latta said. "It's just kind of miraculous."

He knows that as part of the highway-clearing, KDOT workers do a lot of work behind the scenes, out of the public eye, like loading materials to treat the roads.

His idea resulted in Lamar placing this message on some of its billboards: "CLEARLY OUR HEROES! Thank you KDOT," with "HEROES" in enlarged type next to a bright orange plow truck in the snow.

Lamar put the message on 10 of its billboards in Wichita along Kellogg, I-135 and I-235 from Feb. 16 to Feb. 21. Lamar then also placed them on I-70 and I-35 in



Signs of appreciation can be seen in Wichita (above), Kansas City (left) and Topeka (below). Photos by Tracy Crockett, Albert Horn and Kim Stich



Kansas City and I-470 in Topeka.



Jorge Alvarado, Equipment Operator Senior in Wichita, said he appreciated the billboard message. His snow-and-ice route is U.S. 54/Kellogg from Webb to Seneca and I-135 from Lincoln to 21st Street. Photo by Dan Acridge

Latta said he wanted to credit Lamar Wichita office Graphic Designer Phuong Bach for creating the advertising.

Latta said he had the idea for the message in the past, but the weather changed too quickly to implement it. He hopes the billboard message can be saved so "we can pop it up again" when it's fitting.

KDOT Wichita Area Supervisor Dan Acridge said the signs left a good impression on him and others. Acridge noted something related to him by Jorge Alvarado, an Equipment Operator Senior whose snow-and-ice clearing route is U.S. 54/Kellogg from Webb to Seneca and I-135 from Lincoln to 21st Street.

"It made him (Alvarado) feel good to be appreciated," Acridge said. "He had never felt that appreciated. ... We do it to make the people safer."

Staff members support snow and ice efforts

By Kelly Kultala
District One

During snow and ice events, the efforts of the snowplow drivers are easily seen. What the public does not see is the supporting cast, those team members who are behind the scenes, that help make a snow and ice event run smoothly.

In each District, the facilities crew keeps the buildings in working order, making sure that the heat is on, the pipes do not freeze and the doors work. The District paint crew, bridge crew and heavy operators also take on additional responsibilities to support the team.

The Engineering Technicians drive snowplows when necessary. They are also put on stand-by, giving up potential time spent with their families. They pick up supplies and parts, pick up and deliver mail and may help thaw diesel supply pumps in the extreme cold.

Equipment Shop Mechanics keep the equipment going. They often go out on the road to fix or diagnose a problem with a truck, saving time and money. While out in the elements, they replace batteries, hoses, fuses and electrical connections. When trucks come into the



Area Three Shop Mechanics keep the equipment running. They include, front row, left to right, Shop Supervisor Dale Shirley and Mason Harris, and back row, left to right, Nick Peuker and Jason Woodward. This photo highlights District One, but each District has a number of employees helping behind the scenes during storms. Photo by Albert Horn, District One



shop during a snow and ice event, they are covered in snow and ice, which can be washed off in the wash bays, but the water and remaining snow still drip on to them as they work on or under a truck.

Superintendents, Supervisors and other staff work to keep KanDrive updated as well as check in with crews and coordinate schedules.

And last, but not least, are the office staff. They pay the bills, which keeps the lights and heat on. They order the salt and fuel and answer phone calls from the public, Kansas Highway Patrol, Sheriff and Police Departments and transfer them to where they need to go. They also work to fill open positions.

The Equipment Operators/snowplow drivers are often considered the leading characters during a snow and ice event. However, the supporting cast members are part of the team effort and are essential to having a well-orchestrated plan.

Trivia!

Famous roads in the U.S.

1. What the name of the highway that runs 113 miles from Miami through the Florida Keys? It also had the longest bridge in existence when it was built – the Seven Mile bridge.

2. This highway was established in 1927 and known as the “Mother Road.” It was one of the most important routes west for those escaping the Dust Bowl in the 1930s.

3. This highway goes through 64 miles of tropical rain forest and is a national Historic Site.

4. This 64-mile long highway cuts through the Navajo Nation and Utah’s Monument Valley. It has appeared in “Forrest Gump” and “Easy Rider.”

5. This 12-mile stretch of the San Juan Skyway is steep and winding – it runs from the Uncompahgre Gorge to the summit of Red Mountain Pass.

Employees start receiving COVID-19 vaccines

By Lisa Knoll
District Six

Several District Six employees in Finney County have received COVID-19 vaccine shots. For Equipment Operator Rene Garcia, getting the shot was an easy choice. “I got it so I don’t get sick.”

But for others, like Shop Mechanic Lee Perkins, it was more complicated. “You have a disease that is mutating and getting worse,” Perkins said. “If the vaccine keeps you from getting as sick and making others sick, you should get it.”

Each of the employees reported slightly different side effects following the vaccine, including soreness at the injection site, feeling tired the next day, a slight fever and some aches and pain.

Lee Perkins, District Six Shop Mechanic, received the COVID-19 vaccine. Photos by Lisa Knoll, District Six



Trivia answers

1. Florida’s Route 1, also known as the Overseas Highway.

2. U.S. Route 66.

3. Hana Highway, Hawaii

4. Scenic Byway 163 in Arizona and Utah.

5. Million Dollar Highway, Colorado

Meggers retires from KDOT after 31 years

Dave Meggers, Chief of the Bureau of Research, is retiring on March 5 after 31 years of service to the state of Kansas.

He started at KDOT in 1989 as Assistant Bridge Inspection Engineer in Local Projects. After a brief stop in the Bureau of Design, he went to the Bureau of Research in 1990 as the Research Development Engineer. In 2016, he was selected as the Assistant Bureau Chief and then in 2019, he was named the Bureau Chief.



Dave Meggers

“I worked with great people in Research and spent many years working on new products, better materials and new construction ideas,” Meggers said. “Kansas is one of the few states that still has research staff who conducts research in the lab and in the field. It’s a major asset for KDOT. Our staff can give near instant responses to problems or questions for field applications.”

During retirement, Meggers plans to spend time in his wood shop, on the lawn and with his family. He and his wife, Li Yu, have four children and five grandchildren.

How U.S. 281 started, how it’s going

The U.S. 281 T-WORKS project in Russell County is getting ready to enter its second and final construction season this month. The road is scheduled to close to through traffic between 15th Street in Russell and Land Road on March 15. Work on the 4-mile stretch includes construction of a 30-foot paved surface and 3-foot turf shoulders, with approximately 2 miles of the road being completely reconstructed on an offset alignment. These photos show the offset alignment at the beginning of the project and the dirt work that has been completed in preparation for the new section of road to be built.

Work is expected to be completed in December 2021. Greg Gonzales’ road squad and Paul Kulseth’s bridge squad designed the project. Photos by Dean Jay, District Three



KDOT projects receive national recognition

The National Asphalt Pavement Association recognized two Kansas projects constructed by the Hays branch of APAC-Kansas Inc. on Feb. 16 during its 66th annual meeting, which took place virtually.

Both projects won a 2020 Quality in Construction award for excellence in asphalt pavement construction.

The first project was on U.S. 50 in Harvey County. The 20-mile project consisted of a 2-inch mill and a 1.5-inch inlay placed on the same day in addition to shoulder chip seal, centerline rumble strips and striping. A large volume of truck traffic was able to keep moving through the construction area.

The second project was on K-51 in Morton County. The 17.5 mile project involved 1 inch of asphalt being milled, then a 1.5-inch overlay was placed. The portable asphalt plant had to be located off the project site because part of the road was in the Cimarron National Grassland.



The photo above shows a portion of the U.S. 50 project in Harvey County, and the photo below shows a portion of the K-51 project in Morton County that received national recognition. Photos provided



Thank you for your service

Retirees

The following employee retired from KDOT in March.

District Three

Holly Richards, Engineering Technician Senior, Phillipsburg

The following employees will retire from KDOT on April 1.

Headquarters

Stephen Campbell, Engineering Technician Specialist, Construction and Materials

Susan Eiseman, Professional Civil Engineer III, Construction & Materials

Donna Falkenstien, Administrative Specialist, Right of Way

David Meggers, Bureau Chief, Research

District One

Ronald Hornick, Engineering Technician Specialist, Olathe

Richard Wieneman, Equipment Operator, Lawrence

District Two

Robert Miller, Equipment Operator Senior, Beloit

Bret Wildfong, Equipment Operator Specialist, Beloit

District Four

Christine Severt, Program Consultant I, Chanute

Douglas Severt, Engineering Technician Specialist, Chanute

District Five

Martyn Howard, Highway Maintenance Supervisor, Coldwater

In Memory

Condolences to the family and friends of KDOT retiree Rodger "Rod" Gregory, of Panama City Beach, Florida. He passed away on Jan. 24. Gregory retired as Highway Maintenance Superintendent in Winfield in 1998 after a three-decade career with KDOT.

Condolences to the family and friends of KDOT retiree James Bonczkowski, who passed away Feb. 7 in Cherryvale. He started at KDOT in 1990 and was an Equipment Operator Senior at the Iola Area and Yates Center Subarea offices. Bonczkowski retired in 2008.

Condolences to the family and friends of KDOT retiree Diana Hewitt, who passed away on Feb. 16 in Topeka. She had 26 years of state service, the last 11 years as a Human Resource Professional I in the Bureau of Personnel Services. Hewitt retired in 2014.

Condolences to the family and friends of KDOT retiree Jim Stwalley, who passed away on Feb. 3. Stwalley

began in 1993 and worked at the Pratt Construction Office. He retired as an Engineering Technician Senior in May of 2011.

Condolences to the family and friends of Randy Conrad who passed away on Feb. 14 in Phillipsburg. Conrad worked as an Equipment Mechanic at the Phillipsburg Area shop from 1998 until his retirement in 2011.

Condolences to the family and friends of Roger Huff who passed away on Jan. 27 in Holdrege, Nebraska. Huff started with KDOT in 1985 and worked as an Equipment Mechanic at the Norton District shop until his retirement in 2007.

Condolences to the family and friends of Jerry Bueker who passed away on Feb. 17 in Topeka. Bueker worked for KDOT for more than 28 years at the Subarea office in Holton as an Equipment Operator Senior. He retired in 2017.



NASA offers unique views of the world

By Tom Hein
District Five

When the first astronaut orbited the Earth, camera work from space started an impressive photo album of the planet. For the last 20 years, the International Space Station (ISS), a temporary home to many astronauts, provided an enviable perspective for photographers.

This view pictured above was captured from the ISS on June 24, 2001. Your mission is to identify the KDOT

District (if you're really good, you'll narrow it down to the Subarea), the two partial counties shown, the major highway and three cities along the highway. Bonus points for naming the "locale" adjacent to the highway that is listed on the county map.

Read no further unless you want spoiler clues. These numbers will help: 626; 41 and 35; and 56. One of the cities is a county seat named for a French mountain man, trapper and pioneer. The locale name rhymes with ice and is about 20 miles from Hobart, Collano, Ryus, Missler and Kismet.

The answers are on page 13

Wichita first to use arterial Dynamic Messaging Signs

By Tracy Crockett
District Five

Signs alerting motorists of crashes, highway construction, travel times, Amber Alerts and other relevant messages can be seen throughout the state.

While frequently used on larger roadways, Wichita is the first to put a KDOT-owned arterial dynamic messaging sign (DMS) into operation.

“They’re really where you get the most benefits in an ITS system,” said Slade Engstrom, operations support for the KDOT Statewide (WICHway) Traffic Management Center (TMC) and Vice President for TranSystems. “The DMS itself is how you communicate with

people on the roadways, so getting good coverage is key.” TranSystems is contracted to handle the day-to-day operations of the WICHway TMC, which is co-located with the Sedgwick County 911 center.

“The arterial signs are a great compliment to our existing mainline DMS and will help promote safety in the Wichita area,” said Shari Hilliard, ITS Engineer for KDOT.

Arterial DMS are typically located on a side street near a major intersection.

These digital message boards provide information to drivers before they get on a freeway, most notably in relation to incidents that impact traffic flow. The signs communicate information regarding incidents as well as travel times to common destinations and advise of traffic congestion. The traffic is slower along arterial streets, allowing motorists more time to read the messages, so



This DMS sign on southbound Webb Road in Wichita helps alert drivers of incidents before they exit onto U.S. 54. Photo by Tracy Crockett, District Five.

smaller characters are used on these signs.

The first arterial DMS location in Wichita is on north- and southbound Webb Road near U.S. 54. The average daily traffic count in this area is more than 20,000.

“The arterial DMS made sense in these locations because you do have such a high volume coming on to U.S. 54,” Engstrom said.

Engstrom said the Wichita DMS helped motorists the first day it was used to divert drivers after a crash caused lane closures.

The four DMS signs can be found near U.S. 54 on Webb and Greenwich. KDOT owns and operates the signs, which were installed on the East Kellogg Project, a partnership with the City of Wichita and the Kansas Turnpike Authority.

Answers to - NASA offers unique views of the world trivia from page 13. The number 626 refers to District Six, Area Two, Subarea Six. County 41 is Haskell; county 35 is Gray. U.S. 56 runs northeasterly from Satanta to Sublette to Copeland.

The locale is Tice. Locales are unincorporated places or towns that often do not provide services for travelers.

See hundreds of world feature photographs at <https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/>.

RCAT expands services to help community

RCAT (Reno County Health Department) has expanded its normal services to assist the community during COVID-19. This is one of about 145 public transit programs across the state that KDOT currently supports with state and federal funds to meet the transportation needs of elderly persons, persons with disabilities and the general public.

An example of this effort includes last spring during the shut-down, when the group took food that was donated to the Reno County food bank and delivered it to a rural school district so teachers could send it out to students and families, said Barbara Lilyhorn, Director of the Reno County Department of Aging and Public Transportation.

"This is just one way we can help the community with transportation needs," Lilyhorn said.

Another example involves assistance with the vaccination program. People can schedule a pick-up time with RCAT as they have recently been offering rides to people who fit the current vaccine criteria. They also are helping people get from the parking lot to the front door of the vaccination site at the Hutchinson



RCAT staff members assist a person to the arena where COVID-19 vaccines are being given. Photo by Barbara Lilyhorn

Community College Sports Arena and back to their cars.

"We are so grateful to have the vehicles, the staff and the support and are more than happy to help the community in this way," Lilyhorn said. "We really do believe that RCAT is a community asset, so how ever we can help, we want to do that."

26th Annual **KDOT Transportation Safety Conference**
A Virtual Event • April 20 & 21, 2021
April 19: Pre-conference sessions • April 20 & 21: Conference plenary and concurrent sessions



To register, click here - lpe.ku.edu/transportation-safety **Deadline: April 16**