

Highway Division ready for snow — if it comes

When winter left its calling card during the first week of December, State Highway Division personnel were already well advanced in their planning for the first snow flurries.

Early plans are made for winter work by the division so that snow plowing equipment, sanding equipment, radio equipment, equipment operators, sanding materials and supplies, including signs, flags, barricades, small tools, and equipment parts, will all be in readiness for the first frost or snowstorm, according to Robert Schroeder, assistant state highway engineer for maintenance.

The preparations are not

limited to personnel and equipment alone, but to the cleaning of side ditches, and making the shoulders smooth and flush with the pavement. Snow stakes and fences are erected. Tall weeds, grass and brush that may cause drifting are cut and removed.

Pre-season preparations for snow and ice control operations normally are completed by Nov. 1 of each winter season, he said. These include snow plan development, equipment adjustments, winter equipment preparations and deployment, radio equipment maintenance, materials stockpiling, small tools and equipment parts

stockpiling, equipment operator training, and snow plow and snow fence deployment.

All operators prior to being assigned to winter operations are instructed in the proper operation and maintenance of the equipment. During the summer, many of these operators serve on crews patching roads, replacing guardrails, painting and striping in the valleys. In the winter, they move to the mountain summits.

Schroeder said all snow plowing and sanding equipment is overhauled as needed, and placed in good operating condition in the equipment repair shop during the summer. Heavy

equipment is called into the shops regularly for major preventive maintenance.

An adequate supply of replacement parts, including fan belts, spark plugs, light bulbs and batteries, are stocked at maintenance headquarters; when a crunch is on, these items are not always immediately available on the open market. In addition, supplies of antifreeze, special lube oils and grease are kept on hand.

Studded tires are not used on division-owned equipment. Special lights are authorized for equipment to make it more visible. Plug-in motor heaters are authorized in the coldest areas.

The policy of the division during storm conditions is that the orderly movement of traffic normally will take precedence over all other operations, excepting the protection of life, according to H. Scott Coulter, state highway engineer. The division's goal during winter storms is to maintain the state highway system so that traffic can proceed in a reasonably safe manner, he said.

To be most effective, snow and ice control procedures start with the first snow fall or sign of icing. Coulter said supervisory personnel are charged personally with the responsibility of anticipating the need for these activities.

They also must make arrangements to assure that personnel and equipment are on the job and properly outfitted with equipment and materials in advance of the need.

Wherever justified, night patrols are organized to provide maintenance on danger spots as needed, to observe the condition of the roads, and to advise immediate superiors of storms or emergency conditions. Statewide snow and ice control operations are limited by the resources available for winter maintenance operations. These include budget, personnel, equipment and materials. Last year the division spent

over \$5 million for snow removal operations, including \$105,000 for clearing the Columbia River Gorge highways, which closed 1-84 for four days. This year more than \$7 million has been budgeted.

Because of these limitations, a system of prioritizing highway routes is done annually by the district engineer in consultation with section supervisors. School bus routes are given primary consideration in assigning priorities in relation to hazards involved, regardless of the class of highway, Coulter said.

The following priorities have been established by the

Highway Division for plowing operations:

The first priority is for hills, curves, intersections, structures, and known problem areas based on historical information.

The second is for heavily traveled sections on Class 1 and 2 highways, emphasizing the heaviest direction of traffic and commuter routes.

The third is for the remaining sections of highways, including routes and operations covered by special agreements, such as winter recreation areas. Schroeder said storm conditions may result in a section of highway not being reasonably safe for traffic.

County mulls tax division transfer plan

OREGON CITY — Clackamas County Commissioners Thursday will consider a proposal to transfer the county Tax Division from the sheriff's office to the assessor's office as yet another move to promote efficiency in the county's day-to-day functions.

County Assessor George Malin and Sheriff Paul McAllister, who were sworn into their elective offices Monday, both supported the transfer during their fall campaigns and have sent the commissioners a letter of intent asking for their approval.

"Due to the similarity of work conducted in the assessor's office and the tax division, both Sheriff McAllister and myself felt it would be more efficient for both offices and mean better service to the public" if the transfer were made, Malin said. "We thought maybe the lows and peaks of the workload in the two offices could be integrated" for a more even workload, he said.

The Tax Division is only included in the sheriff's office for historical reasons, according to McAllister. At least 18 counties in Oregon already have transferred the taxing duties to the assessor's or treasurer's office, he said.

"There's really a duplication of records between the two offices now," McAllister said. Eliminating duplication of records and equipment should provide some cost saving in the future, he said, although both men are unsure what actual financial savings will be.

The sheriff's office will continue to handle collection of delinquent taxes, however, said McAllister.

Should commissioners approve the transfer, the Tax Division will remain in its current office building on Kane Road, next to the Assessor's office, Malin said.

Boat license forms changed

Boat owners will notice a change in the boat license renewal forms they're soon to receive in the mail.

According to the State Marine Board, taking the place of the traditional two-part form will be a postcard renewal notice. People wishing to re-register their boats must return the postcard with the indicated fee to the Marine Board.

The validated Certificate of Number and decals will then be issued by mail.

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