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## Agreement eases emergency cleanup

**LAST MAY** a severe windstorm toppled dozens of large trees in Grafton. The nearby villages of Cedarburg and Saukville were also hit hard.

"We lost 32 big trees in one area. It was four blocks wide and five blocks long," says Dave Murphy, Director of Public Works for Grafton. "Fortunately there was not much damage to homes, but the roads were blocked. You couldn't get through at all."

Getting enough manpower and equipment to open the streets was the first challenge. The next was dealing with huge piles of brush. Both would put a major strain on the resources of this small village.

Fortunately, Grafton was one of eleven neighboring communities that had just signed a public works mutual aid agreement. "I got on the phone and started calling," says Murphy. Jackson and Port Washington could each spare three men and a chipper. Later West Bend sent a tub grinder and operator to grind the debris.

"We were able to get the streets open the same day. The next was a Saturday so our crews started picking up brush," Murphy says. "We were pretty much back to normal in two weeks, thanks to the help we got. And with that tub grinder from West Bend, we got everything ground up in about a day and a half. Otherwise we would have had to truck the brush to West Bend, costing enormous time and effort."

### West Bend launches aid discussion

"It started about three years ago when our city administrator suggested we exchange equipment lists with the surrounding communities," says Terry Kiekhefer, DPW for West Bend. "Lists go out of date, but I thought: police and fire have mutual aid agreements. Why not public works?"

The Federal Emergency Management Agency was asking a similar question. Their concern was trying to make disaster management more effective while streamlining the flow of dollars into injured communities. They began raising the topic at training programs.

Starting with sample agreements found on the Internet from the states of New Hampshire and Washington, Kiekhefer and another staff person drafted a document. After the city attorney reviewed it, Kiekhefer started meeting with public works reps from other communities. There were plenty of issues to work out.

"Workman's Comp, equipment insurance, communication issues, different rules for different unions." He ticks them off quickly. "Defining what is an emergency. Does the pay clock start when they leave or when they arrive? Who pays for the fuel? The key issue pretty much throughout was cost: who pays?"

It took about a year for the public works reps to hammer out their differences. Then the document had to be approved by each community's elected council or board. That process took another year. In May 2004 eleven communities signed on, just in time to help Grafton, Saukville, and Cedarburg.

### Sharing what they can spare

In the end the communities decided to help each other for no cost unless FEMA was invoked and provided reimbursement. "We talked it through and everyone came to understand the concept: if it's you today, it will be us tomorrow," says Kiekhefer. "Assistance from other communities is what will help save your budget."

The key elements that make the agreement work are:

1. Each community authorizes a person to decide on his own authority whether to send help and what it will be.

2. No one is required to provide assistance. All help is voluntary.
3. Wages, union rules, start/stop times, etc. are the lender's responsibility.
4. Equipment lists and contact information are exchanged and updated annually.

Having enough participants is important to spread the cost and responsibility. Proximity, amount of resources, and resource balance are also considerations. Since help has to arrive quickly, travel time and geography are important. Similarly, if one group has a lot of equipment and staff, they probably will be doing much more lending than receiving.

For that reason Washington County did not join. "We have not entered into written agreements on aid," says Ken Pesch, Highway Commissioner. "We do respond if a municipality calls with an emergency condition, but with the imbalance in equipment available, we shouldn't have to call on a village or city very often. It would be too lop-sided."

### A push from the Feds

Making sense of local disaster management and making it more effective are among the goals of the Department of Homeland Security (H.S.). The agency has developed a National Incident Management System (NIMS) and is now pressing states to begin putting the system into effect at the local level.

"They want everybody to be NIMS compliant by the end of 2006," says Diane Kleiboer, Disaster Resources Supervisor, Wisconsin Emergency Management. "But that is predicated on Homeland Security developing all of the criteria and guidance, which they have not done yet."

Encouraging local public works mutual aid agreements is one part of the effort. Last September, H.S. published a revised policy on "Mutual Aid Agreements for Public Assistance (9523.6)." This clarifies the eligibility of costs under the Emergency Manage-

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Talk with your County Emergency Management Director.

ment Assistance Compact (EMAC) where mutual aid agreements are in place. One guideline now says that if the agreement is to supply aid at no cost, FEMA will follow that precedent and not give reimbursement. In an earlier version, the policy indicated that no aid would be paid unless a Mutual Aid Agreement was in place.

"There's a lot of speculation and angst about what everybody needs to do at all levels of government to be compliant," says Kleiboer. "Most of our communities and state are NIMS compliant because they have made a good faith effort to do ICS training and hone their skills in implementing ICS."

Currently the requirement only affects future grants, not disaster assistance; it leaves the definition of compliance vague. The guidelines are evolving, she says, and until they are in place, there will be some latitude in interpretation.

### Neighbor helping neighbor

While federal and state agencies are slowly grinding their way to resolution, local communities can help each other. "If you look at the whole scheme of things, most times when something happens it's not going to be a FEMA disaster," says Dave Murphy of Grafton.

"So we will be sending staff and equipment to help. Now, with our mutual aid agreement, we know who to call and what to expect."

In 2004 West Bend's Terry Kiekhefer presented their mutual aid agreement at the Wisconsin APWA chapter conference. APWA-Wisconsin asked him to head an Emergency Management Committee and promote the concept around the state. Since then he has given presentations, advice, and copies of documents to many localities. "It's really well received," he says. "It's a matter of working with every group of people, working through all the issues, and agreeing to work together."

Just recently the City of Beloit Public Works distributed a draft agreement among neighboring



communities. "The most critical thing is a list of equipment for every community involved," says Bruce Slogoski, Terrace Operations Supervisor who spearheaded the project. "For example, if there's a tornado you need to know who

has chain saws. You know where all your resources are so you can get people on scene faster."

Mutual aid among communities is a long tradition; the written agreements make the process smoother and faster.

*"Everybody came to understand the concept: if it's you today, it will be us tomorrow."*

## Sharing stretches budgets

**FEW THINGS** are as satisfying as ditching an old, decrepit piece of equipment for the latest, shiniest version. Economic reality is now making that harder and less frequent. To stretch their budgets, many roadway agency leaders have turned to cooperating, swapping, and entrepreneurship.

For example, Washington and Ozaukee county highway departments cooperate on chip sealing projects. Ozaukee has a good chip spreader while Washington has extra hauling trucks. "We team up and do it at the same time," says Commissioner Ken Pesch, of Washington County. "We rent their spreader with the operator, and then we help them haul their aggregates. It works very well."

In the winter, those same hauling trucks work for the City of West Bend. The city leases the trucks to haul snow from the downtown area. In return Washington County hires West Bend's urban street sweeper when they need to pick up debris on roads with curb and gutter.

"There's a lot of back and forth," says Pesch. "We also have a deal to borrow salt from the Village of Germantown, if our plow operator is short at the end of his run. Rather than drive 15 miles back here he loads up from the village's salt shed. Then we replace it when we have time."

### Buying power, rental income

Fuel is taking an ever bigger bite out of budgets. Not only do gas and diesel costs keep rising, but someone has to own and maintain the fueling system. Outagamie County saves \$16,000 a year by running a bigger operation that nearby communities fuel at.

"If we only fueled our own equipment, our fixed costs would be \$.23 a gallon," says Al Geurts, County Highway Commissioner. "We bring that down to \$.16 by sharing. Plus, we're buying larger quantities so we have more buying power." Even though locals pay \$.11/gallon for fixed costs plus the fuel price, they still save

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## Sharing stretches budgets

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Al Geurts, Outagamie County Highway Commissioner, is available to make a presentation on *Sharing Resources* and answer questions at meetings. Contact him at: 920-832-5673. [Geurtsaj@co.outagamie.wi.us](mailto:Geurtsaj@co.outagamie.wi.us)

Plan now to attend the next regional or statewide meeting of people like you. County commissioners meet in the summer. Foremen meet in the fall. Ask around to find out dates and locations.



Sharing big expensive equipment, like Outagamie County's road reclaimer, spreads costs and keeps it in use.

money over buying in the private marketplace.

Rental income can make it possible to buy and operate specialized equipment. Outagamie County, for example, owns a \$480,000 road reclaimer. It uses a lot of fuel, has high maintenance needs, and takes expertise to operate, but it can only do a mile of road a day.

"Last year it ran 117 days, pretty much six days a week for the whole construction season, but only 24 percent were on Outagamie County highways," says Geurts. "The days are gone when you can buy expensive equipment and it stays in the county full time."

Besides sending trained operators with equipment, Geurts also shares expert staff, such as their

bridge inspector. The training costs add up: required course work, travel expenses, and a mandatory 40 hrs accompanying an experienced inspector. "I estimate it costs my department about \$11,500 over five years to have a certified bridge inspector on staff," Geurts says.

Contracting with other counties and local municipalities to inspect their bridges at \$30-\$35 an hour helps recover the training costs. It's a significant savings for them over hiring a private inspector. In addition, the inspector becomes familiar with the bridges, saving even more time and money.

### Making connections

You could find similar examples at most road agencies around the state. The connections are informal. Superintendents, foremen, and commissioners get to know each other at meetings. Word of new equipment spreads quickly. Even *Crossroads* gets into the act, helping spread good ideas.

Get to know the streets and highway folks next door. When you need equipment or a service, call around to see who has it. Sharing resources can save you money, and it's satisfying as well.

## Key changes to MUTCD from page 3

The unit of government that has jurisdiction of the roadway approaching the STOP sign shall maintain the visibility of the STOP sign all the way to the face of the STOP sign.

The unit of government that has jurisdiction of the through roadway (*State and County highways, for example*) shall be responsible for the installation and maintenance of the STOP sign placed on roadways at the approach to the through roadway. *These are roadways not driveways.*

**Chevron spacing** Section 2C.10 *Chevron alignment spacing (W1-8)*. To provide guidance on the spacing of chevrons, a spacing chart was added. When following the chart, choose a speed based on advisory speed or ball bank indicator speed.

RECOMMENDED SPACING	SPEED
80'	25-30 MPH
120'	35-40 MPH
160'	45-55 MPH

*Chevrons are a valuable, low cost safety tool for addressing run-off-the-road crashes at curves or turns.*

## RESOURCES

Print copies of publications are available free from the TIC while supplies last. Electronic copies may be downloaded from the TIC Web site. Videos and DVDs are loaned free through county UW-Extension offices.

TIC Web site  
<http://tic.engr.wisc.edu/>

### Publications

An information packet on *Mutual Aid Agreements* for public works agencies is available from TIC. It includes copies of agreements that are discussed in this issue. Contact us to get one.

*Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management*, TRB NCHRP Synthesis 341, discusses current vegetation management practices, gives results of a survey on vegetation management, and includes examples of best practices in roadside vegetation management. Contact TIC for a paper copy of the results without appendices, 24 pp. The full report, 89 pp (3.1 Mb) is available free at [http://trb.org/news/blurb\\_detail.asp?id=4885](http://trb.org/news/blurb_detail.asp?id=4885).

### Websites

*The Wisconsin Supplement to the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* is online at: <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/business/engrserv/wmutcd.htm>. You can get a user ID/password by following the instructions on the Web page. Or call Matt Rauch at 608-266-2375 for a print copy.

*Applications of Geotextiles, Geogrids, and Geocells in Northern Minnesota* is available online at: [http://www.mrr.dot.state.mn.us/research/MnROAD\\_Project/MnRoadOnlineReports.asp](http://www.mrr.dot.state.mn.us/research/MnROAD_Project/MnRoadOnlineReports.asp)

The report discusses the use of geotextiles on local and county paved and gravel roads in northern Minnesota.

### Videotapes

**NEW** *Recommended Use of Reclaimed Asphalt Pavement in the Superpave Mix Design Method* (CRP-CD-44), National Cooperative Highway Research Program (Project 9-12), 2004, 12 min. CD-ROM #18761  
Information on using Reclaimed Asphalt Pavement (RAP) mix designs for hot mix asphalt pavement designed using Superpave methods. Includes specific recommendations on adjustments in Performance Grade Binder selection based on the percentage of RAP in the mix design. Presented in Quicktime Video Format. Information on downloading the free Quicktime video player is included on the CD-ROM.

Web addresses are live in the e-version of *Crossroads* on the TIC Web page. Clicking them should take you directly to the indicated page. If you are unable to retrieve a document, contact us and we will get a print version to you.