

## Public Relations

Since public opinion of ODOT is influenced by the actions of ODOT employees, all employees should be courteous, considerate, attentive, and polite at all times.

Perform all activities in the best manner possible, consistent with current policies and levels of service. Maintain ODOT property and equipment in a clean, neat condition at all times. Provide and maintain proper, effective traffic control when performing all activities.

Each employee must be properly attired and wearing the appropriate personal protective equipment described in the *ODOT Safety and Health Manual*, Safety Standard STD96015.

Flaggers must be properly attired and signs and flagger paddles in better than “marginal” condition, as defined in the *Quality Standards for Work Zone Traffic Control Devices* published by the American Traffic Safety Services Association. Refer to discussion in the Safety section of this Guide.

The District Manager and Transportation Maintenance Manager should establish a working relationship with local media, law enforcement organizations, utility companies, other public agencies, and the ODOT Motor Carrier Transportation Division. Such working relationships are of great benefit to prevent or more easily resolve problems and to more effectively respond to complaints, incidents, or emergencies.

All ODOT personnel should be courteous and helpful in all matters. If an employee’s duties involve administering ODOT procedures and practices, the employee must become familiar with those procedures and practices in order to:

- Respond accurately to questions.
- Properly follow the procedure and practice.
- Assist others as needed, particularly the public.

If an employee does not know the correct or proper answer to a request, the employee should courteously refer the request to the proper person. The employee should request assistance from the Transportation Maintenance Manager or District Manager as needed or appropriate.

Also refer to the discussion on application for approach, encroachment, and other permits in the Use of ODOT Property by Permit section of this Guide.

An employee should not discuss internal matters of ODOT with persons outside of ODOT, particularly those matters of a sensitive nature. Without the concurrence of the Department of Justice, an employee should not discuss matters, with persons outside of ODOT, where ODOT or the employee may have some liability.

### Transportation Operations Center

To provide a convenient contact point for the public, ODOT has posted the telephone number of the appropriate Transportation Operations Center (TOC) on highway signs. Also refer to the discussion in the Organization section of this Guide.

### Incident Response Vehicles

At some locations, ODOT has Incident Response Vehicles (some are termed "COMET") to respond to incidents and assist motorists in need. Refer to further discussion in the Emergency Operations/Incident Response section of this Guide.

### TripCheck Website/511 Phone System

The Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Unit of the Traffic Management Section maintains a website, [www.tripcheck.com](http://www.tripcheck.com) and the 511 phone system, that provide information about road conditions, construction projects, incidents, and other situations that affect traffic.

The TOC updates that information continually during some periods, or as notified or periodically to reflect current conditions. The TripCheck website also provides access to the roadside cameras that show current conditions at many sites throughout the state.

The District Manager should identify who is to provide the TOC with road and weather information, and at what times, for selected locations in the District.

The District Manager should also assure that the TOC is properly notified about other roadway or travel restrictions caused by maintenance operations, slides, or other occurrences. Also notify the TOC timely when the restrictions are no longer in effect.

### Variable (Changeable) Message Signs

ODOT has several permanent variable message signs that provide information on travel conditions or restrictions. The District may also have portable variable message signs that may be used when needed.

Operate all variable message signs according to the *Guidelines for the Operation of Variable Message Signs on State Highways*.

Unless designated differently by the Region or District Manager, the TOC is responsible to post pertinent messages on the permanent variable message signs. The Region Manager and District Manager should designate who is responsible to notify the TOC about the need to activate the permanent variable message signs.

For portable variable message signs, the District Manager and Transportation Maintenance Manager should:

- Determine when the signs need to be activated.
- Determine where each sign should be placed.

- Assure that accurate, correct information is displayed.
- Assure that each sign is operating continually during the needed periods.
- Assure that each sign is deactivated when conditions change or the sign is no longer needed or appropriate.

The party responsible to activate the variable message signs should record information including:

- Who requested or initiated the sign activation.
- The message posted.
- Times of activating and deleting the message.

As appropriate, the District Manager or Transportation Maintenance Manager must assure that pertinent information is provided to the TripCheck website.

#### Highway Advisory Radio

Highway Advisory Radio (HAR) uses low-power roadside transmitters to provide motorists with travel information via their AM/FM radios. ODOT may utilize HARs to supplement messages provided on standard highway signs or variable message signs. HARs are operated according to the *Guidelines for the Operation of Highway Advisory Radio on State Highways*.

#### Media and Public Outreach

Also refer to the above discussion about the TripCheck website.

ODOT provides training in communications with the media and others. If an ODOT employee likely will be interviewed by the media or may have significant interaction with the public, the employee should participate in that training.

Address the concerns of the travelling public, adjacent businesses and property owners, and other concerned parties in the best manner possible. For some operations, it may be appropriate for the Transportation Maintenance Manager or other designated person to contact each residence and/or business that will be affected by the operation. If needed, refer the concern to the Transportation Maintenance Manager, District Manager, or other authority.

During emergencies, major crashes, or other events that may significantly impact the State Highway system, refer all inquiries for information to the Region Public Affairs representative. The Region Public Affairs representative may obtain additional assistance from the ODOT Communications Branch. The intent is that ODOT provides the same “story”, with correct and appropriately complete information, to all inquiries.

### Roadway Restrictions (Weight, Height, Width, etc.)

ODOT occasionally must restrict use of a section of highway for an extended period due to a variety of reasons, including maintenance or construction activities, weather or other natural events, deterioration of the roadway or structures, or emergency conditions.

When the restriction is a result of highway damage or maintenance or permitted activities, the District Manager must notify proper entities to assure that unacceptable vehicles or loads do not try to use the restricted section. When the restriction is on a section of highway other than a structure the District Manager should notify:

- The Over-Dimensional Permits Unit of the Motor Carrier Transportation Division at least 21 days in advance of all planned restrictions, except those that can be handled with acceptable traffic control. The Unit will notify known carriers of over dimension loads or vehicles in that area.
- Major local users that may haul restricted loads or vehicles. This is most appropriate for more rural locations. The District Manager should also consider this for other areas as appropriate, with assistance and guidance from the Over-Dimensional Permits Unit and the Region Public Affairs Representative.
- The Region Manager and State Maintenance Engineer, for significant or long term restrictions.

Refer to ODOT *Policy PMT 06-01* when a weight restriction involves a structure.

The District Manager must also assure that signs are installed at appropriate locations to notify travelers of the restrictions. Request help from the Region Traffic representative as needed.

Also refer to the above discussion on the TripCheck website.

### Law Enforcement

ODOT maintenance and Transportation Operation Center staff should provide road and travel conditions or other information to law enforcement agencies as requested or appropriate. Develop a working relationship with the agencies to more easily become aware of conditions that need attention.

ODOT employees should not assist law enforcement officers in carrying out law enforcement duties.

### Utility Companies

It is important to develop a good working relationship with representatives of utility companies that are responsible for installing and maintaining their facilities within the State Highway right of way. The reasons for this include:

- Assure that the utility is aware of ODOT permit requirements and properly applies for and receives a permit before it starts its work.
- ODOT may be involved in the utility's development of complex projects that will involve work on ODOT property and may be able to:
  - Mitigate impacts to ODOT facilities.
  - Have the utility's project developed to accommodate upcoming ODOT projects.
- As developers, ODOT, contractors, etc. prepare to construct facilities and request, through the Oregon Utility Notification Center, to have all buried facilities located within their project limits, the utilities and ODOT can help each other to assure that all buried facilities are located before the construction work starts. Remember that ODOT also has the responsibility to respond to the Oregon Utility Notification Center and to locate and mark all of its buried facilities when requested.
- Before ODOT starts any excavation work in areas where utility or other non-ODOT facilities could be buried, ODOT must contact the Oregon Utility Notification Center so the facility owners can mark the location of their facilities. A good working relationship with the utility companies will simplify this process.

As mentioned above, ORS 691 and OAR Chapter 952 Division 001 establish the Oregon Utility Notification Center (OUNC) and require:

- Persons or entities, that will perform excavation work under stipulated conditions, must notify the OUNC of their intent, so that the OUNC can notify potential owners of buried facilities in that location, and must mark the limits of the excavation as needed.
- Owners or operators of buried facilities, in the area of the proposed excavation work, must locate, identify, and mark all of their affected buried facilities within the proposed work area. This location and marking work must be performed within 2 business days after the excavator notifies the OUNC.

Since ODOT owns and operates buried facilities that may be impacted by excavation work, ODOT must respond to the OUNC request to locate and mark its facilities. The Region Manager and District Manager must designate an ODOT person who will receive the OUNC requests for the designated area of responsibility. When that person receives a request from the OUNC, that person must convey that request to the affected ODOT persons to allow ODOT to appropriately mark its facilities.

Refer to discussion in Activity L12 in the Activities section of this Guide, which includes a listing of the proper colors to use to mark the work or facilities.

#### Other Public Agencies

ODOT must develop and maintain a good working relationship with each public agency that:

- Owns or maintains facilities that abut or overlap facilities owned or maintained by ODOT. The good working relationship will allow each agency to more effectively perform its work and may facilitate some cooperative projects or responsibilities, including notification of problems. Also refer to discussion on governmental partnerships in the Organization section of this Guide.
- Regulates work performed by ODOT or otherwise requires permits or agreements to allow ODOT to perform its work. This includes control of erosion, sedimentation, and other pollutants or contaminants. Also refer to the discussion in the Use of ODOT Property by Permit and the Control of Erosion, Sedimentation, and Pollutants or Contaminants sections of this Guide.

#### ODOT Publications

ODOT prepares maps, brochures, or other documents for distribution or sale to the public. The District Manager should assure that information that applies to the District, in the maps, brochures, or other documents, is correct and current. If the information is not correct, the District Manager should contact the document preparer and provide correct, current information.

#### Request for ODOT Records

Follow the procedure in the Communications section of this Guide, and the instructions in ODOT *Procedure ADM 7-04*, when persons other than ODOT personnel request to see or have copies of ODOT records.