



Showing Appreciation for Employees

by Ken Skorseth, SD LTAP Field Service Manger.

One of the characteristics of good management is demonstrate appreciation for employees. This is something that is easy to forget. It is also too easy to focus on the negative issues of managing personnel. Granted, there will be problems along the way, but how could any highway or street department function without dedicated workers?

Managers can become overwhelmed with the daily work of managing budgets, responding to questions and complaints, dealing with regulations, managing contracted

projects, preparing for meetings and a myriad of other things. In the meantime, the crew does the daily work of maintaining the road or street system. Don't ever overlook their role in keeping the department running smoothly. The

larger the department, the easier it is for management to become a bit detached from the daily operations of the maintenance crews. Elected officials should also think about this.

Chuck Fromelt, Day County Highway Superintendent, has set a good example of trying to recognize his crew at least once annually in a special way. Shortly after the holiday season each year, he hosts a lunch for everyone at the shop. No one has to bring lunch. The food and beverages are provided. He has found a cooperative vend or who is willing to donate food to make the event a success. This year the vendor provided a large ham – more than enough to feed the entire department staff. One staff member also likes to provide home-grown sweet corn that he grows each summer. (They invited me this year and it is some of the best sweet corn I've ever tasted!) Others, or their spouses, are proud to provide a special cake or dish they know everyone will like.



County's crew along with a lot of leftovers on the table. No one went hungry!



Other crew members enjoying the event.

It's not an elaborate or fancy affair. But, it demonstrates appreciation in a small way for the service they provide. It's relaxed and informal. A couple of retired employees usually come back for the event as well. Everyone has a good time swapping stories and telling tall tales. But, that's the point—it's a welcome break from the normal routine and it is appreciated.

Think about it. Is there a small way for you as a manager to show your appreciation? As we all know, public employees do not get a lot of recognition for what they do. If you can think of a special way to give or show appreciation, almost invariably you'll be glad you did. It is a small, but effective, way to build a team atmosphere.