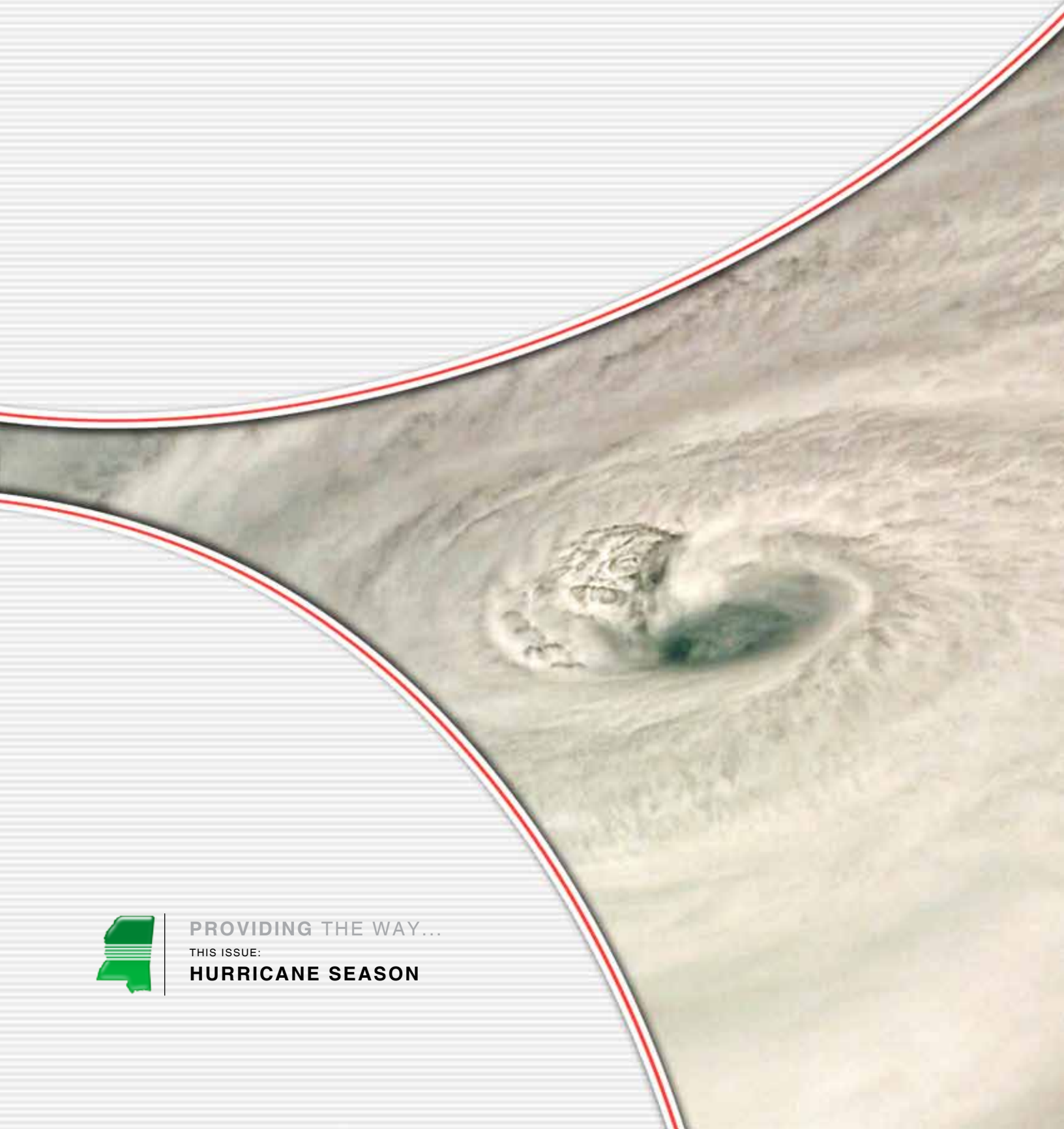


T R A N S P O R T A T I O N

# CONNECTION!



PROVIDING THE WAY...

THIS ISSUE:

**HURRICANE SEASON**

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SUMMER 2009

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# CONNECTION!

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Larry L. "Butch" Brown

Mississippi's highways are our lifelines. And when a hurricane or other disaster strikes, their importance becomes strikingly evident. From evacuation through response and recovery, all functions depend upon a well-functioning transportation system.

The confluence of Mother Nature's worst and the increased travel demand surrounding emergencies creates circumstances that are challenging, to say the least. Implementing Contraflow to double evacuation capacity is a massive undertaking. It involves hundreds of MDOT employees working for hours to execute a carefully choreographed plan, getting thousands of Mississippians—and themselves—out of harm's way before the worst of the storm descends.

MDOT's Call Center provides up-to-the-minute information for Mississippi residents and travelers. And before the storm's fury is fully unwound, our tireless maintenance employees are back out on the highways inspecting damage and removing tons of debris to safely open our travel routes.

MDOT strategically plans and thoroughly practices its emergency procedures. After each event, we examine ways to further sharpen our response. Our activities during Hurricane Gustav last September demonstrated many lessons learned and approaches refined through our experience with Hurricane Katrina. We continue to enhance communication, coordination, and technology to meet the needs of the traveling public during evacuation, response, and recovery.

In fact, for the 2009 hurricane season we are launching a new service to provide customized, up-to-the-minute guidance during hurricane evacuations. MDOT will maintain a Twitter account tailored to each of our main hurricane evacuation routes. If you're not familiar with Twitter, it's a free Web application that allows users to exchange short updates via text messages or a Web browser. That means that while you're evacuating up I-59, for example, you'd be able to receive important information on your cell phone that is relevant for your route. You might need to know where fuel is available on I-59, what rest areas are open, what the status of Contraflow is, and what the traffic is doing ahead of you. MDOT will transmit those types of updates in real-time via Twitter during weather emergencies. If you run into trouble or have questions, you can send a short message back to the person monitoring that Twitter account and they will provide the information you need. MDOT will still maintain our traditional radio and television announcements and staff our Call Center. The Twitter pilot project is just one more example of how we leverage the latest communication tools to get more people to safety, faster.

In this issue of Connection we share our perspectives on various hurricane preparation and response activities. Although every storm is different and each situation requires experienced judgment and on-the-spot decision-making, thorough preparation helps ensure that our workforce is properly equipped and deployed to safely open Mississippi's highways as rapidly as possible.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Larry L. Brown". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Larry L. "Butch" Brown  
Executive Director,  
Mississippi Department of Transportation





*A hurricane is on its way and it's time to evacuate. You quickly log on to mstraffic.com before you leave to check the status of your evacuation route—looks like traffic is heavy but Contraflow is open and you should be able to make it North in time. But what if conditions change while you are on the road? Few people have mobile e-mail, and radio news broadcasts are often too general and intermittent to provide the timely, route-specific details you need to stay safe.*

*If you have a cell phone that accepts text messages, you can now receive instant, customized briefings directly from MDOT via Twitter—a free application that is used worldwide to exchange short updates, and is MDOT's latest tool in supporting safe, efficient hurricane evacuation.*



## MDOT Launches Twitter Feeds for 2009 Hurricane Season

Conditions can change fast during a hurricane evacuation, and with hundreds of thousands of residents of coastal Mississippi and Louisiana surging northward on Mississippi's highways, communicating timely travel information to evacuees while they are on the road is essential.

Twitter is a free, Web-based social networking service that has soared in popularity over the past year. Although it started out as a way for friends to stay in touch, it is now used by major organizations—even the White House—to send short text-based updates known as “tweets.” These messages can be sent and received via the Twitter Web site, smart phones, or text messages.

Twitter is well-suited for hurricane communications because messages can be customized by route, sent instantaneously to an unlimited number of people, and delivered via cell phones to evacuees who are en route.

For the 2009 hurricane season, Twitter feeds will provide information tailored to six major routes: I-55, I-59, I-10, I-20, U.S. 49, and U.S. 98. Relevant, real-time information will be sent via tweets on topics such as traffic delays, contraflow, fuel availability, restroom locations, and roadway conditions.

To access a route-specific feed, type the appropriate address in a Web browser:

- ▶ [www.twitter.com/mdot\\_i10](http://www.twitter.com/mdot_i10)
- ▶ [www.twitter.com/mdot\\_i20](http://www.twitter.com/mdot_i20)
- ▶ [www.twitter.com/mdot\\_i55](http://www.twitter.com/mdot_i55)
- ▶ [www.twitter.com/mdot\\_i59](http://www.twitter.com/mdot_i59)
- ▶ [www.twitter.com/mdot\\_us49](http://www.twitter.com/mdot_us49)
- ▶ [www.twitter.com/mdot\\_us98](http://www.twitter.com/mdot_us98)

Users must join Twitter to receive updates, but signing up is easy and free. Members then have the option of receiving updates via text messages on their cell phones.

“Anyone can sign up for the Twitter feeds, including residents of Louisiana and Alabama who may pass through or seek refuge in Mississippi during a storm,” says MDOT Executive Director Larry L. “Butch” Brown. “We learned through Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Gustav that MDOT must deploy a range of communications tools. Leveraging the new possibilities available through social media such as Twitter will enable us to guide more people to safety—and that is the bottom line during any emergency event.”

In addition to the Twitter feeds, MDOT will continue to staff its Call Center, maintain mstraffic.com, and issue traditional updates via radio and television broadcasts.



A hurricane is forming in the Gulf of Mexico. All eyes and ears are tuned to weather reports as families along the Mississippi and Louisiana Gulf Coasts prepare to evacuate. With thousands of vehicles traveling north on I-55 and I-59, highway capacity is at a premium. To double the volume of northbound traffic the highway can handle, MDOT implements Contraflow—seemingly flipping a switch to reverse the travel direction on the southbound lanes. Making the switch to Contraflow—and back to normal traffic patterns before the storm becomes severe—involves a carefully-developed, well-rehearsed plan and an army of devoted MDOT employees.



# Moving Motorists Out of Harm's Way—Doubletime

As Hurricane Gustav approached the Gulf Coast on Labor Day weekend, 2008, MDOT was ready, having practiced deployment of its Contraflow plan at the beginning of the hurricane season. "MDOT's law enforcement and District 6 and 7 maintenance staff are assigned specific stretches of I-55 and I-59," explains Willie Huff, MDOT Director of Law Enforcement. "During our annual Contraflow exercise, these personnel report to their assigned location to become familiar with the interchanges and review their responsibilities in the event Contraflow is implemented." During planning, practice, and implementation, MDOT coordinates closely with the Mississippi Highway Patrol, the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency, county-level emergency managers, and local law enforcement, as well as the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development and the Louisiana State Police.

## Countdown to "H Hour"

Implementing Contraflow involves placing hundreds of barricades and traffic control devices in specific locations to guide motorists in following traffic patterns that are opposite the norm. Traffic signals at interchanges must be modified. Dozens of variable message signs must be programmed and placed along the Contraflow routes as well as on the highways that feed those interstates.

After Contraflow is over, MDOT must return the flow of traffic to its normal northbound/southbound configuration, dismantle and stow all the traffic control devices and signs, and have its people to safety before tropical storm-force winds reach the coast—a milestone known as "H Hour" in Contraflow plans.

"Emergency equipment trailers are checked and loaded prior to hurricane season," Huff explains. "As Gustav approached and it became likely that Contraflow would be implemented, we began positioning equip-



ment near the sites where it would be used."

That was Saturday afternoon. Governor Barbour was in close communication with Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal, who requested late Saturday that Contraflow be in place by dawn on Sunday. When Governor Barbour gave the order to implement Contraflow, MDOT personnel were back on the job placing barricades and signage. The Contraflow plan calls for a seven-hour window for MDOT to prepare for Contraflow. "Our crews were out at 1:30 in the morning and had all lanes ready to go by 4:00 a.m.," Huff reports. Traffic control communications were finalized and the first cars entered Contraflow lanes at 5:00 a.m. Contraflow was implemented on I-55 from the Louisiana border to Brookhaven, and on I-59 to the Poplarville exit. In all, more than 50 miles of Mississippi interstate highways were set up for reverse traffic

flow.

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**Crews were out at  
1:30 in the morning  
and had all lanes  
ready to go by  
4:00 a.m.**

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## Keeping Vehicles Moving

MDOT's work was far from over. During the Gustav evacuation, Contraflow remained open for more than 12 hours, with MDOT law enforcement and maintenance staff patrolling the route. MDOT vehicles are equipped with extra fuel, water, and tools and supplies for basic vehicle repairs. "Our goal is to get disabled

vehicles back on their way as soon as possible to avoid disruptions to traffic flow," says Huff.

MDOT estimates that 80,000 vehicles were evacuated along the Contraflow routes. "During any evacuation there will be delays and congestion, given the heavy volume of traffic headed north during a very short amount of time. Still, traffic moved as steadily as possible," says Huff.

MDOT monitors traffic conditions during evacuations to make immediate and longer-term improvements in traffic flow. For example, after the Hattiesburg area experienced severe congestion and delays during the Hurricane Ivan evacuation—which did not involve Contraflow—MDOT modified the emergency traffic



*Willie Huff, MDOT Director of Law Enforcement*

Moving Motorists Out of Harm's Way—Doubletime (continues on page 12)



*There is nothing more reassuring than a human voice when you place a call for help. When hurricane warnings are issued and Gulf Coast residents are given the word to evacuate, they have very specific questions, need factual reports, and want specialized advice. During Hurricane Gustav, recorded evacuation messages were commonplace but it was the voices of MDOT employees that reassured and provided accurate, up-to-the-minute information and individual attention. The MDOT Call Center workers gave every caller red-letter attention.*



1-59  
SOUTH  
CLOSED



# MDOT Call Center Delivers Personal Attention

If there was a silver lining to Hurricane Katrina it undoubtedly was Mississippi's renewed commitment to emergency preparedness. Although MDOT received high praise for its immediate and comprehensive response to Katrina, the Department learned many lessons from the storm and continues to make advances in its ability to keep both traffic and communication flowing smoothly during emergency situations.

Making every effort to utilize all resources in responding to Katrina, MDOT opened its telephone lines for emergency and highway traffic information. The resulting call log was astounding as MDOT staff worked around the clock to assist callers with emergencies far beyond the realm of transportation. "We opened all telephone lines to the public," said Charlie Robinson, who served as MDOT's Call Center Manager. "MDOT employees that were not out in the field working to clear and open roads were answering phones helping people to evacuate and, after the storm, to return to their communities. We had thousands of calls from people needing advice on road conditions but also had many calls from people who were faced with tragic situations and did not know who else to call. If our employees could not give the specific help needed, they let the caller know who they should contact or in some cases made those contacts for them."

From the moment attention turned from Katrina to the future, MDOT's Deputy Executive Director, Brenda Znachko, began working with the Outreach Division to create a comprehensive and reliable emergency response call center that could be activated at a moment's notice. According to Znachko, "The lessons learned from Katrina could not be put aside. We saw an additional and significant way to serve the people of Mississippi and to enhance MDOT's ability to improve traffic flow in emergency situations."

Over the last two years, the aim has been to develop the most efficient and caller-friendly system possible to assist travelers during crisis situations. Lessons learned from a storm as devastating as Katrina set the bar high in establishing a call center capable of responding to the most catastrophic conditions. According to Outreach Director Danada McMurtry, "We learned from Katrina that evacuees need very specialized assistance. When

people's lives are at stake, we need to give them immediate and personal attention. They deserve more than a recorded message."

## How it Works

The Call Center, managed by the Outreach Division, was unveiled in 2007. It is supported by state-of-the-art technology and staffed by highly trained operators with special skills in emergency response protocol. The Call Center's number one priority is to support the public by providing pertinent and accurate information relating to evacuations and other emergencies. "These emergencies primarily involve the need for traffic, shelter, or other assistance due to a disaster or weather-related situation," Robinson reports. "The MDOT Call Center is placed in operation during any emergency that could possibly affect the flow of traffic." The MDOT traffic hotline number, 1-866-521-6368, is activated in conjunction with the opening of the Call Center. The Center equipment is readied and MDOT employees are placed on 24-hour call with



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**We had thousands  
of calls from people  
needing advice on  
road conditions...**

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four shifts providing around the clock service.

Using leading-edge technology, a separate MDOT command center collects the latest information concerning traffic, road conditions, weather, shelter openings, and fuel availability. This information is meticulously verified and then put at the fingertips of the Call Center workers. During each shift, up to 20 Call Center staff members, working at stations equipped with laptop computers, answer telephone calls from citizens needing information or assistance. The up-to-the-minute conditions reported by the command center are available to Call Center workers at a glance on SMART Boards. A large-screen television also keeps the workers abreast of current weather conditions.

The Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) is an essential

MDOT Call Center Delivers Personal Attention (continues on page 12)



*It was still raining heavily with high winds when MDOT's District 6 and 7 maintenance crews began braving the elements to assess the damage and debris wrought by Hurricane Gustav. Fortunately, damage to transportation infrastructure was minimal, and the worst of the debris was contained to U.S. Highway 90. Nevertheless, clean-up would be a massive job—Gustav heaved the beach up over the highway, burying it in tons of sand and debris. With its hurricane clean-up procedures honed by Hurricane Katrina, MDOT's crews were ready.*



# Reclaiming U.S. Highway 90

“We learned a lot through Hurricane Katrina about efficiently clearing roads and removing debris, and we applied those lessons during Gustav,” says District 6 Engineer Steve Twedt. “Preparations begin well in advance of a storm entering the Gulf. We review our Contraflow plans, confirm that we have the necessary supplies on hand, and brief personnel on their responsibilities.”

Though every storm is different, downed trees blocking roadways are typically a widespread problem after a hurricane. The most efficient way to move them and clear a path is with a front-end loader. As a storm is approaching, equipment is placed strategically along U.S. 49 and I-59, which are the District’s priority routes. Todd Jordan, Assistant District Engineer for Maintenance, explains, “We have two front-end loaders in Gulfport, two in Hattiesburg, one in Wiggins, one in Picayune, and one in Poplarville.”

“Certain maintenance personnel remain in MDOT offices during the storm so they can respond immediately to address damage and debris. The employees who are sent home during the storm are instructed to take a State truck, a chain saw, and plenty of gas. As the storm lets up, they can clear their way to the MDOT office if it is blocked, and then begin working with heavier equipment,” Jordan explains.

Hurricane Gustav made landfall early Monday morning, September 1, 2008. A few MDOT supervisors were out during the storm to monitor conditions and determine clean-up priorities and strategies. Because Gustav left minimal debris on Highways 49 and 59, crews could load up equipment and focus on U.S. Highway 90, the coastal route that is most vulnerable to hurricanes. “The storm surge carried sand and debris from the Gulf and the beach and deposited it on the highway. We had crews from all 14 counties in District 6—about



100 people—on U.S. Highway 90 by 2:00 p.m. Monday using front-end loaders, back hoes, and skid steer loaders to clear the highway,” says Jordan.

## First Things First

Workers clear the highway in phases, first pushing debris into turn bays, parking areas, medians, or the highway shoulders to open travel routes; later they return to haul away debris. In this case workers were able to move sand

back onto the beach. “The wind was still blowing while we were scooping sand, so in some areas it would drift back over the highway,” Twedt says. Crews worked until about midnight on Monday, then were back on the job at daybreak to finish the clean-up. U.S. Highway 90 was clear by late Tuesday night.

Before the highway could be safely opened to motorists, however, damage to numerous traffic signals along the route had to be addressed. Signal work had begun as soon as the storm let up and continued through Tuesday night. By dawn on Wednesday, U.S. Highway 90 was opened to traffic with certain signals on flash. Signals at a few other intersections were still not functional, so local law enforcement directed traffic as needed. By Thursday all signals were fully operational and normal traffic patterns were restored.

Gustav also damaged about a dozen Interstate signs that were repaired or replaced. The Bay of St. Louis Bridge suffered minor damage to one abutment and its roadway lighting system.

## Staying Connected

Strong communication is critical to ensure that people and equipment are in the right places at the right time and activities are efficiently coordinated. Cell phone service remained active during Hurricane Gustav, but if it were knocked out, MDOT has satellite phones for backup. “MDOT staff in the field report



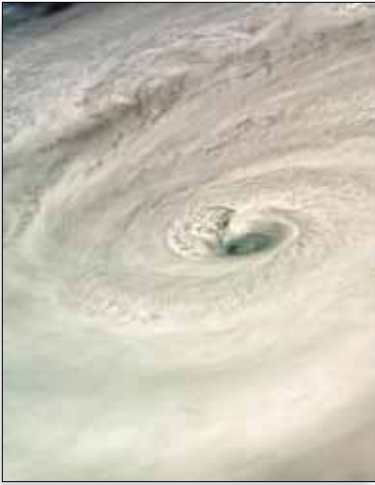
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**The wind was still blowing while we were scooping sand, so in some areas it would drift back over the highway.**

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Reclaiming U.S. Highway 90 (continues on page 13)





## Moving Motorists Out of Harm's Way—Doubletime

*(continued from page 7)*

control plan for the area. During subsequent emergencies, traffic conditions in Hattiesburg have been more manageable.

As Gustav was bearing down on Mississippi, Contraflow was stopped

road closures. Many people are involved in other advance planning and communication activities, such as publishing and distributing Mississippi's official Hurricane Evacuation Map."

### Always Improving, Always Ready

MDOT reviews and enhances its Contraflow and other hurricane response procedures informally as needed and formally at the end of each hurricane season. The full Contraflow plan

at 5:00 p.m. Sunday. By 9:00 p.m. MDOT had the highways opened to normal traffic flow. Crews continued collecting equipment as the heavy rains began. Many of those same maintenance workers would be out again just hours later as the storm was lifting, beginning the arduous task of clearing roadways of debris.

### Many Hands

Huff estimates that 200 MDOT personnel were directly involved in implementing Contraflow, with another 25 or more supporting operations from Jackson. "MDOT's Call Center fielded a tremendous number of telephone calls related to Contraflow," Huff says. "We issued up-to-the-minute press releases to local media so the public received timely, accurate information on evacuation routes and

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**We issued up-to-the-minute press releases to local media so the public received timely, accurate information...**

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was updated in 2006 based on lessons learned during Hurricane Katrina, which was Mississippi's first implementation of Contraflow.

Having well-developed emergency plans and communications in place, and practicing and updating them regularly, is essential for hurricane evacuations. Further, notes Huff, being prepared for mass evacuations is a necessity even for areas not threatened by hurricanes. "Whether it is a flood, act of terrorism, or another type of disaster, it may become necessary to move a tremendous number of people out of an area within a very tight timeframe. States and local governments must be prepared to handle these situations to guide citizens to safety as rapidly and efficiently as possible."



## MDOT Call Center Delivers Personal Attention

*(continued from page 9)*

element of the information-gathering process for the command center. Housed in a separate building from the Call Center, the Intelligent Transportation System monitors traffic at key locations around the clock, 365 days a year. The ITS computer screens show real-time camera images of Mississippi's most traveled highways, facilitating adjustments to traffic patterns as volumes change. The images are available to the command center personnel and to the Call Center staff members. Knowing traffic counts and current average speeds at strategic locations enables Call Center staff to make informed recommendations to callers trying to decide on the best possible routes.

### Tested by Gustav

On August 25, 2008, just days before Hurricane Gustav made landfall, MDOT's Dynamic Message Signs were activated allowing MDOT to provide evacuation-related information to



travelers passing through the Jackson metropolitan area. These signs also listed the MDOT Call Center number giving motorists the opportunity to call for more specific help. The Center was activated and tested under fire as more than 10,000 calls came into the Call Center during a four-day period. The Call Center handled the requests for help with efficiency and accuracy and played a significant role in MDOT's immediate response to Hurricane Gustav.

## Looking to the Future

MDOT staff continue to make tactical improvements and process revisions to ensure the most immediate and positive response to future crises. Mississippians can be confident that it takes only moments to bring the MDOT Call Center back to life and that help is only a phone call away.



## Reclaiming U.S. Highway 90

*(continued from page 11)*

through our emergency operations center," Twedt explains. "There, we have different people managing different types of information so that individuals do not become overwhelmed. For example, one person manages our fuel situation.

Another tracks which roadways are re-opened. Another directs emergency purchasing and distribution of supplies. Conditions from the field are rapidly relayed so we can coordinate efforts and provide timely, reliable information to the public through press releases and our Call Center."

### Many Hands for Complex Work

Although Hurricane Gustav clean-up was a substantial effort, it was clearly not in the same league as Hurricane Katrina. When the degree of damage and debris is more than MDOT maintenance crews can possibly handle within a reasonable timeframe, MDOT engages private contractors to assist with debris removal. To award work fairly but rapidly, MDOT calls in local contractors to help push debris out of travel lanes at industry standard rates. Once the roads are opened, MDOT uses an accelerated competitive bidding process to award contracts for removal of that debris.

There are certain roadways within municipalities that are federal-aid routes, meaning they are eligible for federal funds for

clean-up and repairs. However, obtaining federal funding can be a complex process. "The debris or damage must be formally assessed and a report filed in order to receive federal money," says Special Projects Engineer Sharpie Smith. MDOT visits such sites with Federal Highway Administration representatives to conduct assessments and assist local officials through the process.

### Back on Track

Another aspect of hurricane preparation is ensuring minimal disruption to regular construction and maintenance work that was under way before the storm. For example, several repair projects were in progress on U.S. Highway 90 when Gustav hit. "When we knew Gustav was headed our way, we videotaped the status of those projects," Twedt explains. "That allowed us to provide contractors with the fair and correct reimbursement for any re-work that was necessary due to storm damage, so they could quickly resume construction."

After each hurricane clean-up, MDOT holds an "after-action" meeting to discuss what went well and what could have been done better. "Every situation is different," Twedt says, "but we always try to refine the process and make improvements. And while formal processes are important, we try to build in flexibility so that maintenance supervisors out in the field are empowered to make appropriate decisions and do what must be done. The bottom line is that we must get Mississippi's highways safely open to traffic as rapidly as possible."

---

**The bottom line is  
that we must get  
Mississippi's highways  
safely open to traffic  
as rapidly as possible.**

---





Larry L. "Butch" Brown

## MDOT Director Named Vice President of AASHTO and President of SASHTO

MDOT Executive Director Larry L. "Butch" Brown was named vice president of the influential American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) during the organization's annual meeting in Hartford, Connecticut, in October 2008. AASHTO represents the transportation departments of all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.

Brown was also elected president of the Southeastern Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (SASHTO) during the association's annual meeting in Orlando, Florida, in August 2008. SASHTO represents transportation departments in the southeastern United States: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, and Puerto Rico.

The purpose of the association is to encourage improvements in all transportation modes, including highway, air, public transport, rail, and water, and to encourage a balanced transportation system within member states. As part of his official duties as president, Brown will serve as host of the next SASHTO annual meeting, to be held in Biloxi, in August 2009. "This is an outstanding opportunity to showcase the state of Mississippi. The meeting will coincide with the fourth anniversary of Hurricane Katrina," Brown said. "It is an honor to serve in this position and to have the opportunity to welcome more than 1,200 transportation officials to our state and share the phenomenal recovery and growth that has taken place since Katrina."



Richard Chisolm

## Chisolm Named Assistant State Maintenance Engineer

Richard Chisolm was appointed Assistant State Maintenance Engineer in September 2008. Chisolm brings more than 13 years of experience

in developing construction plans and performing inspections on construction projects, and has maintained an excellent working relationship with the Federal Highway Administration and other government agencies. In his new position he oversees the coordination of activities in the Maintenance Division, including roadside management, roadway condition assessments, outdoor advertising, and environmental stewardship. Chisolm, a graduate of the University of Mississippi with a bachelor's degree in civil engineering, is a licensed Professional Engineer. He began his career at MDOT as a project engineer with the Whitfield Project Office, where he was later promoted to area engineer in the Construction Division. He and his wife, Bridgett, reside in Madison County with their two children, Connor and Morgan.

## Commissioner Brown Honored

The Mississippi Engineering Society named MDOT Southern District Commissioner Wayne Brown Government Engineer of the Year at its March 2009 Awards Banquet.

"This award recognizes excellence in professionalism and leadership," said Mississippi Engineering Society President Al Crawley. Commissioner Brown is a longstanding member of the Mississippi Engineering Society and has been instrumental in expanding MDOT's involvement in the organization.

Brown, a native of Lucedale, received his bachelor's degree in civil engineering from Mississippi State University in 1959. During his time in college, and for two years after graduating, Brown worked for MDOT, then known as the Mississippi Highway Department. In 1966, he founded Batson and Brown Engineers, a consulting engineering business, and in 1967, he founded TAB Map Company. He was elected to his first term as transportation commissioner in 1999.



Southern District Commissioner Wayne Brown





## Awards and Achievements

### Biloxi Bay Bridge and the Bay of St. Louis Bridge Capture National and Regional Honors

The Bay of St. Louis Bridge won the People's Choice Award in the America's Transportation Award competition sponsored by AASHTO. The project was one of ten selected to compete for national honors from a field of 41 regional winners across the U.S. The competition for the People's Choice Award saw more than 55,000 votes cast online and at the AASHTO Annual Meeting.

The Bay of St. Louis Bridge was also named a winner in the On-Time category for projects over \$200 million. This award recognizes a project that demonstrates specific measurement, process management, and quality assurance methods used to deliver a quality product and demonstrate effective schedule management from conception to completion. This award also demonstrates involvement and interaction with the surrounding community and illustrates the degree to which traffic movement was improved for customers/users.

The Biloxi Bay Bridge tied for first place in the Innovative Management category for projects over \$200 million. AASHTO annually presents this award to highlight innovation, technology, and transportation solutions that improve safety, relieve congestion, improve access to jobs or schools, and enhance quality of life.

The Biloxi Bay Bridge earned the Award of Excellence in the Project Management category of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) 2008 Excellence in Highway Design Biennial Awards. The project management was characterized by rapid and effective decision-making, continuous communication, and "doing it right the first time."

The Design-Build Institute of America (DBIA) awarded MDOT the 2008 Transportation Owner of the Year Award for their innovative use of the design-build process in the reconstruction of the Biloxi Bay Bridge and the Bay of St. Louis Bridge. The Transportation Owner of the Year Award pays tribute to a transportation organization that has made significant contributions in advancing awareness, understanding, and use of the design-build project delivery method.

The American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC) recognized MDOT and Parsons with an Honor Award for the Biloxi Bay Bridge. A distinguished panel of judges with backgrounds in engineering, architecture, government, media, academia, and



*Biloxi Bay Bridge*



*Bay of St. Louis Bridge*

the military evaluated projects from all over the world for engineering excellence and selected 16 Honor Award winners.

The Construction Management Association of America awarded MDOT and URS Corporation the 2008 Construction Management Project Achievement Award for the bridge replacements on U.S. Highway 90. The award is designed to recognize and promote professionalism and excellence in the management of the construction process.





# Awards and Achievements

## MDOT Environmental Division Receives FHWA Award

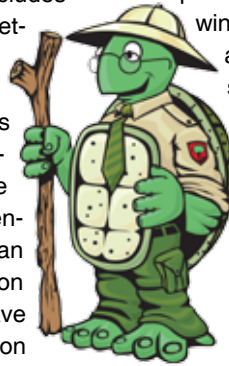
The Exemplary Human Environment Initiatives Award from the Federal Highway Administration was presented to the MDOT Environmental Division, for their enhancement of public education efforts in highway project development throughout Mississippi. The staff developed an innovative and creative educational program for school-age children, which includes a student workbook, video wetland demonstrations, and aerial photography as a visual aid. This program has been implemented as a pilot project in conjunction with the U.S. Highway 45 Bypass Environmental Study in Columbus. The program can be adapted for use by other transportation agencies. Two countries and 10 states have inquired about the environmental education program.



*Jimmy the engineer*

## MDOT Wins Perpetual Pavement Award

In September 2008 MDOT won its second Perpetual Pavement Award in three years for 10.8 miles of U.S. Highway 78 in DeSoto County. To qualify for the award, presented by The Asphalt Pavement Alliance, the roadway must be at least 35 years old and in its original state, with the riding surface maintained through systematic overlays. The roadway surface must demonstrate the qualities expected from long-life asphalt pavements. The winning section of Highway 78 is in excellent condition and carries approximately 2.5 million equivalent single-axle loadings each year with 19 percent of that being truck traffic.



*Dr. Shelly*



## Willie Bernard Making Significant Contributions to Keep Mississippi Beautiful

MDOT's partnership with Keep Mississippi Beautiful is a key component in Mississippi's efforts to "Think Green and Keep Mississippi Clean." Playing a significant role in this effort is Sergeant Willie Bernard from District Five. Bernard received the Keep Mississippi Beautiful award for ticketing the most litterers in the Central District in 2007. This is the third consecutive year Sergeant Bernard has received this award.

## MDOT Receives 2008 SCAN Quality Award

The Southeast Concrete Alliance Network (SCAN) presented MDOT with the 2008 Quality Award for its whitetopping project in Meridian, Mississippi. The winning project is part of the I-20/I-59 interchange at 22nd Avenue. Whitetopping refers to placing a layer of concrete over asphalt to extend pavement life and reduce the rutting caused by heavy trucks at interchanges.

## Copeland Named MDOT Assistant District Construction Engineer

Randall Copeland has been selected as Assistant District Construction Engineer for operations at the District Five Office in Newton. A native of Philadelphia, Mississippi, Copeland earned a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from Mississippi State University and began his engineering career at the MDOT Philadelphia Project Office, where he has worked for more than 15 years. Copeland and his wife, Kimberly, and daughter, Kelsey, reside in Philadelphia.





## Awards and Achievements

### Outreach Recognized for Outstanding Public Relations Campaigns

The American Road and Transportation Builders Association (ARTBA) presented MDOT with its 2009 PRIDE Award for the Bay St. Louis Bridge People's Choice Campaign. MDOT mobilized 55,000 people to vote for the bridge in a national AASHTO competition. The bridge won by a landslide, earning \$10,000 for community development projects in Bay St. Louis.

The Outreach Division was recognized by the Public Relations Association of Mississippi (PRAM) at their 2008 annual meeting. Included in the categories and awards were: Special Events – Reconnecting the Coast; Special Purpose Publications – Artists of the Coast, A Commemorative Coloring Book; Broadcast Production – Secure Your Trash; and Writing for Public Relations – Passing the Baton, Communication Techniques for Developing Tomorrow's Transportation Workforce.

MDOT was also honored with four 2008 Southern Public Relations Federation (SPRF) Awards of Merit for the above projects. In addition, SPRF recognized MDOT with its 2008 Award of Excellence for After Katrina: Rebuilding Lives and Infrastructure, a book authored by Mississippi Transportation Commissioner Wayne Brown.

MDOT was honored by the Tupelo Public School District with the Golden Apple Award. The rarely-bestowed award is designed to spotlight individuals, organizations, or businesses that have shown outstanding commitment to education. The award recognizes the innovative TRAC, RIDES, and CARS programs.

### MDOT Employees Receive Silver Ant Awards

In recent months, several employees have been presented with prestigious Silver Ant Awards by MDOT Executive Director, Larry L. "Butch" Brown. The employees are Ben Cohen, Charles Riddell, Monica Thornton, Tim Hardin, and Barney Lane.



The Silver Ant Award is presented to employees who exemplify exceptional leadership skills and service to the agency. Silver Ant honorees are employees who go above and beyond their job descriptions in order to serve the department and the people of the state of Mississippi.

### Liberty Road Bridge and Interchange Wins Two National Awards

The Liberty Road Bridge and Interchange in Natchez, Mississippi, was recently recognized at two national awards programs. The project, which was designed and constructed in coordination with ABMB Engineers, Inc., and Grace and Herbert Architects, was one of only 12 projects out of more than 100 entries



Executive Director Larry L. "Butch" Brown (L) receiving the award from FHWA Division Administrator Andy Hughes (R)

to receive an Honorable Mention at the Federal Highway Administration's Excellence in Highway Design Awards program. In a separate competition, the American Council of Engineering Companies awarded MDOT and ABMB with its 2009 Engineering Excellence Honor Award for the design and construction of the Liberty Road Bridge and Interchange.

The project was originally a vision of MDOT Executive Director Larry L. "Butch" Brown as a means of relieving traffic congestion and providing for an aesthetically pleasing gateway from the Natchez Trace Parkway into the City of Natchez. The project achieved its goal and now provides a greater level of safety for travelers.





## Awards and Achievements

### Mississippi Association of Governmental Purchasing and Property Agents (MAGPPA) Recognizes Lisa Hancock and Jessica Younger

Each year MAGPPA presents four awards recognizing outstanding government employees. Nominations are based on experience, personal contributions to the field, and involvement in professional development. In 2008, two of the four awards were presented to MDOT employees.

Lisa Hancock, Director of Procurement, was named Purchasing Manager of the Year for her development of professional training programs to ensure an exceptionally trained staff in using the latest electronic solicitation bid module, which increases efficiency and saves taxpayer dollars.

Jessica Younger, Asset Management, was named Property Officer of the Year. She has received all three levels of property certification, including Certified Professional Property Manager. She also serves as treasurer of the Magnolia Chapter of the National Property Management Association. State Auditor Stacey Pickering came to MDOT to personally present Ms. Younger with a proclamation honoring her achievements.



Lisa Hancock



Jessica Younger

### Lee, Ruff, and Smith Earn Mississippi Engineering Society Awards

Retired MDOT District Six Engineer Richard "Ricky" Lee was awarded the Distinguished Engineering Service Award by the Mississippi Engineering Society. The award recognizes his career-long achievements in engineering. For 35 years, Lee served the public as a professional civil engineer and a trusted leader in the construction and maintenance of South Mississippi's transportation infrastructure. Following the destruction caused by Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Lee was a leader in efforts to rebuild the highway system with a dedication to safety and fiscal responsibility.

Wilson Ruff, MDOT District Six Materials Engineer, was named Mississippi Government Engineer of the Year by the Mississippi Engineering Society. The award recognizes Ruff's exemplary contributions to the engineering profession and his leadership in ensuring the health, safety, and welfare of the traveling public.

MDOT's District Six Special Projects Engineer Sharpie Smith is this year's recipient of the Engineer of the Year Award presented by the Southeast Chapter of the Mississippi Engineering Society. The award recognizes one individual each year for outstanding service and contributions to the engineering profession. Smith oversees administration of the federally-funded transportation infrastructure program in the Forrest and Lamar county region, the Gulf Coast metropolitan planning organizations, and other cities in southeast Mississippi.



### Signalization Project Selected as Winner in National Competition

MDOT's efforts to reconnect and improve the network of traffic signals along U.S. Highway 90 along the Gulf Coast have earned national recognition. ITSA (Intelligent Transportation Systems – America) named the project a winner in the Best Innovative Practices award category at the ITS World Congress, held in November 2008 in New York City. The new system will enable traffic engineers to maximize traffic flow through intersections. Through a connection with MDOT's mstraffic.com website, local public safety agencies will be able to monitor the interchanges through the site's network of traffic cameras and respond more quickly to accidents and other incidents.



L to R: ITS Manager Mike Stokes, Central District Commissioner Dick Hall, State Traffic Engineer Wes Dean, Northern District Commissioner Bill Minor, Southern District Commissioner Wayne Brown, and MDOT Chief Engineer Melinda McGath.





## Highway Dedication Honors Fallen Soldier



On Friday, January 16, 2009, Highway 393 in Winston County was dedicated as the “Corporal Dustin Jerome Lee Memorial Highway.” Cpl. Lee was fatally wounded in March 2007 in a mortar attack in Fallujah, Iraq, while serving with the 3rd Recon Battalion of the U.S. Marine Corps. He was a distinguished dog handler; he and his dog, Lex, searched for bombs. Lex was severely injured in the attack and has since been adopted by Cpl. Lee’s parents.

The dedication was an event full of tears, laughter, and memories of the heroic young man being honored. Cpl. Lee was remembered as respectful and honorable young man who always strived to do his very best. His family and friends were joined by elected officials from throughout the state to commemorate Cpl. Lee’s life and service to his country.

## Dedication of Bay Saint Louis Bridge Honors Coast Entrepreneur

A ceremony dedicating the Bay Saint Louis Bridge as the Leo W. Seal, Jr. Memorial Bridge was held on Saturday, May 16, 2009. Seal, the former president of Hancock Bank, was chosen by the Mississippi House of Representatives for this honor because of his lifetime of service to South Mississippi as an economic, civic, and philanthropic leader.

The bridge, reconstructed after the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina, has become a symbol of progress and rebuilding on the Gulf Coast. Thus, it is fitting that it has been dedicated to the memory of a man who, according to Transportation Commissioner Wayne Brown, “was a driving force throughout his beloved South Mississippi and Hancock County not only in banking but also in education, economic development, and transportation.”



Matt Dunn

## Tupelo Students Receive Top Honors at National Bridge Building Competition

Three eighth grade teams from Tupelo Middle School returned from Bedford Springs, Pennsylvania, with something to celebrate. The students, participants in MDOT’s Transportation and Civil Engineering (TRAC) program, were finalists in the national bridge building competition sponsored by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO). The competition consists of three-person teams designing and constructing balsa wood bridges.

Tupelo teams placed first and third in the floating bridge competition, and they swept the lift bridge category. The students worked with MDOT engineer Matt Dunn in designing and constructing their bridges. The winning students came home with cash prizes.



## MDOT Participates in Cell Phones for Soldiers Program

Thinking Green now has a patriotic ring for the Mississippi Department of Transportation. MDOT District Offices and the Administrative Offices in Jackson are official drop-off points for the Cell Phones for Soldiers program. The program accepts donations of used cell phones which it recycles and re-sells. The profits are used to purchase 60-minute calling cards for soldiers stationed overseas.

MDOT began participating in the program in Fall 2008, and it has become a huge success. Members of the Mississippi public who wish to donate can find collection sites around the state at <http://www.cellphonesforsoldiers.com/> MDOT offices are listed under the Find Drop-Off Point tab.



(R) Wes Carter of Facility & Records Management demonstrating the Drop Box





L to R: Commissioner Dick Hall and Mayor Robin McCrory

## Hall Led Ribbon Cutting in Lexington

Central District Transportation Commissioner Dick Hall led a ribbon-cutting ceremony in the city of Lexington on April 16 to mark the completion of a landscaping enhancement project. MDOT awarded Federal Highway Administration grants totaling \$108,582 to the city to restore and enhance its historic Court Square. Federal Transportation Enhancement Program funds are utilized to enhance the quality of life in U.S. communities. Commissioner Hall was joined by state senators and representatives at the ceremony, along with local officials. Lexington serves as the county seat of Holmes County.



## MDOT 2008 Construction Career Fair Successful



Students in the Canton, Batesville, and Hattiesburg areas experienced first-hand the wide variety of careers the transportation industry offers thanks to MDOT's Construction Career Fair, held at various high schools during September and October. During the fairs, students had the opportunity to view and operate actual construction equipment and speak one-on-one with working professionals about careers in the highway construction industry. Construction career fairs, hosted nationwide by state DOTs, have proven highly successful in promoting the transportation industry and the careers it offers to America's youth. Sponsors teaming up with MDOT to make the career fairs a success in our state were the Federal Highway Administration, Mississippi Department of Education, Mississippi Road Builders Association, Mississippi Asphalt Association, and other non-profit organizations.



Carolyn Bell (L), Civil Rights Director of MDOT and Kay Atwood (R), Atwood Fence Company, Inc. coordinate the event.

## CARS Program Introduced

Ninth grade students around the state now have the opportunity to benefit from one of MDOT's highly successful educational programs. The newly implemented Career Awareness/Roadway to Success (CARS) program was created to introduce students to the various careers available in the transportation industry.

The program is geared toward helping students develop their math and science skills as well as creating a 21st century workforce, as emphasized in the State Superintendent of Education's Workforce Pathways program. MDOT is an active participant in developing and implementing education programs, like CARS, which focus on building tomorrow's workforce and reducing the dropout rate among high school students.

## MDOT 2009 Safety Fair a Success

Children were the top priority at MDOT's recent 2009 Safety Fair held in Jackson, which focused on MDOT's goal of reducing child fatalities by educating children and parents about passenger safety and occupant protection. Volunteers worked to achieve this goal by inspecting child safety seats and demonstrating the importance of seat belts using the MDOT Rollover Simulator, known as the ROVER. The safety fair included demonstrations on fire safety and participants received child fingerprint and DNA kits. The kids had the opportunity to have some fun jumping on a space jump and to get their pictures taken with the MDOT crash test dummies.

The Safety Fair was sponsored in part by Safe Kids Mississippi, Woodmen of the World, and the Mississippi State Department of Health.



## Best Operators in Region

MDOT heavy equipment operators won first place in the Regional Equipment Operators' "Rodeo" in Asheville, North Carolina. The event is an annual competition with heavy equipment operators from seven states demonstrating their skills and learning new techniques. The Regional Rodeo provides an opportunity for equipment operators from across the south to show off their skills while improving safety through hard work and practice.



## Highway Dedication Ceremony Honors Coast Representative



*James C. Simpson, Sr. family attending the dedication in his honor.*

A segment of U.S. Highway 90 in Harrison County was named the “James C. Simpson, Sr., Memorial Highway” in honor of the Gulfport legislator who was a vital part of the Mississippi House of Representatives, serving District 120 of Harrison County for 28 years until his retirement in 1991. He was a dedicated public servant, a champion of Gulf Coast issues, and a staunch supporter of public education. The seven-term legislator suffered a heart attack at the Pass Christian East voting precinct on Second Street on Nov. 8, 1994, while helping his son, Jim Simpson, Jr., win the District 120 race for the Mississippi House of Representatives.

## MDOT is Keeping Mississippi Beautiful



The strong partnership between MDOT and Keep Mississippi Beautiful (KMB) brought national attention to the state of Mississippi with the presentation of three national awards by Keep America Beautiful. The awards were given in recognition of the MDOT/KMB partnership and MDOT’s dedication and success in the Keep America Beautiful Great American Cleanup.

## MDOT Encourages Health and Safety for Mississippi Students

Thanks to growing support for MDOT’s Safe Routes to School Program, students in 14 communities around the state now have safer sidewalk and crosswalk connections to their schools. In May, the state allocated more than \$3 million in federal funds to the program, aimed at encouraging students to walk and bicycle to school. The program’s benefits include helping young people achieve the recommended 60 minutes of daily exercise, reducing traffic congestion, and improving air quality around schools.

## Albert Joins Myrtle the Turtle at the Mississippi State Fair

He’s brown, full of adventure, and loves hanging out with his anti-litter partner, Myrtle the Turtle. Albert the Monkey, with storybook in hand, joined Myrtle the Turtle at the State Fair in October to launch the new anti-litter theme, “Think Green, Keep Mississippi Clean.” Myrtle and Albert will travel with MDOT’s Anti-Litter Coordinators to educate students across the state about keeping Mississippi clean.





## “Barrel Toss” on U.S. Highway 90

People from the Biloxi area celebrated the completion of the U.S. Highway 90 Reconstruction Project in a fun and unusual manner. Officials attending the ceremonies tossed away miniature orange construction barrels to symbolize that the road is now open to traffic. The barrels had been a familiar sight blocking Highway 90 from Saint Louis Bay to Biloxi Bay causing delays for commuters. The highway was seriously damaged by Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and required major reconstruction efforts. The reconstruction projects covered 28 miles of U.S. Highway 90 and were completed on time in March 2009.

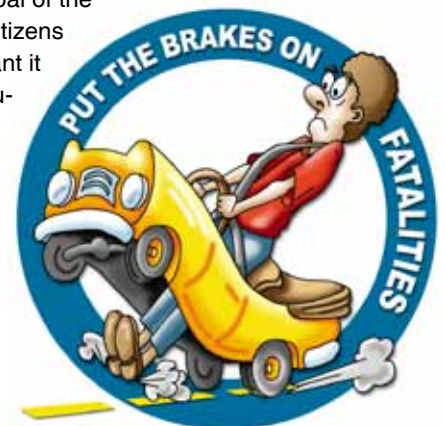


## Highway Named after Dr. W.W. Walley

A highway dedication ceremony for a segment of U.S. Highway 84 in Wayne County to be named the “Dr. W.W. Walley Memorial Highway” was held Thursday, Oct. 30 at the Waynesboro Municipal Auditorium. Walley’s commitment to helping his fellow man is reflected in his many worthwhile contributions. He was a member of the Foreign Missions Board through which he made many international trips to establish hospitals. He was elected president of the Mississippi Baptist Convention as well as president of the Mississippi State Medical Licensing Board and in 1985 was the first recipient of the Mississippi State Medical Association’s Community Service Award.

## MDOT Observes the Eighth Annual Put the Brakes on Fatalities Day

In October, MDOT hosted three press conferences across Mississippi to kick off the state’s participation in Put the Brakes on Fatalities Day®. The goal of the event was to remind the citizens of Mississippi how important it is to focus on their individual behavior when utilizing the roadways—not just as drivers but also as pedestrians, bicycle and motorcycle operators, and passengers.



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