



Employee contest yields innovative solutions at IDOT

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SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Department of Transportation is recognizing 10 finalists for its Operations Innovative Ideas Contest, a new in-house initiative to encourage creative problem solving that results in improved service for the traveling public and potential savings for taxpayers.

More than 100 ideas were submitted to IDOT's internal selection committee. Submissions were evaluated by size and scope of problem, creativity in coming up with a solution, ability to be implemented statewide, and potential to save time, money or other valuable resources for the state.

“Our vision is to be the country's most innovative state department of transportation. Listening to the talented people who do important work for our agency every day is one of the best ways to reach that goal,” said Illinois Transportation Secretary Randy Blankenhorn. “Our employees maintaining the state's highways see opportunities to do better all the time. This contest encourages them to turn their ideas into inventions that make their jobs easier, with even the smallest ideas having the potential to make a big difference in the service we provide.”

Gov. Bruce Rauner has encouraged Blankenhorn and other agency directors to find creative ways to make government more efficient. He says there's no better way to do that than by tapping into the knowledge and experience of talented employees.

“We have world-class employees, right here in Illinois,” Rauner said. “Their creative and innovative ideas are just what we need to streamline our operations. The winning entries here will not just make IDOT's work processes more efficient, they'll also help keep our employees and other drivers safe. I'd like to thank everyone who submitted an entry and congratulate all the finalists.”

The winning entry came from the department's Riverton maintenance yard for developing a warning light that can be installed on truck beds. Facing the cab, the light will help alert plow drivers if the bed is raised, avoiding collisions with bridges and overpasses.

The first runner-up was the Morton maintenance facility for inventing a bracket that can be fitted to a jack for installing plow blades, making the task safer and reducing the chances of injury. The second runner-up was the Towanda maintenance yard for creating a shield for costly road temperature sensors on trucks with simple parts that can be purchased at any home improvement store for \$10 or less.

Remaining finalists included:

- Schaumburg Bureau of Maintenance: New lead worker training
- Amboy maintenance facility: Safer process for replacing plow blades
- LaSalle maintenance facility: New inductor to safely mix and load chemicals in large spray tanks
- Decatur maintenance facility: Visual indicator for when a plow's salt spreader is spinning
- Troy maintenance facility: New cost-effective inductor system for making hot brine
- Marion maintenance facility: Safer and more efficient process for spraying pesticides by mounting a spray rig to a snow plow
- Day Labor unit (Springfield): Invention to safely guide truck drivers towing compressor units