

# Training: What it Can Do for You

by Kathy DesRoches

In our society new technologies are developing so rapidly, and in such large volume, that only a few can keep up with them. With regard to road maintenance and repair these technologies cover management tools as well as advances in materials, equipment, and techniques.

The mission of the UNH T<sup>2</sup>Center is to sort through these changes and transmit the useful information to local road managers and their crews. One of the most effective ways of transferring information is through training.

Seminars, workshops, and on-the-job training enables people to find practical applications of information. Knowledge and applications learned from training provide benefits at three levels: the municipality, the manager, and the individual.

## Benefits to Municipalities

A well-trained staff or crew knows and understands local, state, and federal regulations. According to Sheldon Morgan, the Director of Public Works in Gilford, "it's critical employees stay current on rules, regulations and procedures." Through training, crews learn how to meet required standards which may change because of federal guidelines and/or state law.

Training reduces costly turnover. Trained employees become qualified for promotions and are more likely to stay with the municipality. When vacancies occur, a department with a training program tends to attract new employees.

Training saves money by decreasing mistakes and improving the quality of a crew's work. Crews work smarter when they understand why things are done certain ways.

## Benefits to Managers

A manager with a highly trained staff has more time to manage. A trained crew can be left on a job site permitting the manager to attend to administration,

public relations, or other managerial details. Training improves employees' safety practices and their ability to respond to emergencies.

Skills training helps the manager decrease the affects of personnel shortages and normal staff turnover. Cross-training reduces problems created by personnel shortages, including those created by vacations and illness.

Well-trained staff and crew members provide indirect benefits to the manager. They can provide valuable suggestions for problem solving, saving time and money. Trained employees can help set standards for evaluating their own performance. Moral is higher: as Sheldon Morgan states, "the trained employee feels involved."

## Benefits to the Individual

Highly trained employees feel good about themselves as well as their work. They have higher moral and confidence in their knowledge and abilities. They seek promotions and are motivated to gain more knowledge and skills. It feels great to be, as Sheldon Morgan puts it, "on the cutting edge."

In short, people enjoy their jobs more when they know what they are doing, and they know they are doing it well.

## When is Training Needed?

Training is needed for the benefits described above and essential when any of the following occur:

- New methods or work procedures are started,
- Goals are not met,
- Employees lack a sense of purpose,
- Costs of operations are increasing without apparent reason,
- Quality of service is declining,
- Accidents are increasing,
- Staff or crew pride is lacking,
- Complaints and grievances are excessive,

- Workers are asking many questions about the job,
- High turnover and/or absenteeism, or
- Experienced employees are promoted or leave.

## Making Training Effective

To get the maximum benefits from training, managers should ensure that employees understand what they can expect to learn and their knowledge will be used. Thus prepared, they will absorb more information and develop more ideas about how to apply it.

### Sources

Huffmire, Donald. 1990. *Successful Supervision for Local Roads Supervisors*. (FHWA-RT-91-002) McLean, VA: Turner-Fairbanks Highway Research Center.

NACE. 1986. *Handbook on Training for Road Departments*. Washington: National Association of County Engineers

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- Mapping New Hampshire's Roads
- The Interface between Road Agents and Regional Planning Commissions
- Timber Retaining Walls
- Local Road Supervisors' Tips for Motivating Employees
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1. Innovative ideas.
2. RSMS tips and applications

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