

## Public Relations

The saying, "Information is Power" is often true. When people say this they normally are referring to keeping information but sharing information can be more powerful than hoarding it. The sharing of information creates goodwill and educates the public.

Ken Roberts is a Master Road Scholar and the Highway Agent in Alton. Ken's vehicle for sharing information is through his column in the monthly town paper, *Main Street*.

The column, Highway Happenings, contains the basic information a road manager would want people to know. A summary of what has been done. A note of what to expect in the future, a reminder of the number of miles the highway crew maintains, a suggestion to drive safely and a request for cooperation.

The public's response has positive. Ken says, "they like seeing the report." Like most road managers, he also submits a letter for the town's annual report but the monthly column is a valuable part of his public relations.

Even if your municipality doesn't have a local paper, below are two other examples of approaches road managers have taken to improve their public relations.

Before starting work on a project, Master Road Scholar Chum Cleverly, the Public Works Director in Bow, writes a letter to the people who live in the affected neighborhood. The letter is then hand-delivered by a crew member who places it in doorways. The letter explains the project, its purpose, and the desired result. After the project is completed, the employee hits the streets again. This time delivering an evaluation form. Chum has had positive results from this approach.

Master Road Scholar Sheldon Morgan, the Public Works Director in Gilford, maintains a good relationship with a local reporter. The reporter's paper publishes a list of projects that are underway which informs people in town of what to expect.

Although you may not be up to the task of writing a column, you can see there are ways to improve your public relations. Often the public is uninformed of your departmental duties and why

you do certain jobs. Tell them and they might surprise you but acting more cooperatively, what do you have to lose?

### Highway Happenings

By Ken Roberts, Highway Agent

#### A Look Back and A Look Ahead

Winter is here again and as a new year begins, it's time for me to take a look back at what's been accomplished and then look ahead to goals and objectives.

During 1996, significant improvements were made to (list of road names). The town roads are in better shape than ever thanks to the residents who support our efforts. Although each construction project undoubtedly cause many inconveniences, I appreciate the patience and cooperation of all.

The past year also saw the Highway Department deal with more snowstorms than ever before in the past hundred years, many extensive rainfalls which set also records and the dam breach tragedy. These events kept us busy for many long hours. We have stretched our manpower and equipment resources to the limit, but the mission continues on a daily basis.

Please remember though, your traveling safety depends on our safe operations. Never tailgate a plow truck and always yield when plows go by. People who blindly pass plow trucks because they are in a hurry are a danger to themselves, the truck driver and the public. Vehicles parked along roadsides at night in violation of the winter parking ban are at risk for damages and obstruct snow removal operations. Also, please understand we are currently training three new drivers and some things may not be done the same way as past years. If you have a problem with a plow, give me a call. We are here to help.

The Town of Alton has 80+ miles of road. There are many more reconstruction projects ahead will include ditch line maintenance, roadside brush cutting, pavement shimming and keeping pace with street sign disappearances. We certainly welcome citizen participation, whether it's a phone call or someone shoveling a culvert before the road washes away, we are all in this together.

Although the key to a good road is drainage, drainage, drainage, our success depends on the resources we have available. Your Highway Department is ready 24 hours a day.

*Reprinted from Main Street, Alton Bay, NH*