Happy Holidays!

The Topeka Community Christmas Tree decorates the north side of the Capitol building and is lit up for the holidays.

State offices are closed for the holidays on Thursday and Friday, Dec. 24 and 25. State offices will also be closed on Friday, Jan. 1, 2016 for New Year’s Day. Have a safe and Merry Christmas!

Headquarters

Tommer retires from KDOT: Construction and Materials Bureau Chief Sandra Tommer is retiring from KDOT after 40 years of service. Tommer graduated from Kansas State University and started with KDOT in 1976 in the Engineer-in-Training program. She became a Project Engineer at the Topeka Construction Office, and in 1982, was promoted to the Construction Engineer. She was named the Area Engineer in Wamego in 1988, was promoted in 2000 to the District One Construction Engineer in Topeka and has been in her current position at Headquarters since 2011.

“It was a challenge because there were no women in the field when I started - I was one of the first,” Tommer said. “But I had a lot of good people to learn from and have enjoyed working with all of them. That's what I'm going to miss the most, the people.”

Tommer’s husband, Bill, retired from the District One office in 2011 after a 43-year KDOT career.

A retirement party for Tommer will take place tomorrow, Dec. 17, from 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. in the fourth floor auditorium at the Eisenhower Building.
The I-235/U.S. 54 interchange rebuild has begun - after only one month, seven work zones (and counting) are in place. At one of the project sites, welders connect H-pile in the footing of pier one of the first bridge of six on the northbound I-235 ramp to eastbound and westbound U.S. 54. Traffic disruption in the project area has been minimal so far but that will change in January when ramps from nearby West Street to both eastbound and westbound U.S. 54 are closed for six months. Mark Hurt’s bridge squad and Kelly Keele’s road squad designed the project. A website to keep commuters, media and other project watchers informed is at www.235red.org.

**General**

Drunk driver wrecks into Oregon construction zone: According to a story in Better Roads, a drunk driver in Oregon barely avoided a potential disaster after he crashed into a construction site and found himself teetering on the edge of a pit with an active gas line below. According to the Beaverton Police Department, an intoxicated man was driving his car in Beaverton recently when he crashed into a construction zone he didn’t notice - despite the flaggers and construction vehicles. The man’s car ended up almost halfway into a very large hole that had an exposed, active gas line. If the driver had gone a foot further, the car would likely have fallen into the pit and atop the gas line.

Luckily, in the process of the crash, the driver avoided hitting any construction workers or causing injuries to anyone on the site. The man’s car balanced on the edge of the pit until workers from NW Natural Gas helped remove the vehicle. The driver was then arrested and charged with driving under the influence.

**Trivia!**

Chocolate
1. How many Hershey’s kisses are produced every day?
2. About how many cacao beans does it take to make one pound of chocolate?
3. What year were M&Ms created?
4. What was the main purpose?
5. Who was German chocolate cake named after?
6. About what temperature does chocolate melt?

**Railroad Crossing Inventory**

Rail inventory: There are thousands of railroad crossings in Kansas and KDOT Rail Crossing Coordinator Darlene Osterhaus needs to know a lot about each one of them. So, over the past two years, she has trained 160 KDOT staffers to help inventory and record some 100 attributes of each crossing. Osterhaus needs the information, which includes photos, number of sets of tracks, latitude/longitude, signage, crossing surface, name of street, type of roadway, and much more, to update KDOT data bases and meet reporting requirements of the Federal Railroad Administration.

Since the FRA now requires that the full inventory of crossings be updated every five years, Osterhaus has had to recruit and train more people from KDOT districts to meet the demand. In the past two years, 2,856 public crossings in 37 counties have been inventoried and next year’s plans include the inventory of 1,310 crossings in 24 counties. Osterhaus says that additional information collected from this point forward will be verification that each crossing includes the blue Emergency Notification System (ENS) signs posted on both sides of the tracks. The blue signs, she said, bear a string of six digits followed by a letter that identify the precise location of a crossing, which can be crucial to those reporting a crash or other emergency situations at the crossing.
District Five

The Wichita Area Crew provided a bucket truck so project designers could finalize camera locations for the next phase of Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) deployment on Wichita highways. This location is on I-235 at K-42. Bidding is scheduled for May 2016.

District Four

Pittsburg officials, along with Transportation Secretary Mike King and Mary Sullivan of Amino Brothers (second and third from right), cut the ribbon celebrating Quincy Street improvements during a Dec. 10 ceremony. The $3.2 million project, on which Amino Brothers was the primary contractor, reconstructed Quincy from Broadway to Joplin streets. The work included storm sewer improvements, ADA updates, new sidewalks and a traffic signal at Quincy and Joplin. The project was funded by an 80/20 match of state and city funds.

District Three

Updated intersection: K-258 near Webster Lake in Rooks County is getting a new look thanks to a new, at-grade intersection at the U.S. 24 junction near the reservoir. The intersection is replacing the overpass that carried traffic over U.S. 24. Pavement on the new alignment has been completed and work will begin to remove the overpass in early 2016. Work on the $1.8 million project is expected to be completed by the end of spring, weather permitting. Shawn Schwensen’s bridge squad and Kris Norton’s road squad designed the project.

Top photo: Striping and finishing touches take place on the new K-258 pavement. Above: Paving on the new alignment was under way earlier this year.

Employees’ Council

A variety of art was on display (top) and employees enjoyed cookies and punch (right) at the Employees’ Council Artwalk/Holiday reception on Dec. 3 in Topeka. Above, KDOT retirees Larry Emig, Harold Benoit and Nancy Bogina taste cookies entered in the Cookie contest with Coleen Weber being named the winner.
Thanksgiving week storm racks up impressive numbers

The winter storm that hit nearly every corner of Kansas over Thanksgiving week cost $3.5 million. Much of that cost was due to the fact that the storm was stretched over most of the week, covered all but a few southeast counties and was a ‘material heavy’ storm due to the ice. KDOT trucks covered an impressive 300,000-plus miles due to the storm’s duration and icy characteristics.

37,000 tons of material

1 million gallons of brine

30,000 hours of labor

To see more stories on other transportation topics, check out the regular posts on the Kansas Transportation blog at http://kansastransportation.blogspot.com/
**Great Gift Item - Don’t Miss Out!**

Celebrate with a 2015 KDOT holiday ornament!

**KDOT Ceramic Holiday Ornament**

To order:
- **Headquarters:** Contact your Employees’ Council representative
- **Districts/Retirees:** Mail completed form and check to -
  
  Ruby Hilton, KDOT, 700 SW Harrison, 13th Floor/Bridge Design, Topeka, KS, 66603.

**Checks payable to Employees’ Council**

Orders are limited on ornaments from previous years - first come, first serve.

Only $5 each

- 3" diameter/flat ceramic
- Qty: ______
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Please Print -
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- Address: _____________________________________________________
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- Work phone: ________________________________

For more details, call Ruby at (785) 296-0603.

**CD-ROM Template**

Supply is limited on ornaments from previous years - first come, first serve.

Join the KTA on Dec. 18 for a groundbreaking of the cattle pens ramp improvements and scenic outlook project located at mile marker 111 on the Kansas Turnpike (I-35.) The festivities will begin at 3 p.m. with remarks by Gov. Sam Brownback, KDOT Secretary/KTA Director Mike King and KTA CEO Steve Hewitt. Can’t make it to the event that afternoon? Photos will be posted on the KTA’s Flickr page at [https://www.flickr.com/photos/ksturnpike](https://www.flickr.com/photos/ksturnpike).

**Order Form for Past Year’s Holiday Ornaments**

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