

## Acronyms in *Technology News*

AASHTO	American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials
APWA	American Public Works Association
CTRE	Center for Transportation Research and Education (at Iowa State University)
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
Iowa DOT	Iowa Department of Transportation
ISU	Iowa State University
LTAP	Local Technical Assistance Program
MUTCD	Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices
NACE	National Association of County Engineers



U.S. Department of Transportation  
Federal Highway Administration



Iowa Department  
of Transportation

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Center for Transportation Research and Education  
ISU Research Park  
2711 S. Loop Drive, Ste. 4700  
Ames, Iowa 50010-8634  
Telephone: 515-294-8103  
Fax: 515-294-0467  
[www.ctre.iastate.edu/](http://www.ctre.iastate.edu/)

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# Just for street and

## Interacting with the public

(Based on chapter 2 of the *Local Roads Maintenance Workers' Manual*, TR-514)

Interacting with the public may be the most important part of your work day. *You* are the public face of your organization.

### Good responses

Be sure to respectfully acknowledge all comments or questions from citizens. If you can address a person's question yourself, do so. If a question is outside your area of responsibility, refer the person to your supervisor.

Following are some effective responses to questions or requests for information:

- That's a good question. I don't know the answer, but let me refer you to someone who does.
- [After responding to a question for which you are responsible.] That's a good question. Have I answered your concern?
- Thanks for your interest.

Sometimes just listening can be useful. But silence can also be misunderstood as inattention, disagreement, or anger.

Gestures, expressions, and vocal inflections also communicate. Be aware of what your body language is saying, especially in situations that may be tense for you.

### Key points

- Always be honest, courteous, and respectful.
- Know your agency's position on work rules and maintenance policies and procedures.
- If you don't know an answer, say so. Refer the questioner to your supervisor or other appropriate person.
- When you're asked a question, share only the facts. Don't represent your opinion as your agency's position or policy.

- Do not share your personal opinion. Do not argue. A good question to ask yourself is, "Do I want this conversation on the front page of the newspaper?"
- Be loyal to your agency. If you disagree with a policy or position, take it up with your supervisor, not with someone outside the organization.
- Have information for appropriate contacts readily available.
- Don't take questions or complaints personally. You are a symbol of the organization, much like the referee in a sporting event, and comments are not about you personally.
- Document all questions or comments from the public and report them to your supervisor.

### Useful communication tools

In some agencies, maintenance workers carry cards with contact information (name, phone and fax numbers, e-mail, etc.) for various services. See figure 1. When citizens have questions, workers can use the card to refer them to appropriate staff or offices.

Another useful communication tool is a "door knocker": a flyer to hang on house doorknobs. See figure 2. These can be especially useful for answering questions/providing information in advance of specific road maintenance activities. ■

<b>CENTER COUNTY, Iowa</b> 123 Main St., Centertown, IA 50000-0001 515-222-2219; fax 515-222-2200 ( <a href="http://www.centercounty.com">www.centercounty.com</a> )	
Joe Brown, Engineer 319-222-2220 <a href="mailto:joe.brown@centercounty.com">joe.brown@centercounty.com</a>	Board of Supervisors 319-222-2224
Mike Black, Roads Supervisor 319-222-2221 <a href="mailto:mike.black@centercounty.com">mike.black@centercounty.com</a>	Assessor's Office 319-222-2225
Permits and Policies 319-222-2222	Conservation Office 319-222-2226
Planning and Zoning 319-222-2223 M–F 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.	Utilities 319-222-2227

Figure 1. Sample information card