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Walla Walla District

Intercom

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A day at Little Goose, p. 4-5

Recent weather spurs reflection on driving safety

As Bing Crosby sang it, “Oh, the weather outside is frightful...” It’s that time of year again – snow on the ground and slippery roads. Time to dust off those winter driving skills and try to get to work. Are you and your car prepared for this?

Winter driving is a test of wills and skills. Not everyone is ready for the slippery roads and additional caution needed to get around this time of year. Vehicles need cold weather preparation to assure that the cold won’t affect the battery, coolant and lubricants. Windshield wipers, all-season or traction tires with good remaining tread, a snow scraper for the windshield and an emergency kit for the road are a good start on being prepared for the winter driving season.



Bob Bonstead

Before Christmas, my wife and I traveled up to the Tollgate area to get our holiday tree. The place we go is a mile or two below the chalet, and I figured the snow wouldn’t be too bad there. The recent storm had dropped about 18 inches of new snow, and the driveway we usually take to the tree lot had a good covering of the white stuff. I have snow tires on my two-wheel drive truck. I made it about 10 feet off the highway before I lost traction. I tried to back out, but had no traction in reverse either. Fortunately, I carry a small, folding shovel, which I used to dig the snow out from behind my front and rear tires. That allowed me to back out onto the highway.

The point I’m trying to make here is that I was prepared for the snow. Carrying that shovel was all I needed to gain traction again. It’s the little things that don’t take much space that can help the most in emergency situations.

A bag of kitty litter or a couple of strips of asphalt roofing may be all you need to gain the traction required to get you back onto the road. Four-wheel drive is nice, but not everyone has that. A small shovel, a tow rope or even that bag of sand you throw into the pickup bed for extra weight can be used in an emergency. A blanket, some water, a flashlight and a high-energy bar can be lifesavers if you get stuck somewhere and can’t get yourself out.

The important thing to remember is to be prepared for

WINTER CAR KIT

- ✳ Windshield scraper and small broom for ice and snow removal
- ✳ Flashlights with extra batteries
- ✳ First aid kit with pocket knife and necessary medications
- ✳ Blankets or sleeping bags
- ✳ Newspapers for insulation
- ✳ Plastic bags for sanitation
- ✳ Matches
- ✳ Extra set of mittens, socks and a wool cap
- ✳ Rain gear and extra clothes
- ✳ Sand, clay litter or asphalt shingles for adding traction under tires
- ✳ Tools: pliers, screwdriver, wrench and small shovel
- ✳ Tow chain and jumper cables
- ✳ Set of tire chains or cables
- ✳ Cards, magazines, games and puzzles
- ✳ Brightly colored cloth to use as a flag
- ✳ Road flares
- ✳ Dried fruit, nuts or other high-energy snacks
- ✳ Several bottles of water

the problems – whether it be the slickness of the road you’re driving on or the way you’ll get back onto the road when you get stuck or go off the road.

If every driving precaution fails, and you lose control of your car to a slippery road, take remedial action:

- ▣ Take your foot off the gas and steer into the skid to regain control.
- ▣ Pump the brake lightly, so you don’t lock up the wheels.
- ▣ Once you’ve regained control, steer back into your lane.
- ▣ Now, slow down – that may be why you lost control in the first place. Speed and winter driving don’t mix.

Every year, we have Corps vehicles damaged in winter accidents. Be aware of the road conditions and drive defensively. Use the knowledge you obtained in the defensive driving course you took online this year.

Lack of attention will get you into trouble – chain ruts, speed, following too closely, deer on the roadway, fatigue, heavy snow, black ice and drivers unaccustomed to Eastern Washington road conditions. Be extra careful when driving on snow and ice. It’s more important to get to and from work safely, rather than how quickly you can make the trip.

Bob Bonstead
Safety Specialist

Got a great idea that will do the job better, faster or cheaper? Make that idea pay off.

Employees submitting an innovative, cost-saving idea to the Army Suggestion Program could earn a reward – up to \$25,000. For more information, contact Angie Fleenor, Walla Walla District’s Army Suggestion Program coordinator, or read about it in Official Memorandum 37-1-35 on the District Intranet (accessible only by authorized NWW local area network users).

Gotcha!

Laurie Newsome stands near the Tigris River with a Dec. 15 morning Iraqi newspaper announcing Saddam Hussien's capture.

Newsome, an electronics systems control craftsman from Ice Harbor Dam, deployed to Iraq in support of the Corps' Gulf Regional Division.

"Most of the local people that I am around do not like Saddam. When you watched the 'We got him' speech (on television), the Iraqis in the video were saying 'Death to Saddam,'" said Newsome in an e-mail message.

The front page story, translated into English, called Hussein "the big devil" and claimed "a new day shines on Iraq," Newsome's e-mail said.

"This is the most gratifying thing that I have done," she added. "Having all kinds of people and trades come together and work as one toward a common goal. It is great!"



Corps employees can get W-2s online

from a DFAS news release

Can't wait to figure your taxes? U.S. Army Corps of Engineers employees have the option of receiving their W-2 electronically, rather than waiting for the hardcopy through the mail, according to a Defense Finance and Accounting Service news release.

The release can be a bit confusing, noted Ray Quinn, chief of human resources at Walla Walla District.

"The DFAS news release notes that the service is automatic for DFAS employees who have a myPay personal identification number, however, for Corps folks it is an option they may choose," said Quinn. "Corps employees fall into the 'all other DoD civilian employees' category mentioned in the release's second paragraph."

To be sure of your W-2 mailing status, Quinn

recommends employees check out their current account settings on the myPay website, <https://mypay.dfas.mil/mypay.aspx>. The DFAS news release was posted as follows:

Effective Sept. 17, all current myPay military users and DFAS civilian employees who request or already have a myPay PIN and access myPay are consenting to receive only an electronic W-2. They may, however, elect to receive a hardcopy W-2.

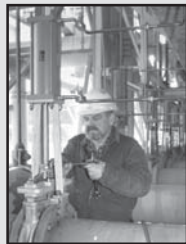
All other Department of Defense civilian employees who use myPay may elect to receive an electronic W-2 in lieu of a hardcopy W-2 through the myPay system.

To turn on the hardcopy W-2 print, you must elect

See **W-2s**, p. 6

On the Cover...

Roger Bowen, a maintenance worker at Little Goose Lock and Dam, makes incremental adjustments to a newly-installed valve in the project's juvenile fish facility. The valve-replacement job was one of many tasks reserved for the winter season at Walla Walla District dams.



Gina Baltrusch

Intercom

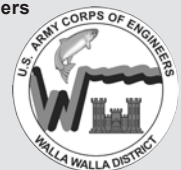


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Little Goose

One day in December

Story and photos by Gina Baltrusch

To the outside observer, winter weather seems to put a freeze on major work activities at Walla Walla District dams.

Large work projects – the kind easily seen from nearby roads – are typically scheduled for warmer weather. However, the dams are anything but inactive this time of year. A visit to Little Goose one day in December found workers engaged in tasks reserved for especially for the winter.

“We try to schedule indoor jobs for winter months in order to reduce exposing workers to severe weather,” said Scott Ross, Little Goose operations manager. “It’s a great time to catch up on paperwork and make repairs to equipment that can’t be shut down for long during the fish seasons. During the winter, the impact to protected fish species is at its lowest.”

At the dam on Dec. 17, power plant workers raised turbine fish screens for annual cleaning. Administrative members kept paperwork moving and pulled records to prepare for the annual navigation lock maintenance set for March. Workers also cleaned filters from generator cooling systems.

The juvenile fish facility’s maze of sorting and holding channels were drained. Workers replaced valves and removed bits of debris left by 10 months of rushing river water. Biological technicians compiled juvenile fish transportation program data from previous years into reports. Electricians replaced old fish-counting systems.

“The project may look quiet from the outside,” said Ross. “But, there’s still lots of work being done out here.”



Roger Bowen, maintenance worker, repairs air lines that run to valves.



Above, Alan Schlachter, power plant shift operator, monitors the dam’s six generators from the control room. Right, Ed Baker, power plant mechanic, removes a main unit generator cooling water strainer for cleaning.





...ves that add water to the adult fish release.



Kellie Donovan and Anne Dowdy, biological technicians, compile past years' fish data.



Tony Sijohn, power plant mechanic, disconnects a cable from the gantry crane's lifting beam after raising a turbine fish screen.



Power plant workers prepare to lock in place a turbine fish screen being raised by the dam's gantry crane for off-season cleaning and maintenance.



James Lyerly, power plant electrician, installs the wiring for one of the new push-button stations used for counting smolts at the dam's juvenile fish facility.



Rick Weis, biological technician, installs new, perforated, metal plates in the fishway leading to the separator to help release excess water.

W-2s, from p. 3

“HARDCOPY” by using the turn on/off hardcopy W-2 option on myPay. If this option is selected you will receive a hardcopy W-2 print in the mail. You will also be able to view your W-2 on myPay. This option is not available for W-2s that have already been provided electronically before the option is selected.

To ensure that customers receive an electronic or hardcopy W-2, there will be a “no change” period that will run from Dec. 1 through Jan. 31 of each tax season. During this period you will not be allowed to change your W-2 print election on myPay, but may request a paper W-2 by contacting your local servicing finance activity.

The consent to receive an “ELECTRONIC” W-2 will remain in effect each year, unless an election is made to receive a “HARDCOPY” W-2. DFAS civilian employees may decide to “opt out” of this election electronically through myPay.

If you are a military member you may opt out of this election electronically through myPay or by submitting a written request to your local servicing finance activity.

The electronic W-2 will discontinue after a DFAS civilian employee separates from employment or after a military member separates without retirement. Civilian retirees’ taxable retired pay will be reported on a Form 1099 by the Office of Personnel Management. Military retirees will have the capability to receive an electronic 1099R through myPay.

Your electronic W-2 will be available yearly on myPay and will be available for the entire year. If you are separated, your W-2 will be available for one year after you are separated.

You may need to file a copy of your electronic W-2 with your state and local tax returns.

Bulkhead overhaul

Lower Monumental workers spent several weeks in November refurbishing the dam’s floating bulkhead. Right, Mike Moore, utilityman, uses a grinder to smooth out a repair spot on the hull of the 30-plus-year-old bulkhead. Below, Harold Clemens, maintenance worker, strengthens a weak point in the bulkhead’s steel skin by welding in new material. The internal pump system also received a complete overhaul, said Ron Standing, power plant mechanic crew foreman at the dam.



Photos by Gina Baltrusch

CDCP recommends six steps to avoid flu

Walla Walla District Safety Office

Flu activity in the U.S. continues to spread, according to a Dec. 19 influenza update issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

“Half of the health care providers in Walla Walla have the flu, and the other half are wearing masks in an attempt prevent catching it,” said Mike Remington, Walla Walla District safety officer.

The flu virus is very contagious, and although this strain isn’t particularly virulent, more than 36,000 Americans still die every year from complications of the disease, according to a CDCP information bulletin.

The vaccine this year is not an exact match, but it is close enough that if you had the vaccine and do still come down with the flu that your symptoms should be rather mild.

“With the number of personal contacts we must make everyday, it is difficult to avoid exposure,” said

Remington. “There are, however, several things you can do to reduce your chances of getting or spreading the disease.”

1. Avoid close contact with people who you know are sick. Note: one recent study showed a person on an airplane flight that had the flu. That person was coughing and sneezing, and within three days, everyone on the plane had come down with the flu. The three-foot rule will minimize exposure to large doses of the virus, but it may not be enough.
2. Stay at home when you are sick.
3. Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing to prevent others around you from getting it.
4. Wash your hands frequently.
5. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
6. Try to keep your immune system up, get your rest, eat well, drink water and exercise.

For more information on the flu go to: www.cdc.gov/flu.

District moves on FY04 OPlan

by Gina Baltrusch

The Quality Steering Group met Dec. 14 to wrap up Walla Walla District's fiscal 2003 operations plan and discuss execution of 2004's objectives.

Completed 2003 objectives and bonus items garnered enough points to give employees a special act award, the QSG decided. Employees must meet all of the criteria listed in the 2003 operations plan to qualify for this award. Eligible employees should see the award in one of the next few pay periods.

After closing out 2003, the QSG turned their attention to 2004's objectives. QSG members noted a different focus to this year's plan.

"There are fewer objectives this year, but they are worth more points," said Sharon White, executive assistant. "The focus is more on quality, rather than how many objectives are in the plan."

With the competing demands of 2012, P2 and deployment of District members to support overseas missions, operations plan teams have little room for delay.

"The competing tasks on people's time provides opportunities for employees not usually involved with operations plan objectives to join a team," White added.

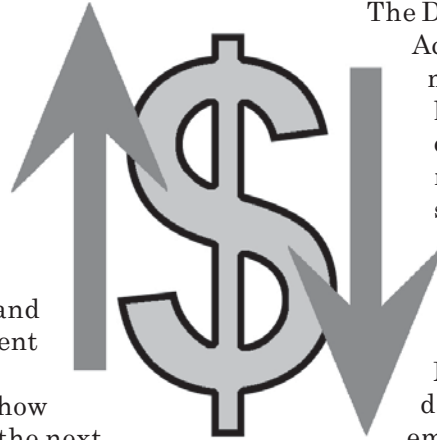
Employees who are interested in contributing their talents to an objective team can find out more about individual objectives by contacting the champions listed in the 2004 operations plan that was distributed in November.

Watch for pay changes

by Gina Baltrusch

Employees should watch for changes in their leave and earnings statements over the next few pay days, according to local human resources officials.

"Incentive awards, changes employees may have made to tax withholdings, health care plans, savings and investment plans, and the initial two-percent raise for federal employees should show up in LESs within the next two or three pay periods," said Ray Quinn, Walla Walla District's chief of human resources. "Those changes may show up one or two at a time in each of those pay checks."



Quinn advises employees to keep track of the changes they expect to see in their pay and closely examine their statements to see that they are accurately processed.

The Defense Finance and Accounting Service myPay web site <https://emss.dfas.mil/mypay.asp> offers a sneak preview of federal LESs – usually posting upcoming statements the Monday prior to pay day, added Quinn. If employees still have question about their statements after reviewing their myPay accounts online, they should contact a District human resources representative.

Record temperatures spur new policy

Walla Walla's record-setting low temperature of minus 12 degrees Jan. 5 prompted a dusting-off of the organization's inclement weather plan.

In the event of inclement weather this season, I am establishing a liberal leave policy for those individuals who feel the need to use it due to dangerous road and/or weather conditions. In effect, this policy allows employees throughout Walla Walla District to take leave without prior approval on inclement weather days.

Commander's Policy Letter Number 6, Subject: Emergency Dismissal or Closure Procedures Due to Inclement Weather, dated Oct. 7, 2002, addresses the current District policy regarding inclement weather.

Project and regulatory field offices have established procedures to notify employees when weather conditions pose too great a threat for employees to travel to and from their workplaces. If unclear of your duty location's inclement weather notification process, check with your project manager or supervisor so you know what to do before the situation occurs.

In the event of dangerous conditions prior to the start of the workday, District headquarters and Mill Creek Project closure or delay information will be posted, banner-style, on the main page of our internet site at www.nww.usace.army.mil. Notices will be posted only if weather conditions warrant a change. In addition to the website, headquarters and Mill Creek employees can call (509) 527-7424 for current closure or delay information impacting District facilities in the City of Walla Walla area. The Public Affairs Office has contact with media outlets that will, as necessary, announce closure or delays.

My primary concern is that everyone makes it safely to and from work. Essays!

Maj. Harry L. Cunningham
Acting District Commander

District employees share holiday cheer

Story and photos by Gina Baltrusch

District members caught the holiday spirit with a potluck lunch, a tree-decorating contest and Giving Tree opportunities.

During the District's quarterly town hall and awards ceremony held Dec. 19, Acting Commander Maj. Harry Cunningham, presented Scott Shelley, contract specialist and U.S. Army Reserve lieutenant colonel, the Bronze Star medal for his recent service overseas in support of the Corps' Afghanistan Area Office.

The Logistics Management Office won the best-decorated tree contest – their entry's decorations held perfect alignment despite being suspended upside-down from the ceiling.

Susan Stewart-Rickelman, director of Walla Walla Friends, addressed town hall attendees, thanking the Association of Corps Employees and those who picked Giving Tree cards to donate toys and clothing for local needy families.

To top off the festivities, Cunningham proposed a commander's holiday toast to "freedom" and turned employees loose to enjoy the luncheon.



Employees try to decide on desserts.



Above, Robin German, Association of Corps Employees vice president, helps Walla Walla Friends personnel load donated gifts for needy families. Right, dozens of gifts surround the ACE Giving Tree in the District headquarters atrium.



Left, logistics members make last-minute adjustments to their prize-winning tree. Above, District employees sample potluck.

