ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY NEWS

WINTER/SPRING 2007

Direct from the Director

News from MDOT Director Kirk T. Steudle

It's been a terrific year for the Adopt-A-Highway program in Michigan! For three weeks out of the year, 27,000 volunteers scour our roadsides for trash. Our AAH program includes county extension groups, Boy Scout troops, garden clubs and many, many service clubs who don safety vests each year to pick up hamburger wrappers, plastic cups, dead mufflers, and even a few (non-winning) lottery tickets.

Thanks very much for all that you do! Your work makes a tremendous difference in keeping our state looking good. Whatever your motivation – to honor a loved one, because you care about the environment, to do the right thing – your efforts helped us clean about 5,700 miles of roadway in 2006.

I have a challenge for you. The number of Adopt-A-Highway volunteer groups has been declining for the past 10 years. We need help to recruit more AAH volunteers for 2007 and beyond. And who better to help us recruit, than the existing participants who understand how valuable the program is? If each existing group attempted to recruit one more organization, or business, or church, or high school service club – we could double our ranks. Could you work on my request in the next few months? By the summer or fall pickup, we could have new volunteers to help us fight the battle against litter. Simply refer prospective new groups to your area coordinator (see list on back of newsletter) to determine which sections are available for adoption. Don't forget, there must be a minimum of three people, plus backups.

When we celebrate our 20th anniversary of the program in 2010, I want to look back and say 2007 was the year we began growing the ranks of Adopt-A-Highway volunteers.

From our MDOT family to yours – *Thank you*!

Kirk Steudle, MDOT Director

2007 Road Construction

If your adopted area has a road construction project scheduled during one or more of the pickup periods, please do not conduct your pickup until the construction has been completed. Send in your pickup report form indicating that the area is "Under Construction." Regular road project updates are posted on the MDOT Web site at www.michigan.gov/laneclosures.

We'd like to hear from you!

Send us your news and photos as you pick up litter throughout 2007. We'd like to hear if you have an interesting experience, or find an unusual piece of trash – really, no kidding! Are you celebrating an anniversary as volunteers – let us know. Just send an e-mail about your group news to MDOT-adoptahighway@michigan.gov.
Digital photos must be jpg format
(no larger than 640x480 pixels).

2007 Pick-up Dates!

Spring	***April 21-29***
Summer	***July 14-22***
Fall	***September 8-16***

✓ Pickup and Safety Forms Reminder

Be sure to submit your safety meeting and pickup forms after *each* pickup. Please include the date of the safety meeting and date of the pickup on its respective form. Forms for the 2007 season are included in this mailing.

Meet your Adopt-A-Highway coordinator…

Ponce Esparza, MDOT Bay Region

Ponce Esparza has been an Adopt-A-Highway coordinator for most of the program's 18-year existence. He is the literal "jack-of-all-trades" in MDOT's Bay Region, Saginaw. He writes the majority of the region's maintenance contracts, including curb sweeping, snowplowing, mowing, spraying, catch basin cleaning, and tree removal. He also writes and oversees the pavement marking contracts and is the region coordinator for billboards.

During Esparza's nearly 30-year career with MDOT, he has worked in bridge and road design, forestry, the sign shop, traffic and safety, permits, and has been a maintenance foreman. Have a question? Ask Ponce!

"I really like what I do because I can see the end results of my work as I drive down the road," said Ponce. "The billboards, highway pavement markings, new sign designs – they're all there on our highways in MDOT's 13-county Bay Region. I have been fortunate to work for, and with, some of the hardest working and brightest minds in MDOT."

The Adopt-A-Highway program has been very popular in the Saginaw/Mt. Pleasant/Flint area. Most of the highways are already adopted, with Saginaw County and Genesee County highways almost always covered. "We have a system. If a stretch of roadway is not adopted, the sign stays up, but the lower panel is missing, so drivers know we need a new Adopt group to come forward," he said.

"Last year, we lost about a half-dozen groups who had been with us since the beginning of the program in 1990," said Ponce. "We understand that group members are getting older and it is harder to work. This can be a physically demanding job, especially during the first spring pickup."

Esparza is encouraged by the enthusiasm of the volunteers, including a group who insisted on mowing the M-46 right-of-way in Tuscola County during a recent pickup! …And the Sandusky Boy Scouts, who picked up trash, dropped it off at the local Pizza Hut dumpsters (with the restaurant's permission), and were treated to free pizza. How's that for dedicated service and community spirit?

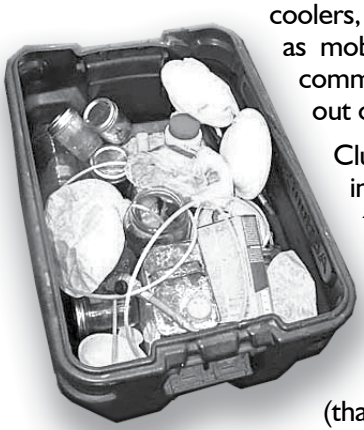
Web site at www.michigan.gov/Adoptahighway

Meth Lab refuse – what you need to know

Volunteers who clean up roadside litter are cautioned to watch for potentially toxic debris discarded from methamphetamine labs.

Meth is a highly addictive stimulant that can be made using household chemicals and equipment, and common cold remedies containing ephedrine or pseudoephedrine.

Cleanup crews who come across materials used to make the drug could be burned, or their lungs damaged from inhaling fumes. If you encounter any of the signs of a meth lab, leave the area immediately and call MDOT or the police. Do not touch anything if you suspect it may be meth lab waste. The waste can be extremely dangerous and may even be booby-trapped. Entire labs can be found in tool boxes, coolers, or other storage containers as mobile meth labs become more common. Labs are sometimes run out of car trunks and RVs.



Clues indicating a dumpsite include empty bottles attached to a rubber hose, the smell of ammonia, and coffee filters stained red or containing a white powder residue. Additional items include garbage bags with cat litter (that could contain deadly gases and are sometimes called "death bags"), corroded propane tanks, empty or used alcohol products, numerous empty cold medicine and diet pill bottles or blister packs, and unused matches without striker plates.

Don't try to remove unknown or suspected toxic substances. Notify MDOT or the police of the location of these items **immediately.**

Meth lab waste is very serious. Your safety comes first!

Life Span of Litter

Item →	Decomposition
Plastic bottles & Styrofoam	Indefinitely
Glass bottles	1,000 years
Plastic six-pack holders	450 years
Aluminum cans	200-500 years
Rubber boot soles	50-80 years
Leather	up to 50 years
Nylon fabric	30-40 years
Plastic bags	10-20 years
Wool socks	1-5 years
Cigarette butts	1-5 years
Orange & banana peels	2-5 weeks

The *ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY NEWS* is authorized by the transportation director to provide adopting group coordinators with timely, brief and accurate accounts of safety issues and other program polices of the department that impact the Adopt-A-Highway program. It is published by the Michigan Department of Transportation Office of Communications in accordance with Executive Directive 2007-1. Comments, questions and news ideas are welcomed. Contact Janet Foran, editor, at 517-335-7176; E-mail: foranj@michigan.gov; or write to: MDOT Office of Communications, P.O. Box 30050, Lansing, MI 48909. Requests for this information in an alternative format may be made through the Office of Communications or by TDD/TTY through the Michigan Relay Center at 800-649-3777.

News from the Roadside

From Marquette to Monroe – and most points in-between – Adopt-A-Highway crews are busy everywhere in Michigan. Via our "Final Fall Pickup" reminder card, we invited everyone to send in photos and news.

On M-93 in Grayling, the **family of Cheryl Ann Mott** adopted a three-mile stretch of highway between I-75 and the entrance to Hartwick Pines. "Our family enjoys doing this in honor of our daughter, Cheryl Ann, who passed away in 2005 after a courageous 19-year battle with cancer. Other families need to know that you don't have to be an organization or church group to Adopt-A-Highway."

The **Quota Club of Iosco County** has picked up trash along three miles of M-55 for seven years. Quota Club is a service organization that raises donations for community projects such as the hearing and speech impaired, disadvantaged families, and domestic abuse shelters. Add to that, picking up trash on state highways! The volunteers are (from left to right): Kay Robson, Marian Charters, Bonita Coyle, Yvonne Babe, Marilyn Doyle and Linda Pyle.

Here are **Niles Garden Club** members, Cathy Mauthe (left) and Wendie Stephenson, working along US-12 Business Route this past summer.

Doug Nowiski, an 18-year-old college student at Central Michigan University, is a self-proclaimed supporter of environmental conservation. He plans to continue with the Adopt program "for the rest of my life!" He, and a group of friends, make up **Hugo's Happy Highway Friends** and pick up trash on M-142 west of Harbor Beach. Doug created a MySpace.com site for the photos – we think that's a first for the program. Here's Doug (left), Paul Backus, Steve Roggenbuck and Joe Roggenbuck. Brian Backus was the photographer and is another member of the group.

The **Escanaba Elks Lodge** has 12 participants in its group. Here are two: Frank Berres (left) and Lem LaBonte.

The **Northern Michigan University Chemistry Club** in Marquette has been clearing trash along M-94 longer than any of the current club members can remember. It's become a service tradition that continues year after year.

It's the first year in Adopt-A-Highway for the **St. Joseph County, MSU Extension** who claim M-86 near Centreville as their own. These folks have day jobs in 4-H business, family nutrition, and county extension education, but here they are picking up trash. From left to right: Maury Kaercher, Linda Towles, Brad Newmann, Deanna Mumby, Sara Springsteen, Tonya Franz, Linda Kline, Rose Risko and Diana Fair.

Many thanks to all of you for your hard work! You do make a difference!

For current Adopt-A-Highway information, check out the program Web site at www.michigan.gov/Adoptahighway.

ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY

MDOT

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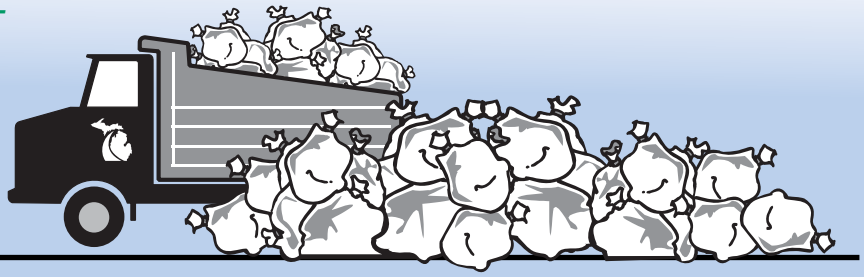


Five Easy Pieces

Five commonly asked questions – and the answers!
(Things you'll want to know about the Adopt-A-Highway program.)

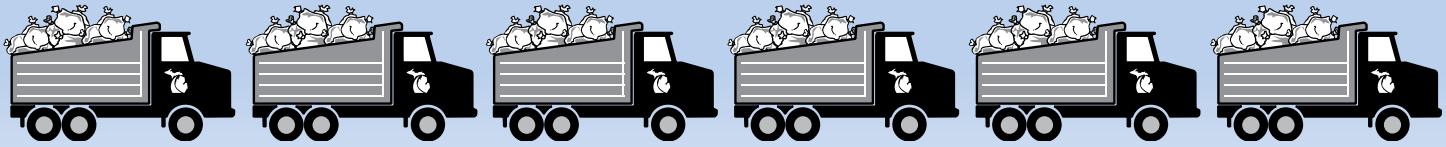
1. **How much money does Michigan spend each year collecting litter (not counting what cities and counties spend)?**
   A. *MDOT spends $5 million a year. But our volunteer program saves us about $2 million every year. Thanks!*

2. **How many bags of trash were picked up in 2006 by Adopt-A-Highway volunteers?**
   A. *55,838 bags. Wow!*

3. **How many miles of roadway were adopted by our volunteers?**
   A. *5,708 miles.*

4. **Seeing lots of vested volunteers on the highway? Exactly how many volunteers are there?**
   A. *About 27,000 volunteers pick up trash three times a year.*

5. **Who does all that littering?**
   A. *Uh-oh, guys! Experts estimate that approximately 80 percent of all littering is done by males.*



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Chippewa, Luce and Mackinac Counties

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