



Boone workers double as snow-removal crew

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Jason Gamble knew his job would include working with networks and grids.

What he didn't know when he started working for the Boone County Information Systems Department nine years ago is how the broad definitions for those terms would fit his job description.

As the county's network administrator, Gamble's job is to help keep the computer systems in working order.

When a winter storm hits the region, however, his duties change dramatically.

Gamble is one of the county's cross-trained employees. When the snow falls, his focus shifts from servicing a network of computers to helping maintain a grid of roads by driving a truck for the county's snow removal crew.

"I've always believed that the more jobs you can do, the more valuable you are," Gamble said.

Gamble, 34, has been on call for a few years and got his first taste of action Friday, when the brief but ill-timed rush-hour storm snarled traffic across Northern Kentucky. If the predicted winter storm hits, he expects to get the call again.

"I've always been kind of a truck guy, but I've never done anything like this," Gamble said. "The guys that work the crews have been really helpful."

The county started the cross-training program in the winter of 2008 when budget cuts made it difficult to replace employees that retired or left the county for another position.

The county now uses employees from five other departments to supplement its road crews in the public works department, where employees have also received additional training.

"It really is about getting the maximum use of all of our resources, including our employees," Boone County Engineer Greg Sketch said. "It also provides a rare opportunity for those employees to get overtime."

Sketch said the program has been successful because of cooperation between the departments. When a snow event occurs, employees are loaned out to the public works department for the duration of the storm.

"They have to be ready and willing to go when we call or it just wouldn't work," Sketch said.

The most rural of Kentucky's three northernmost counties, Boone County has 225 square miles of roads that range from heavily traveled streets to seldom-used back roads. The grid is maintained

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by a fleet of 36 trucks during a snow event.

"What we do works pretty good here," Kenny Crooker, the county's public services supervisor, said. "The county personnel that were not familiar with the trucks have gotten a lot better in the last few years."

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