



# THE ROADRUNNER



January 2024

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

Save the Date:

**October 28-31, 2024**, are the dates for the 2024 Annual TACERA Conference. It will be held in College Station at the Hilton as last year.

**April 15-18, 2024**, is NACE Annual Conference in Palm Springs CA.

Do you have an article you would like to put in our newsletter? Send them to us at TACERA or [bryan.neaves@bellcounty.texas.gov](mailto:bryan.neaves@bellcounty.texas.gov)



*TACERA Board members Jaime Mendoza and Wayne Gisler present Mr. Saul Gonzales with his Employee of the Year award.*

## TACERA EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR AWARD

Mr. Gonzales began his career with Reeves County on August 13, 2001. When Mr. Gonzales joined our team, he brought several certifications he earned at Odessa College, including Heating and Air Conditioning, Welding, and Electrical certifications. During his tenure at Reeves County, Mr. Gonzales has served in various roles such as County 911 Coordinator, Head of the Sign Department, and Addressing and Mapping Coordinator. Currently, Mr. Gonzales leads the chip seal crew and is also responsible for leading the inclement weather crew outside of regular working hours. He serves as our lead equipment trainer for new employees and he serves as a mentor to other staff members.

Mr. Gonzales has demonstrated remarkable achievements throughout his career, with some notable accomplishments being his involvement in the Toyah, Texas flooding and bridge collapse of 2004. During this event, Mr. Gonzales displayed immense courage by entering high waters and utilizing a front-end loader to rescue others, despite the hazards and risks to his safety. Furthermore, Mr. Gonzales demonstrated his exceptional welding skills during a prison riot in Pecos, Texas, in 2010. Alongside the Bureau of Prisons and County officials, he helped secure the perimeter fence of a burning prison building, which was critical in ensuring public safety and restoring order. Mr. Gonzales' heroic actions and expertise in high-pressure situations make him an invaluable asset in any organization.

Mr. Gozales is a volunteer for Meals on Wheels. He has been called out on several occasions after hours to repair the iceboxes and freezers at the Meals on Wheels building, thus salvaging the food from loss, saving taxpayer funds, and ensuring all the elderly would receive their next meal on time. In conclusion, Saul has demonstrated a strong commitment to leadership within our community and department.

*Source: Reeves County News*



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## CAN OLD DOGS LEARN NEW TRICKS?

I came across a document a few months ago that was published in 1944 titled, “The Unwritten Laws of Engineering”. It was written by W.J. King and published as articles in a few issues of Mechanical Engineering. I won’t go into the details but found it interesting that I had never run across it in the 61 years I have been alive and practiced in the civil engineering profession. I found it to be useful for any discipline and hope some of you seek it on the internet and read for yourself.

Some of King’s subjects include relationships with your work, your boss, your peers and outside of workplaces, character, personality, and professional integrity. It is a good guide outside of our standard code of ethics. Some of the pieces of wisdom were learned over time and some were not relevant to me. It would have been nice to have an old mentor share it with me after I graduated from school.

Link- <http://tmerrill.pbworks.com/w/file/attach/85018306/Unwritten%20Laws%20Engineering.pdf>

Source: *Bryan Neaves*

## THE DPS MAKES A STOP IN REEVES COUNTY

The Texas Department of Transportation stopped by the Reeves County Road and Bridge department on Thursday, October 5, 2023. This stop was not your ordinary traffic stop, this stop was a Safety stop. The Texas Department of Transportation training officer for the West Texas region, Sergeant Steven Blanco from Midland Texas was on hand to provide Highway statistical training for the Road and Bridge crew from Reeves County. Sergeant Blanco covered subjects from all aspects of road safety, such as defensive driving, traffic work zone incidents, distracted drivers, inattention, crashes, speed violations, and highway fatalities.



Safety training is a subject that we can never have enough of. Reeves County employees were glad to receive the training on that day. At the end of the day, as roadway workers, we all want to go home to our loved ones, and that was the message Sergeant Blanco offered to the Reeves County Road and Bridge Department.

In conclusion, the Texas Department of Transportation is willing to work with local municipalities such as the city, county, and state road crews to get the Statistical message out to everyone on the roads. Safety is knowledge and we must all agree. Finally, the entire staff enjoyed the stop by DPS followed by lunch and door prizes.



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The Texas Department of Transportation and Seargent Steven Blanco will be more than glad to offer Highway Safety and Statistical training to all organizations from the West Texas region. For more information contact:

[Steven.Blanco@dps.texas.gov](mailto:Steven.Blanco@dps.texas.gov) Source: Daniel Alvarado, Reeves County social media 2023

## **“I’VE GOT A PROBLEM!”**

Many complaints are caused by lack of understanding by the public. They grow upset with the lack of progress of a job or the traffic delays caused by it. The County Engineer or staff should listen carefully and evaluate the situation. The problem is important to the individual, no matter how insignificant it may be to the County’s overall program. Often the problem can be resolved by listening and calmly explaining the facts to the individual.

Every complaint should have a response and action. Each office should have a work order request form where the problems and possible solutions can be documented. The supervisor must check on the issue and determine what action is to take place. If possible, the supervisor should return a call to the original caller and explain how and when the proposed action will take place. We should try to resolve complaints at the lowest level. If the problem is ignored or progresses to a higher-level manager, they tend to become more complex. When evaluating a complaint, consider how urgent it is for action. Health, safety, and welfare should be held as a high priority. Be able to record, track, and measure results of public complaints.

Occasionally a policy prohibits the desired response for the complaint. Commissioners Court make the policies and can address them if the constituents contact them regarding the issue. Empower your staff to handle complaints by making sure they understand current policies and procedures.

A successful method to reach many people is to prepare a press release or door knocker flier to help inform the public. This has reduced the complaints received on major road projects. Sharing the dates of construction, the purpose for the construction, and recommendations to minimize the negative impact to the public can be valuable information on the notice. A contact for the person in charge of the project will make sure a knowledgeable response is available for project questions. In Bell County, we have installed signs to share start and finish dates on some projects like seal coating in residential areas or bridge closures.

Other useful hints on handling public complaints:

The top expectations of customers making a complaint are prompt response, to be taken seriously, and to be replied to with empathy.

If using social media, respond within 24 hours, keep a positive tone, and have clear rules of behavior for the staff.

One of the most important employees is the person answering the phone. They should be polite and professional. They should be familiar with most county procedures and know which personnel can answer specific questions.



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General tips on telephone usage:

Answer the telephone promptly. Identify yourself and your department.

Speak clearly, naturally, and distinctly.

Keep a pencil and paper near the phone to take notes.

If the caller is upset, remain calm and try to obtain the facts. Do not argue.

If the call must be transferred, relay all the pertinent information to the next person so the facts do not have to be repeated by the caller.

If you do not know the answer, instruct the caller you will call them back after you find the proper person in the office who can answer the question.

If you put someone on hold, keep it to a short 20-30 seconds.

Deliver all phone messages promptly to prevent delays in returning phone calls.

*Referenced material in this article :1. "Ten tips for public sector complaint handling", Fiona Brown, ANZSOG, September 14, 2022 2. NACE Action Guide, Vol I-8, Public Awareness and Support, 1995.*

## Members of the Newsletter Committee are:

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