

17, 1989, we managed to hold our initial conference in Peoria, Illinois. The eight states represented at this meeting were: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri and Nebraska. States unable to attend but within the Midwestern region include: North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma and South Dakota.

Those attending the conference were all involved with the daily management of equipment fleets. Common job elements of the managers participating in the conference included replacement selection, specification development, receiving acceptance, and maintenance policy formation.

The conference started with reports from the fleet managers in attendance. Considerable differences in organizational structure and range of equipment responsibilities were identified. For example, Missouri builds some of its own equipment while Illinois does no in-house maintenance. This portion of the conference provided everyone with an understanding of how the different states handle equipment management.

A large portion of the conference was concentrated on round-table discussions of vehicle and equipment specifications. The agenda provided an opportunity for individual state representatives to explore areas of special concern. We found it interesting to hear about the problems other states were having with equipment that we were considering buying. Learning how other states were solving problems similar to those that we were experiencing was also informative.

Those attending the conference decided they wished the group to remain independent. It was decided not to seek affiliation with a national organization. We decided to have specification summaries made in advance of the next meeting and that agendas for future meetings would attempt to emphasize equipment innovations.

As equipment becomes more expensive to purchase and more complicated to maintain and repair, purchasing the correct equipment becomes even more important. Equipment expenditures have been forced to compete with other programs for funding. Fleet managers must plan equipment purchases and practices to support the organizational objectives of his agency.

Participation in professional activities, such as regional equipment conferences, can assist fleet manager to be technically proficient concerning the equipment that they purchase, maintain and repair. This type of conference provides information on how other managers are resolving equipment problems. We continue to discuss equipment matters with the individuals who attended the conference. This has become the most significant benefit that we gained from participating in the Midwestern States Equipment Conference.

Many of the challenges facing fleet managers in the 1990s will be the same equipment challenges we faced in the past. The challenges that we expect to face in the next decade are presented below.

Challenges in the 1990s

- Responding to budget restraints.
- Obtaining value added support.
- Practicing effective management of time and people.
- Providing adequate training for mechanics.
- Acquiring multi-functional equipment.
- Determining who should make repairs.
- Meeting environmental concerns.

Working with fleet managers from other states at future Midwestern States Equipment Conferences will help us to respond better to many of these challenges.

WESTERN EQUIPMENT MANAGERS MEETING

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The Western States Equipment Managers group was formed in 1969 at a meeting in San Francisco, California. The meeting was initiated by three states equipment fleet managers from Washington, California and Oregon. Contracts were made with other states equipment managers from the west, including Wyoming, Colorado, Montana, Idaho, Utah, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, Alaska and Hawaii. Seven years ago the State of Texas was invited as a guest and subsequently has become a member and participant of the western group.

The structure and makeup of the group follows:

- No bylaws, officers, secretary, dues.
- An informational/participant workshop.
- One member preferred from each state.
- One or two additional representatives from each state may attend, but not as an active participant (at the table).
- Exception, encourage host state to have additional personnel attend the meeting. This benefits the host state and its participants and the group at large.
- Agenda, usually 2 to 2-1/2 days, with each state having 1 to 1-1/2 hours of presentations and discussions, depending on the subjects.
- Host state is chosen at conclusion of annual meeting, usually on a rotational basis. Location "city" and meeting dates are usually determined at this time, or within a month or two after the meeting.

- No manufactures or vendors allowed in meeting, except on occasion when invited by host to make a short, 15 to 20-minute presentation on a subject related to the manufacturer's products or a generic subject that would be of interest to the majority of the group. Usually there are no more than two such presentations during each session. The manufacturer is dismissed after the presentation.
- No advertising by vendor or manufacturers. No hospitality rooms. Occasionally, a manager or vendor with approval of host state, may provide lunch or evening "information and awareness" session.
- Controlled by host, a limited (few) manufacturers products may be displayed outside the building during off hours. Products must be of interest to majority of states.
- Agenda consists of topics furnished by each state, two to four items are the norm. Sometimes the presentation on a specific subject (i.e., specifications, type of equipment or component, management or operational topics of concern); questions or "poll" of states or specifics, comments on concerns of products, types, components or manufacturers.
- The host state arranges for meeting rooms, program agenda, coordinating and chairs the meeting.
- Periodically, a participating state has a problem with out-of-state travel, discouraged participation by upper management (usually caused by an unawareness, new equipment manager or upper management). In a few instances, the "cycle of meeting location" will be altered and the group members solicit the "state of concern" to "host" the next annual meeting. This has been successful in several instances.
- On several occasions, we have been asked to be included in AASHTO and WASHTO. We have declined. We continue to support and endorse "bare bones/technical format in a workshop atmosphere."
- No formal spouse program. Spouses often take non-structured tours/shop during the daytime. They participate in any evening activities. Periodically, they gather for lunch and sometimes with spouses on closing day.
- Often, a portion of the last day, an hour or two, is allocated for review of the host state's equipment and equipment facility or shop that may be in the area. This has become a popular event and allows the participants to become familiar with the host state's equipment types and configurations.
- One of the major and most beneficial benefits, in addition to the annual meeting, is the "information and communication" provided by knowing and sharing with member states throughout the year on a variety of subjects. These contacts have been one of the major benefit. Some of the areas often discussed are equipment types, manufacturers, comparing models, specifications, bids, warranties, and problems with repairs. Others include work site structures, employees relations, testing the waters and comparing manufacturers and peddlers "statements of facts" or one state loves them and the other state hates them. Now, many of the member states from various geographic areas are contacting other regional member states for similar input and discussions.
- The western group believes we have been successful with minimal problems, restrictions by:
 - ♦ Being small, with limited person representing each state.
 - ♦ No formal bylaws, rules, policies and officers.
 - ♦ No commercial/manufacturers/vendors at meetings, except for a specific time for short presentations.
 - ♦ No hospitality rooms and with controlled and limited manufacturers present.
 - ♦ Workshop and sharing by equipment-oriented state highway department representatives.
- The western group continues to support other geographical regional state highway/transportation equipment groups and similar organizations to be formed around county governments within state and possible some cities of similar sizes.
- The western group has worked well for its members, and if properly presented and structured, will work well for others.