

## Office Workers Wrangle Vehicles in Non-CDL Roadeo

Think walking a mile in someone's shoes is tough? Try driving in their oversized vehicles.

2023 AGENCY GOAL SPOTLIGHT  
Enhance Internal Services

Fort Wayne District office workers learned first-hand how difficult it is to maneuver INDOT trucks in the inaugural Fort Wayne District Non-CDL Roadeo in mid-September.

A [regular Roadeo](#) is a snowplow-driving competition, among district Winter Operations staffers, that mimics real conditions and uses barrels, cones, and other obstacles to test driving maneuvers.

"Creating a competition for non-CDL employees gave us a great opportunity to expand operational knowledge of the district," said Fort Wayne Subdistrict Operations Manager Jason Bruce, who helped organize the event. "It enabled other departments to see the types of equipment that our Operations team uses and highlight the skills necessary for safe, effective execution of our work plan."

Additionally, subject-matter experts were positioned at each competition station to give a general overview of the equipment while providing an opportunity for office workers to ask questions.

To make the competition more relevant to office employees, the Non-CDL Roadeo included more than just trucks. The four competitive stations were:

- **Plow Truck Diminishing Clearance:** Operate a single-axle dump truck with front plow by maneuvering it down a straight path through cones.
- **Plow Truck Backing:** At the end of the diminishing clearance course, back up to the start point without hitting the cones.
- **Sedan Alley Backing:** Back a state-issued car without hitting cones and come as close as possible to a barricade without hitting it.
- **Pre-trip Inspection of a Pool Vehicle:** Learn what a basic walk-around of a state-issued car entails.

The plow-truck competition was intimidating to most participants, but a CDL-issued INDOT employee was in the passenger seat to prep and coach each contestant. Also, the cones were placed slightly wider than those positioned in the regular Roadeos.

"I should have used the backup camera more instead of looking at the side mirrors," said Fort Wayne Subdistrict Administrative Assistant Kathy Jackson. "I hit four barrels backing up. But I liked driving the truck. I can see how, if you drive it long enough, you can master it. This helped me be less intimidated by the truck."

The sedan alley-backing station simulated real-world hazards in a controlled environment and proved vexing for some. Participants had to back up on a curve before trying to get as close to a "Road Closed" barricade without hitting it. Angola Unit Supervisor Bob Hamilton graded contestants by deducting points for hitting cones and repositioning the car. No points were deducted if the driver parked the vehicle within 6 inches of the barricade,



Fort Wayne District Operations Support Administrative Assistant Erin Hunter drives a snowplow down a straight path through cones.

but drivers were penalized for each 6-inch increment from that goal.

“I have a new respect for those who alley-back with a truck,” said Fort Wayne District Construction Engineer Adama Samba. “Even with a car, I thought that the path was too narrow. Luckily, I knocked down a bunch of cones and not people!”

The pre-trip inspection station was educational because most employees don’t pay attention to the details when picking up a state-issued vehicle.

Fort Wayne Subdistrict Equipment Leader Dave Aspy educated the non-CDL employees about the importance of checking fluids, lights, signals, wiper blades, interior gauges, tire bulges, dents, and more. Participants were given a flashlight for the 7-minute timed inspection and told that they would be given five bonus points for each of the four defects that they could find. The defects were a missing license plate, oil dipstick, and washer fluid cap, and a jack placed under a front tire.

View a [video](#) of Fort Wayne District Traffic Engineer Dana Plattner’s reaction to the missing oil dipstick, Fort Wayne District Logistics Director Eric Bass’ alley-backing performance, and the day’s other activities.

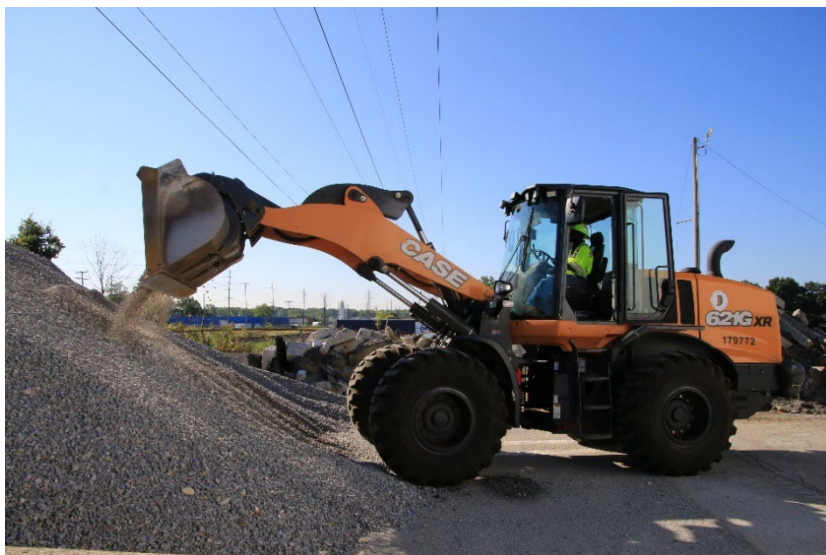
Technical Services Testing Engineer Daniel Jones was the overall winner with an average score of 95.75 for all four stations. Maintenance Highway Engineer Alex Zembala finished second at 92.5 followed by Bass at 92.25. The average score was 77.99. Zembala received the only perfect score for alley backing, six individuals had perfect scores for both plow truck categories (diminishing clearance and backing), and Zembala received the highest score for pre-trip inspection with 95.

*District Director of Stakeholder Services Britt Salay (right photo) learns how to drive a loader; District Construction Engineer Adama Samba uses the loader to drop sand into a sandpile.*



Besides the four competitions, employees could see what it’s like to drive a skid steer through a serpentine course and drive a loader to a pile of sand, lower the bucket to scoop sand and then dump the sand.

“I was a bundle of nerves and a ball of anxiety in the loader, even though I was driving it around 2 mph,” said Fort Wayne District Director of Stakeholder Services Britt Salay. “You’re up so high and there are so many buttons. I’m grateful that INDOT has skilled people to operate these pieces of equipment.”



Volunteers set up other equipment, as well, for non-CDL drivers to climb in to discover blind-spot visibility. Elsewhere at the district complex, INDOT vehicles and traffic barrels were set up to mimic an interstate work zone. This enabled onlookers to see how a taper works and witness how much space is between the work-zone vehicles and barrels. Crews had painted the yellow lines and the white skip lines in the lot just days before the competition; this area now can be used for training new personnel or putting on refresher courses for how to properly set up a work zone.

Nearby, the Traffic Division set up an open

house to educate others about panel signs, the inner workings of a traffic-signal cabinet, and how a paint truck works.

Later, participants had the chance to buy lunch from four food trucks — the first time that food trucks had ever been offered in the district. Bruce informed the Indiana State Police (ISP) about the food trucks, and ISP personnel made the trip to enjoy the offerings.

“Not only did the Non-CDL Roadeo and food trucks open up doors across different departments in the Fort Wayne District, but it also opened doors with other state agencies,” said Bruce.

The committee that produced ideas for the activities consisted of Jason Caskey, Luke Wilson, Drew Pearson, Aubrea Jones, Josh Crider, Alex Zembala, and Bruce.

“The Non-CDL Roadeo is just one tool to break down organizational silos to create alignment and buy-in,” said Bruce. “Employees who are engaged in the workplace have increased job satisfaction. Also, this was a great opportunity to walk a mile in someone else’s shoes. When we can appreciate the perspective that the other person brings, then we can truly create an inclusive environment where everyone belongs and feels valued.”

To view more photos, click [here](#).