

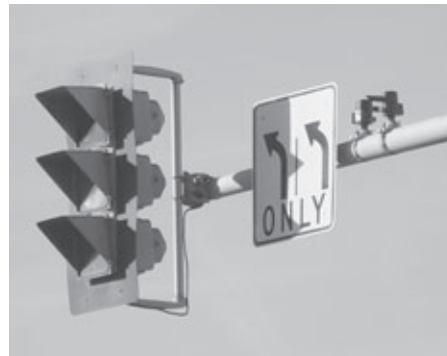
## Wrongful Use of Signal Devices Latest Scourge

The premise behind most technological advances is that they are generally designed to be beneficial to man and society. The unintended impact of the same technology is that someone, somewhere, will find a way to abuse it by exploiting its intended purpose for personal gain. Such is the case for mobile infrared transmitters (MIRTs), traffic signal preemption devices that were designed for public safety vehicles.

Communities in Central Oklahoma utilize traffic signal preemption systems to reduce emergency response time of a responding vehicle by activating traffic lights to turn or stay "green" on the path of destination. A remote device on the vehicle triggers a receptor on the traffic signal and turns the light the appropriate color depending on the direction of the approaching emergency vehicle. Time

saved traversing a busy intersection can be crucial when it comes to responding to a medical emergency, fire or crime.

While the transmitters have been in use in the region for over a decade, recently,



*Mobile infrared transmitter receiving units (top of bar) help control traffic signals so emergency vehicles can travel through intersections safer and faster. The remote devices may recently have come into the hands of private citizens, which concerns public safety officials.*

there have been several incidents reported across the country of MIRTs coming into the hands of private citizens. Internet wholesale and online bidding houses have been listing the items for sale, for a moderate price. As a result, many states and communities are now drafting policies to assure that public safety officials and entities are the only ones authorized to use the devices.

In Oklahoma, state law does not currently bar the devices from being utilized by the general public. However, the Oklahoma Department of Public Safety is now working with legislators to develop regulations that would make unauthorized ownership of the transmitters illegal.

*Central Oklahoma Perspective* will keep you informed of future action on this matter. For more information, contact Douglas Rex, ACOG.

## 2004 REAP Grant Application Process Underway

The 2004 Rural Economic Action Plan (REAP) grant process is currently underway, with communities in the Central Oklahoma region with a population of

under 7,000 eligible to apply. The maximum dollar amount for grants is \$50,000, which can be used for a variety of projects in the areas of community development and transportation.

REAP funding is important to the region because it allows small communities to develop necessary infrastructure and transportation projects that they otherwise may not have full resources to implement. The program consistently receives more requests for project funding than there is funding available. REAP has also experienced dwindling funds in the past several fiscal years. The maximum funding level that ACOG will administer this year will not be determined until spring.

Projects can include, but are not limited to the following: transportation projects,

water quality projects, including acquisition, treatment, distribution and recovery; solid waste disposal; sanitary sewer construction or improvements; provision of health care services, including emergency medical care for rural areas; construction or improvement of telecommunication facilities; improvements of municipal utility distribution systems; expenditures designed to increase employment; implementation of emergency communications systems; non-administrative costs for engineering studies and preliminary architectural designs; construction of public facilities; and others.

Last year, REAP funds helped fund several regional economic and community development projects, including sewer improvements for Marshall, remodeling ...See "2004 REAP" on page three.

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# Local Grants Assist Operation FireSAFE Program

Funding received from regional supporters will help assist Operation FireSAFE with its programming needs. Operation FireSAFE is the region's juvenile firesetting prevention program that offers information and counseling to children who have played with or started fires.

For the second year, the Kirkpatrick Family Fund, State Farm Insurance and the Oklahoma SAFE KIDS Coalition have provided funding to the program to help supplement training expenses and interviewing equipment. Funds this year were used for videotapes, video monitors and playback equipment that were in dire need of replacement in Del City, El Reno, Nichols Hills, Oklahoma City, Shawnee, Tinker Air Force Base, The Village, Yukon and the State Fire Marshal's Office. Spe-

cialized training sessions held last fall were also funded through the grants, and have enabled program administrators to learn new interviewing techniques.

Since 1992, Operation FireSAFE has relied on 22 community fire departments and mental health professionals in Canadian, Cleveland, Logan and Oklahoma counties to carry out the program. ACOG provides administrative services and the Oklahoma Department of Health and area guidance clinics provide mental health assistance to the program.

Firefighters from the participating communities receive special training on interviewing and educating families and children about the dangers of setting fires. Information gathered through the interviews is shared with a network of mental health professionals that decide if counseling is needed to stop this dangerous behavior. If counseling is determined to be warranted, then it is generally provided at little or no cost.

Children are referred to the Operation FireSAFE education program by arson investigators, parents, physicians, school and childcare professionals, as well as justice and social service agency representatives.

Firesetting by children and adolescents is a major concern to fire departments across Central Oklahoma, as well

as the nation. Child set fires are the leading cause of hospital burn admissions for children under age five and a leading cause of home and school property loss in the region.

Operation FireSAFE has been widely successful in the region since its inception. Since the program started, more than 2,000 children have been educated through the program. Reported child-set fires in the region have also been steadily on the decline for the past ten years.

Adults worried about a child's curiosity with fire can call the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments or their local fire station to learn more.



Tim Adams, with the Oklahoma City Fire Department, receives training materials for Operation FireSAFE that were provided by regional grants to assist with juvenile interviews.

## Central Oklahoma *Perspective*

Offering Regional Leaders News and Information

21 East Main, Suite 100  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73104-2405  
(405) 234-2264/FAX: (405) 234-2200  
TDD: (405) 234-2217/www.acogok.org  
E-mail address: [acog@acogok.org](mailto:acog@acogok.org)

### Association of Central Oklahoma Governments

*"Providing Regional Leadership in  
Central Oklahoma Since 1966"*

Established in 1966, the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG) is a voluntary association of cities, towns and counties. ACOG helps member governments plan for common needs, cooperate for mutual benefit and coordinate for sound regional development.

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Layout: Ken Brown

Central Oklahoma Perspective, printed by TNT Printing, is authorized by the ACOG Board of Directors. Financing is partly provided by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Oklahoma Department of Commerce, the U.S. Department of Transportation and local dues. 1,850 copies were prepared and distributed at a cost of \$944. Copies have been deposited with the Publications Clearinghouse of the Oklahoma Department of Libraries.

## 9-1-1 ACOG, T-Mobile Team Up To Reduce Response Times

Dispatchers in the region will be able to process certain 9-1-1 emergency phone calls from wireless phones faster and more efficiently, thanks to a new routing system installed by a wireless carrier. T-Mobile worked with the 9-1-1 Association of Central Oklahoma Governments to implement a database system that helps better direct wireless emergency calls to correct community answering points in a more timely fashion.

"This is a first phase in establishing true wireless enhanced 9-1-1 service to the region," said Zach Taylor, Executive Director of 9-1-1 ACOG.

In Central Oklahoma's enhanced 9-1-1 system, calls from landline phones generally route to the public safety answering point in the community from which the call is made, and provide important information such as the phone number and the address of the caller. Since wireless phones change locations and operate through radio frequencies, routing the calls to the appropriate community becomes more complicated, and sometimes incomplete.

T-Mobile, Cingular Wireless and Sprint PCS have established databases that ...See "Response Times" on page four.

# Winter Rainfall Could Still Come to the Region

by John Harrington, Water Resources

The prediction of several days of rain would be depressing for most people, but this winter in Oklahoma, that kind of news would be a welcome relief from a trend that has become worrisome to drought watchers in the state.

The 2004 calendar year has started out with a warmer and drier-than-normal winter with most of the state receiving only about two-thirds of the rainfall it would normally expect. Although the ground in the eastern part of the state still has a fair amount of water, southern and western Oklahoma is altogether a different story with very little moisture left in the soil.

Using the Palmer Drought Severity Index, the Oklahoma Water Resources Board has flagged the area around Altus as falling in the mild drought category. Central Oklahoma is being classified as near normal, although with only 61 percent of total rainfall normally received. About five inches of rain will be needed just to get back to normal rainfall totals.

Historically, 2003 was the 12<sup>th</sup> driest year on record out of 85 periods for Central Oklahoma. And although southeastern Oklahoma is not in a drought situation yet, it was the second driest year on record for that region. Statewide, it has been the ninth driest year on record.

Regional forecast models indicate that normal conditions will prevail for the coming months, with normal cold weather returning in February.

## “2004 REAP”

...Continued from page one. of a town hall and fire station for Slaughterville, water line replacement for Hall Park, completion of an industrial park for Harrah, firefighting equipment for Mulhall and town hall renovations for Luther.

REAP grants last year also funded transportation projects in Hall Park, Piedmont, Logan County, Mulhall, Harrah, ...See “Grants” on page four.



## Around the Region

- In the January issue of *Central Oklahoma Perspective*, the editor unintentionally misspelled **Douglass High School** in an article about the school's renovation and its impact on the **MAPS for KIDS** program. Douglass High School was named after American abolitionist **Frederick Douglass**. We apologize for the error.

- The city of **Oklahoma City** is proceeding on a wayfinding signage system that is scheduled to begin installation this month. The signage system is intended for first-time visitors and those who may not be familiar with the urbanized region. Funded through the city's 2000 bond election, the system will feature standing and hanging gold and blue signs with ornate art deco styled framing. Parking signs, directions to key destinations and information kiosks will be components of the 98 signs that encompass the project.

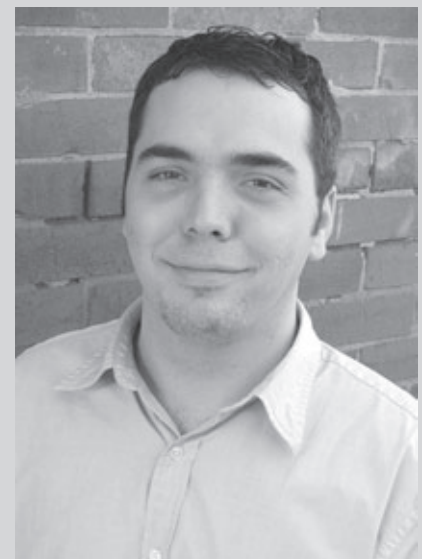
- **Morton Payne**, president and chairman of **The Tree Bank Foundation**, has been selected to receive the State of Oklahoma Citation Award of the **Oklahoma Recreation and Park Society**. Payne was recognized for his participation and leadership in the region's beautification and environmental improvement. The Tree Bank Foundation raises funds for and manages urban forestry projects in the state.

- The city of **Bethany** is making progress on the construction of its new city courthouse and police station. The complex is being funded by revenue bonds that the city of Bethany set aside for municipal capital improvements. A new police station has been a critical need for the city for several years. The new complex will double the size of the communica-

tions center and courtroom. The building is scheduled for completion by summer.

- **Dave Lopez** began work as president of **Downtown OKC Inc.** last month, directing the group that provides marketing and business operations for the downtown region. Lopez has previously served the region as president of Southwestern Bell (now SBC), Oklahoma office. He has been recognized and honored for his commitment to regional growth and development.

- **James McHendry** has joined the **ACOG** staff as an intern with the **Transportation Planning and Data Services Division**. He will be working on various research and database projects related to the development and updating of socioeconomic and land use data. McHendry lives in Oklahoma City and is currently finishing his master's degree in regional and city planning at the University of Oklahoma. He has a bachelor's degree in English from Oklahoma State University.



James McHendry

## “Grants”

...Continued from page three.  
Cimarron City, Langston and Cleveland County.

Application packets have been mailed to eligible entities in the Central Oklahoma region and an information and application workshop is scheduled for Feb. 13, from 10 a.m. to noon, at the ACOG offices. For more information on REAP, contact Diane McCullough, ACOG.

## “Response Times”

...Continued from page two.  
identify their customers' locations through more specific tower locations. Without this routing system, emergency calls made from other wireless phones would likely route to the city of Oklahoma City and then have to be answered and transferred to another answering site if the call is coming from another community.

With the new tower identification system, incoming wireless calls will identify a nearby tower and its directional face, which will more accurately pinpoint the community from which the calls are being generated. Valuable time, often needed in an emergency, will be saved, because the call will be able to bypass the transfer process. The system will also help

<b>February</b>	
12th	Areawide Planning Technical Advisory Committee, 9 a.m. Intermodal Transportation Technical Committee, 10 a.m.
13th	Rural Economic Action Plan (REAP) Workshop, 10 a.m. - Noon
16th	ACOG Offices Closed for President's Day
26th	9-1-1 Board of Directors, 1 p.m. Intermodal Transportation Policy Committee, 1:20 p.m. ACOG Board of Directors, 1:45 p.m. Garber-Wellington Policy Committee, 2:30 p.m.
<b>March</b>	
9th	9-1-1 Technical Committee, 9:30 a.m.
11th	Areawide Planning Technical Advisory Committee, 9 a.m. Intermodal Transportation Technical Committee, 10 a.m.
12th	Garber-Wellington Technical Committee, 10 a.m.
16th	Operation FireSAFE, 10 a.m. Clean Cities Stakeholders, 1 p.m.
25th	9-1-1 Board of Directors, 1 p.m. Intermodal Transportation Policy Committee, 1:20 p.m. ACOG Board of Directors, 1:45 p.m. Garber-Wellington Policy Committee, 2:30 p.m.

reduce the wireless call volume of the city of Oklahoma City.

“We will continue to work with all

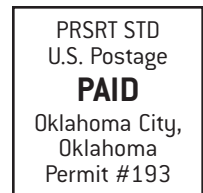
wireless service providers in our region, to improve the handling of all wireless 9-1-1 calls,” Taylor said.

# Central Oklahoma *Perspective*

## Association of Central Oklahoma Governments

21 East Main • Suite 100  
Oklahoma City, OK 73104-2405  
**(405) 234-2264** • FAX 234-2200  
TDD 234-2217 • [www.acogok.org](http://www.acogok.org)

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