

DRIVER & VEHICLE SAFETY DIVISION

In 2019, the driver examination and motor vehicle functions of the Missouri State Highway Patrol combined to form the Driver & Vehicle Safety Division. Captain Darewin L. Clardy was named director for this new division.

The Driver Examination Section provides an effective program of driver testing to ensure Missouri licensed drivers have a level of competency consistent with safe driving habits and practices as well as demonstrated skills and knowledge of Missouri laws related to traffic safety. The Driver Examination Section provides the written and skills test for applicants applying for a Missouri operator's license, motorcycle license, Class E chauffeur's license, and commercial driver's license (CDL).

The Driver Examination Section provides administrative and staff support for the program in the field. Responsibilities of the section include program direction and guidance, coordination of examination site selection, liaison with the Department of Revenue and field personnel, correspondence and contacts concerning the driver examination program, training, equipment, supplies procurement, and overall program budget control.

The Driver Examination Section includes approximately 228 full-time, part-time, and temporary employees. There are 158 driver examination offices throughout the state with locations in each of the state's 114 counties and the city of St. Louis. Fifteen offices are commercial driver's license skills test sites. Eighteen full-time, five day-per-week offices are located in the urban areas of Kansas City, St. Louis, Springfield, St. Joseph, Joplin, Columbia, and Jefferson City.

The Motor Vehicle Inspection Section is responsible for the statewide administration of MVI programs, consisting of the Motor Vehicle Safety Inspection Program, the School Bus Inspection Program, the VIN/Salvage Examination Program, and the Emissions Inspection Program in the St. Louis area. The section provides administrative oversight to over 60 motor vehicle inspection personnel assigned to troops statewide.

In March 2020, the Driver and Vehicle Safety Division found itself on the front line of the COVID-19 pandemic. The unique services provided by DVSD employees across the state demand close interactions with the public. Thus, the challenge of COVID-19 was a significant test of our personnel's resiliency. The initial onset of the pandemic led to a flurry of procedural adjustments and safety measures being implemented, which quickly turned to large-scale facility access challenges. Soon after, the situation culminated in a statewide pause of services as the entire state virtually shut down.

The division used this pause in services to secure necessary safety equipment, participate in national dialogue regarding best practices to combat the pandemic, monitor industry needs, and prepare a plan to re-establish services.

Upon returning to service, DVSD employees throughout the state responded exceptionally and provided citizens the needed services. Troop commanders helped assess their regions and led the charge of ensuring all challenges were overcome. Extended hours and facility adjustments for social distancing were the norm as the demand for services grew.

The Driver Examination Section experienced a sustained surge in the demand for written testing, non-CDL skills testing, and overall testing throughout May and June 2020. The Motor Vehicle Inspection Section experienced a heavy backlog of salvage inspections and extended the inspections of school buses through the month of June 2020. Motor vehicle safety inspection and emission stations also experienced a significant increase in demand as citizens adjusted to their new normal through the summer.

Throughout the challenges of 2020, DVSD employees embraced the opportunity to collaborate and create solutions that both served the public and protected personnel as best as possible. Two DVSD personnel accepted awards for their outstanding work in 2020.

Clerk Typist Kimberly Threet was named Department of Public Safety Non-Sworn Employee of the Month for February 2021. She was recognized for her actions during 2020, when a longtime employee's retirement in mid-May left a full-time position vacant. The duties were extremely time-sensitive, including processing emissions and safety inspection records from statewide stations to meeting daily deadlines and promptly fulfilling orders for a variety of motor vehicle safety inspection stickers and decals.

MVI Analyst Brenda J. Davis accepted the 2020 Superintendent's Award for Excellence in Public Service. Her knowledge of financial processes, state and federal law, agency and division directives, and the state's rule-making process is invaluable to the organization. Mrs. Davis serves as the program director for the division's School Bus Inspection Program. She provides oversight, communication, research, and leadership to ensure over 12,000 school buses across the state are properly accounted for and safe for our students.

As driver examination operations resumed following the heart of the COVID-19 crisis, the CDL appointment backlog experienced a significant increase. The target waiting period for a CDL applicant to obtain a skills test is seven days; however, beginning in November 2021, wait times spiked, culminating in a statewide average wait time of 12 days during March/April 2022. This increase in backlog was primarily due to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's implementation of a new "entry level driver training" requirement combined with post-COVID demand and staffing issues. (The FMCSA required carriers to implement entry level driver training by February 7, 2022.) The Driver Examination Section used a multitude of methods to combat the increased wait period, including temporary staff reallocations and overtime projects. These efforts, along with the passing of entry level driver training, resulted in

a statewide average waiting period being reduced to 5.2 days, significantly below target, by July 2022.

The Driver Examination Section saw a significant overall increase in written and skills testing, with three of four testing categories posting large gains during the post-COVID period of 2021, compared to the COVID period of 2020. Total testing in 2021 exceeded 2020 counts by 125,741 tests, or 18.7%. Individual testing increases included 48,253 CDL written exams (36.2%), 78,370 non-CDL written exams (23.1%), and 22,449 non-CDL skills tests (4.7%).

The first half of 2022 continued to indicate increased testing demand as total combined tests increased 6.2% over the same period during the previous year (23.6% combined CDL and 0.6% combined non-CDL).

Senate Bill 53, signed by Governor Michael L. Parson and with an effective date of August 28, 2021, authorized Head Start school buses to certify through the provisions of Section 307.375, RSMo, under which the division's school bus inspection program is administered. Division personnel worked closely with Missouri Head Start Association and individual Head Start agencies to identify all Head Start buses for which such certification would be sought. Five Head Start agencies were added to the school bus inspection program database and assigned district numbers for tracking. During the 2022 annual school bus inspection program, 48 Head Start school buses were inspected and/or reinspected as part of the certification process.

Despite the addition of Head Start buses to the annual school bus inspection program, the division experienced a noticeable reduction in school buses presented for inspection from previous years. In 2021, 11,893 buses operated for public, private and charter schools were inspected during the annual program. In 2022, 11,678 buses were inspected. Through interaction with school district and contracting agency personnel, the division ascertains that this reduction is a result of 1) the consolidation of bus routes to accommodate for a statewide shortage of school bus drivers and mechanics; 2) a decrease in school buses available for inspection because parts for repairs are unavailable or slow to receive; and 3) districts/contractors removing unneeded school buses from the fleet.

Assistant Director Rhonda Czarnecki retired on December 1, 2021. Mr. Dennis Richardson was promoted to senior chief examiner and designated assistant director of the Driver Examination Section.

Assistant Director Gary Campbell retired on January 1, 2022, at which time Mr. Richard Hargrove was promoted to motor vehicle inspection supervisor and transferred from Troop F to the Driver and Vehicle Safety Division, General Headquarters, to serve as assistant director of the Motor Vehicle Inspection Section.

In the fall 2023, the Driver Examination Section secured federal grant funding to assist with a total modernization of CDL testing standards. This training effort successfully trained all state CDL examiners and third-party CDL examiners to the newest accepted testing model, which included a revamp of all basic skills courses. The

new standard was implemented December 4, 2023, placing Missouri in the first large wave of states transitioning to the more efficient and modern model.

Driver & Vehicle Safety Division Directors

Capt. Darewin L. Clardy, 2019 to present