



# County Administration Newsletter

*Vision & Stewardship*

Issue 45

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## Administration

Focusing on effective and efficient government is important at all levels. While managers and administrators are hired to provide leadership through a variety of situations, they sometimes overlook one of the most important assets of service delivery: those who are actually delivering the service. Deputies, social workers, account clerks, mechanics, foresters, jailer/dispatchers, equipment operators, and many others are the ones who carry out the budgeted activities. These staff members are often the first and last point of contact for many residents and is where we should focus resources to best meet the challenge of effective and efficient service delivery. Asking these employees to step up and LEED can be the difference we need to prepare for the future.

Leadership through Effective and Efficient Designs (LEEDs) is intended to incentivize non-supervisory employees to think about the processes of their work. Thinking about their

tasks in the context of not only their department, but also the organization, may lead to a new process for the delivery of services. Through Burnett County LEED's Program, employees are encouraged to generate ideas that make their department(s) or areas of impact more effective and efficient. Few guidelines create the space for imaginative thought.

Program Guidelines and Process:

- Open to all non-supervisory employees
- Teams must consist of at least two employees or more
- Teams can be within one department, or work with colleagues in another department
- Ideas must be proven net-neutral, in terms of cost, within two years after implementation. For example, if the idea is to use a new software program and the program costs is \$2000, the team

should provide the analysis that proves how the organization will recoup the cost of the original program through efficiencies within the department(s).

- Ideas must be submitted to the County Administrator by July 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Once Submitted, the Administrator's review committee will review all ideas
- Teams will be selected to present their idea to the review committee
- Review committee will select the winning team by September 1<sup>st</sup>
- Winning team will share the performance dollars established annually

**2018**

**Employee Performance  
Amount: \$3000**

I look forward to receiving your submissions!

*-Nate*

*New Year New Goals*



## Highway Department

Each winter we witness a number of incidents or close-calls involving vehicles following too closely or trying to pass our snowplows. Section 346.915 of the state statutes addresses these situations:

### State Statute, Section 346.915

#### Following Snowplows

[346.915\(1\) \(1\)](#) In this section, "snowplow" means a vehicle that is operated by a person employed by or on behalf of an authority in charge of the maintenance of the highway to perform highway winter maintenance snow and ice removal, including plowing, salting, and sanding, during either a storm or cleanup following a storm and which is using lamps described in s. [347.26 \(7\)](#).

[346.915\(2\) \(a\)](#) The operator of

any vehicle that is not a snowplow may not follow a snowplow closer than the following distances, if the snowplow is engaged in highway winter maintenance snow and ice removal, as described in sub. (1), and is using lamps described in s. [347.26 \(7\)](#):

1. Two hundred feet upon any highway having a posted speed limit of more than 35 miles per hour.
2. Seventy-five feet upon any highway having a posted speed limit of 35 miles per hour or less.

[346.915\(2\) \(b\)](#) Paragraph (a) does not apply when overtaking and passing a snowplow, but the fact that the operator of any vehicle follows the snowplow more closely than permitted by par. (a) for one mile or more or

follows more closely than permitted by par. (a) when the snowplow is moving at the maximum speed limit is prima facie evidence that the operator of such following vehicle is violating par. (a).

[346.915\(2\)\(c\)](#) Paragraph (a) does not apply to a snowplow that is stopped or standing in the highway.

[346.915\(3\)](#) The operator of any vehicle that is not a snowplow and that approaches from the rear any snowplow that is engaged in highway winter maintenance snow and ice removal, as described in sub. (1), and is using lamps described in s. [347.26 \(7\)](#) and that is stopped at an intersection shall stop not less than 20 feet from the snowplow and remain stopped until the snowplow resumes motion.



## Emergency Management

# do 1 thing

SMALL STEPS TOWARD BEING PREPARED FOR AN EMERGENCY

## Make a Plan



**THE GOAL:** Understand what puts you at risk from disasters and take steps to lower your risk.

*Disasters change things. When an emergency happens you may have to decide what to do very quickly, while you are worrying about what might happen. By planning ahead, it will be easier to make the right decisions when the worst happens.*

▶▶▶ CHOOSE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING THINGS TO DO THIS MONTH TO BECOME BETTER PREPARED:

- Learn what disasters can happen in your area and decide what you will do in a disaster.**

It is important to know what types of disasters can happen where you are. Is your home in a floodplain? Are you in an area that has earthquakes? When are tornadoes most likely to happen? Knowing what disasters could happen can help you know how to be prepared and what to do. Contact your local American Red Cross or emergency management office to learn more about the disasters in your area.

Meet with your family or household members. Discuss how to prepare and respond to emergencies that are most likely to happen where you live, learn, work, and play. Identify responsibilities for each member of your household and plan to work together as a team. If a family member is in the military, plan how you would respond if they were deployed.

### TALKING ABOUT DISASTERS

Talking about disasters can be scary, especially with children, or with someone who may have difficulty coping with daily life. Be open and positive. The unknown often causes more anxiety than knowing the facts. Listen to what the individual has to say, learn how they feel and what they may be afraid of. Older people and people with disabilities may worry that asking for help during a disaster will take away their independence. Talk about different options for assistance and make a plan with them.

## Take steps now to prevent damage to your home in a disaster.

Once you know what disasters could happen in your community, there are things you can do to lower your risk of injury or property damage. Here are some suggestions:

### **TORNADO**

Add a tornado safe room to your home, or add extra protection to an existing room to keep your family safe in a tornado. Look for FEMA publication 320 for more information.

### **HURRICANE**

Install hurricane shutters. Keep trees around your house trimmed to prevent damage from falling branches. Secure your soffits to make sure that they won't provide a way for wind and water to get into your home. Make sure entryway doors have three hinges and a deadbolt lock.

### **WILDFIRE**

Use fire-resistant building materials like shingles and siding. Cut back branches and brush within 30 feet of your home. Keep firewood at least 30 feet away. Check into the National Fire Protection Association's Firewise program for more ideas.

### **FLOOD**

Elevate your home above the base flood level or take steps to floodproof. Elevate your utilities above the base flood level. Make sure you have adequate flood venting. Use flood-resistant building materials when you build or remodel. Taking steps like these can lower your flood insurance rates.

### **EARTHQUAKE**

Secure your furniture, appliances, and water heater to walls and floors. Install safety catches on cabinets and cupboard doors. Make sure your appliances are connected with flexible connections. Consider using a safety film on your windows or installing laminated glass to prevent injuries from broken glass.

*For more information on any of these projects, or other things you can do to protect your home and family, contact your local sheriff's department or emergency management office.*

## Plan what to do if you have to evacuate.

Choose two places for your family to meet. One should be right outside your home in case of a sudden emergency, such as a fire. The other should be outside of your neighborhood, in case you cannot return home or are asked to evacuate.

Decide where you would go and what route you would take to get there. You may choose to go to a hotel, stay with friends or family in a safe location, or go to a shelter. Hold evacuation drills at home. Practice getting out of the house quickly, and drive your

planned evacuation route. The more you practice, the more confident you will be if you really have to evacuate.

Plan ahead for your pets. Due to health concerns, pets are not allowed in Red Cross shelters. Keep a phone list of pet-friendly hotels and animal shelters that are along your evacuation route in case a designated pet shelter is not available. Contact your local humane society or animal shelter to ask if pet emergency shelters will be opened in a disaster.

# Land and Water Conservation

## Preventing the Spread of AIS is a Year 'Round Job

Did you know that even when the temperature plummets and a layer of ice covers the water, there are still plants growing under the surface? Unfortunately, many of these are non-native plants, alga and mussels that survive the winter and come back in spring in full force. Aquatic plants to be particularly on the lookout for are Eurasian watermilfoil and curly-leaf pondweed. Both plants are tolerant of darkness and cold, making it easy for them to survive over a frigid winter. Curly-leaf pondweed sprouts young plants (turions) in late fall/winter that remain green and

will grow under ice if enough light comes through, allowing it to get a head start in the spring over many native plants. Also, be on the lookout for Zebra Mussels (which have been found in the Mckenzie lakes) and starry stonewort. Starry stonewort, and invasive alga, has plant parts that will die over the winter, but the reproductive centers (white, star-shaped bulbs) survive in the sediments of the lake.

If you're venturing out on the ice this winter, you can help prevent the spread of invasive species. If plant materials get caught up in your fishing lines, dispose of them in the trash or

leave behind on top of the ice before moving to a new fishing spot or lake. Any leftover bait should also be disposed of in the trash - never release minnows or other bait into a lake as a means to dispose of them!



A zebra mussel latching onto an aquatic plant, even in a Wisconsin deep freeze. Photo credit: Paul Skawinski.

*Thanks to the Door County Invasive Species Team for allowing reproduction of this newsletter article!!*

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## National Invasive Species Awareness Week

In 2018 we will observe National Invasive Species Awareness Week from February 26 through March 2. The point of this annual event is to raise awareness and identify solutions to invasive species issues. The event explores how non-native, invasive plants, animals and pathogens impact people, as well as what we can do to prevent the spread and effectively manage them.

Ways you can help:

- Clean hiking boots, waders, boats and trailers, off-road vehicles and other gear to stop the invasives from hitching a ride.
- Avoid dumping aquariums or live bait into waterways.
- Don't move firewood! Buy it where you'll burn it.
- Plant only non-invasive plants in your garden, and remove any know invaders.
- Report any known or suspected invasive species to authorities.
- Volunteer to help remove invasive species from natural areas.
- Ask your political representatives at all levels to support invasive species control efforts.

**Learn about invasive species, especially those found here in Burnett and neighboring counties.** For more information contact the Burnett County Land & Water Conservation Department, 715.349.2186 or [lwcd@burnettcounty.org](mailto:lwcd@burnettcounty.org)

## Register of Deeds

### Property Fraud It Can And Does Happen

According to an article on the FBI website, the latest real estate scam is house stealing. They say it generally works like this:

“-The con artists start by picking out a house to steal – say, YOURS.

- Next, they assume your identity – getting a hold of your name and personal information (easy enough to do off the Internet) and using that to create fake IDs, social security cards, etc.

- Then, they go to an office supply store and purchase forms that transfer property.

- After forging your signature and using the fake IDs, they file these deeds with the proper authorities, and lo and behold, your house is now THEIRS.\*’

‘Variations on this theme: Con artists look for a vacant house – say, a vacation home or rental property – and do a little research to find out who owns it.

Then, they steal the owner’s identity, go through the same process of transferring the deed, put the empty house on the market, and pocket the profits. Or, the fraudsters steal a house a family is still living in, find a buyer (someone, say, who is satisfied with a few online photos), and sell the house without the family even knowing. In fact, the rightful owners continue right on paying the mortgage for a house they no longer own.”

To avoid property fraud, monitor all properties you own or for which you are responsible. Vacant properties are at greater risk, so visit vacant properties at different times and days, be sure locks and windows are in good condition and keep the lawn mowed. Watch to make sure you are receiving your annual property tax statements.

The sooner you discover property fraud, the better! So be sure to sign up for **Property Fraud Alert**. This absolutely free ser-

vice is available from the Burnett County Register of Deeds office. This service will monitor for any documents filed in the Register of Deeds office on any name(s) placed into the registry by you. To add your name(s) to the Property Fraud Alert registry, go to [www.propertyfraudalert.com](http://www.propertyfraudalert.com) or call the Hotline at 1-800-728-3858. If you have any additional questions about this service contact Jeanine Chell, Burnett County Register of Deeds at 715-349-2183.

Since the Property Fraud Alert service became available in late 2014, 468 people have signed up. 401 of those signed up just since December 5, 2017 when Property Fraud Alert brochures were included in Burnett County property tax statements.

If you discover someone has committed property fraud against you, contact your local law enforcement and the FBI, then get in touch with an attorney who knows real estate law.

PROPERTY FRAUD  ALERT

Protect Your Most Valuable Investment.

[www.PropertyFraudAlert.com](http://www.PropertyFraudAlert.com)

## University of Wisconsin-Extension and Tourism

### It's Time to Check Your Credit Report!

The University of Wisconsin-Extension "Check Your Free Credit Report" campaign's website [fyi.uwex.edu/creditreport](http://fyi.uwex.edu/creditreport) lets you sign up for reminders to check your free credit reports and provides guidance on how to get and read your free reports. Since the reminder campaign started in 2013, many people have reached out to UW-Extension educators with questions about obtaining a credit score.

"When individuals order their free credit report, they are often surprised that the free report doesn't contain a credit score," says Peggy Olive, UW-Extension/Madison Financial Capability Specialist. "To make matters more confusing, many different companies create credit scores. Each company's score is different."

The information in your credit report is used to create a number – or credit score – that lenders use to make decisions on whether to extend credit or what interest rate to charge. Referring to a score is easier and quicker for a lender than reading through an individual's credit report history. Credit scores are created by private companies that assign numbers to financial activities appearing in your credit report, such as paying bills on time or opening up a new credit card. Typically, the higher the score, the better your credit.

If you search the internet, you'll likely get millions of results offering a free credit score. Many credit scoring services offer an

"educational" score or letter grade that would not actually be used by a lender. To narrow down your search, a few options exist if you are interested in finding out what types of credit scores you have.

- Start by checking a credit card or car loan statement. Many lenders have started offering a free credit score.
- You can buy a score online from one of the three major Credit Reporting Bureaus – Equifax, Experian, or TransUnion. While you are legally allowed one free credit report from each bureau every 12 months, the bureaus do not have to provide a free credit score. Individuals can also purchase a credit score from one of the largest credit scoring companies FICO®, or Fair Isaac Corporation, at [myfico.com](http://myfico.com). FICO has many different credit score models, with some scores ranging from 200-900 and other scores ranging from 300-850.
- Many services and websites advertise a "free credit score." Some sites are funded through advertising and don't charge a fee, and they may sell your contact information to their advertisers. Other sites may require that you sign up for a credit monitoring service with a monthly subscription fee in order to get your "free" score. Be forewarned that some services offer "free" trials, but if you do not cancel within a certain time period, such as one week or one month, you will be charged a monthly fee on your credit card.
- If you are concerned about your credit history or will be applying for credit in the near future, you

may want to check with a reputable non-profit counseling service listed at [debtadvice.org](http://debtadvice.org) or 1-800-388-2227. Many credit counseling services will be able to offer a free credit score, help you read through your report, and correct errors.

"No matter what credit score you find online or choose to purchase, that score will be based on information found in your credit report," says Olive. "The bottom line is that you need to check your report on a regular basis. Correct any errors you might find, and do your best to practice positive financial behaviors, including paying bills on time."

There are three ways to order your free credit reports: through the mail, by phone toll free, or at the official website [AnnualCreditReport.com](http://AnnualCreditReport.com). **Anyone can sign up to receive an email reminder from UW-Extension three times a year – February 2, June 6, and October 10 – on the campaign's website at <http://fyi.uwex.edu/creditreport>.**

In addition to email reminders, the campaign's website provides information and links for ordering, reading, and understanding your free credit reports. The website explains how long different types of credit information can stay on a report and steps to take to increase your credit score.

While you can order all three reports at the same time, the Burnett County UW-Extension recommends that you view one report every four months so you can be sure that the information is up-to-date and accurate year round.