

Scott County Highway Department workers worked long hours this past weekend, battling the first ice-and-snow event that has occurred in the county since Superintendent Jill Baker took the top job there. “It was bad, and that’s about all you can say about it. The crews did their best to keep roads passable for people who needed to be out,” related a very tired Baker on Monday, December 9. The weather started getting bad Thursday evening, December 5. All workers came in at 6 a.m. on December 6. They worked 16 hours that day. On December 7, everyone came back in at 8 a.m. and worked ten hours. They were helped in their efforts by some much-needed sunshine which aided in melting some of the ice on several roads. Needless to say, everyone reported back in Sunday, December 8, and worked from 11:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Men spread a mixture of cinders and fine gravel at known danger areas on county roads, paying particular attention to intersections and bridges. “The fine rock gives it a little ‘grit’ which helps traction,” explained Baker. Snow plows were enlisted as well because of the five to seven inches of snow that fell and some minor drifting.

No salt is used on Scott County roads, that product having long since priced itself above what the county can afford. “We haven’t had salt for two years,” Baker related. “It’s just too expensive.” The cinders being used have been stockpiled at the Highway Department over the past two years. It was given to the county by a Louisville hospital eager to see it leave.

“We’ve tried to stay ahead of this weather, but the temperatures aren’t allowing much to thaw, and we just keep getting snow,” Baker summed up the situation.

Still, she praised the Highway Department’s employees. “They have done a good job,” she said.

The worst problem crews encountered were private vehicles on the roads. To avoid collisions with motorists, two trucks ended up in roadside ditches, one in District 1 at Burn and Whitsitt Roads northeast of Austin and the other in District 2 in the Plymouth Road area, Lexington Township. Drivers were uninjured in the mishaps, and the trucks were pulled out by a private wrecker firm and put back into service after they were checked for road worthiness.

Baker would love to see a brine truck added to the county’s snow-fighting equipment. Brine is a salty, watery mix which larger counties and the Indiana Department of Transportation spray on highways using special equipment.

Noted Baker, “I guess we could wish for a brine truck for Christmas. And maybe better weather so we could have some time off.”

On a more serious note, she asked local motorists to use caution when around the large county-owned dump trucks.

“If you see one of our trucks coming, slow down and pull over. If you can help our trucks to get around you, they can continue to treat our roads so that we can all drive more safely,” she asked of the public.