Building Service’s Mobile Crews - The Quiet Stewards of IU

By Kelsey Tharp

“We are the eyes and ears of the university. We find the floods, the doors that don’t lock, people trying to make it into buildings – we see it all,” explains Steve Waldrip, Supervisor for Building Service’s Afternoon Mobile Crew.

With four Mobile Crews – day, afternoon, evening and night – the Building Services Division provides 24/7 monitoring of the Indiana University campus. These Mobile Crews are a critical part of the entire Building Services group of about 250 staff members who are responsible for taking care of all the academic buildings on campus. These duties include: sweeping, mopping, polishing floors, carpet care, trash removal, cleaning offices, recycling, bathroom cleanup and a myriad of other cleaning duties.

Besides their daily routines, the Mobile Crews also respond to special requests from Building Managers or departmental representatives. The Building Managers act as the liaison between building users and the Building Services operation. The Mobile Crews are particularly important to these managers because they are usually the people responding to emergency needs during the off-hours. These emergency needs include flood coverage, blood borne pathogen clean-up, security issues, special event coverage, snow removal, and a variety of unscheduled cleaning needs.

Though each crew has similar cleaning responsibilities, each one has an area of specialization. The Night Crew is largely responsible for building security on the weekends – each night they spend numerous hours locking and unlocking doors. The Day Crew deals with moving equipment for classrooms, special events and cleaning restricted areas, such as the Lilly Library stacks and the Glenn Black Archaeological Lab which cannot be cleaned during the night. The Afternoon and Evening Crews look after valuable equipment and important events in areas like: the Optometry School, the Art Museum, the President’s Hall and Cyberinfrastructure building.

In addition to their cleaning responsibilities, Mobile Crew members are trained to look out for and address potential building or safety hazards. Through this practice, they have saved IU a significant amount of money by providing a quick response to emergency situations. Waldrip mentioned recently catching floods in both the Art Museum and the Data Center, the building that houses IU’s supercomputers.

The staff members of the Night Mobile Crew also provide a safety service to our customers on campus. The Supervisor of the Night Mobile Crew, David Sparks, explains that each semester he and his staff discover students in the middle of the night who are in distress and need immediate help. They always provide these students with assistance by calling the proper authorities.

The Mobile Crews of the Building Services Division provide a valuable service for the Indiana University campus. All the Crews are full of flexible, dependable and well-trained staff. Each day brings a new challenge for them to address. As Cherryl Tincher, Supervisor of the Evening Mobile Crew puts it, “We know our responsibilities and work together to get the job done.”

The 4 Mobile Crews are comprised of 54 members who help care for approximately 70 buildings on IU’s campus.
In the ‘Zone’

Each week the staff and supervisors of the Building Maintenance and Operations zone crews work to create a safe, serviceable and comfortable building environment within each of their assigned areas.

The Bloomington campus is divided into three zones: 2, 3 and 5. Each zone has a specific section of campus in which they are responsible for answering maintenance service requests. These can include a variety of issues such as: rooms being too hot or too cool, leaks, broken items, etc. In zone 5 they are also responsible for maintaining Indiana University’s fountains and pools – both therapeutic and recreational. Mark Hobbs, Zone 5 Supervisor, continues to stress customer satisfaction with the pool staff’s work and those of his other service staff.

The daily work assignments in each zone can depend on the season. The cooling and heating seasons affect IU’s buildings in different manners and influence service requests placed by the building’s occupants.

Zones can receive 15-30 Service requests per day. Though Supervision and Staff prioritize and balance these requests they also have to balance emergency requests that come to them. An electrician might start his or her shift changing ballasts, but can get called away to perform an urgent repair to a dimming system.

According to Jana Cragan-Reese, Zone 2 Supervisor, “We are kind of like a first line response.” Zone workers are usually the first team on the scene to address an emergency situation. Some of their work can be completed rather quickly and other times it can take a week to finish a particular assignment. The most time-consuming and specialized jobs are referred to the appropriate shop division.

Working in the zones is great for someone who enjoys variety and working in different environments throughout the course of a day. Zone staff are enthusiastic about the role they play in maintaining the IU campus. “People working in the zones take pride in trying to keep their area maintained,” explains Brett Chitwood, Zone 3 Supervisor, “They strive to keep customers pleased and do efficient work for them, because it’s like they own it.”

Heavy Lifting Help

Bend, strain, lift. POP! That POP is the sound of your now throbbing back because you didn’t follow proper lifting procedures.

Back injuries are one of the most common and preventable on-the-job injuries. The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that more than one million workers incur back injuries each year. Before lifting your next load, check out these simple dos and don’ts to keep yourself from being a part of that statistic.

**DO** - Understand your lifting limits and abide to them. Everyone has a natural lifting limit which differs based on health, age, gender and physical fitness. To increase your lifting potential, engage in strength training outside of work.

**DON’T** - Bend at the waist to lift. The safest way to lift is to squat low to the ground before firmly grabbing the object. Then, keeping your back as vertical as possible, slowly straighten your legs and lift the package.

**DO** - Examine the object for potential hazards including: sharp edges, awkward shape, slippery surfaces, and any other potential hazards. If you notice any of these hazards, ask for help before moving the object.

**DON’T** - Lift without thinking. Be aware of what you are doing to keep yourself safe and prevent injury.

**DO** - Keep the object close to your body. If the object’s center of gravity shifts away from your body, an enormous strain is placed on your lower back. Be sure to follow these suggestions to keep your back happy and healthy.
The World of Motocross with Greg Dow

Within the IU Physical Plant, there exists a man who tempts fate astride his 2008 Honda CRF 450 bike. He hurdles around a dirt track amidst 10-40 other riders, fighting for coveted awards. His success is determined by how hard he pushes his body and his bike to weave around competitors and over jumps.

This man is Greg Dow, amateur motocross racer and two year staff member of the Central Heating Plant.

Dow grew up immersed in motocross. He watched his dad ride from an early age, which sparked his personal interest in racing. Dow began his motocross journey early, racing sporadically from age 9. On the track Dow’s specialties are maneuvering corners and blasting out of the starting gate.

In 2011, Dow decided to get serious about motocross. He wanted to prove to himself that he could qualify for the Amateur National Championship – a nationwide race to determine the best rider in America. While he has not yet qualified for this event, he has placed 27th out of 60 racers in the Midwest Regional Championship. “I like to say that I am the 27th fastest racer in the Midwest,” Dow said with a smile. Though he might not be the fastest in the United States, Dow has earned a multitude of awards and plaques.

Motocross races take place on a dirt track and are comprised of five laps. To start the race, an official stands in front of the starting gate, holding a 30 second placard. When the official turns the board sideways, the gate drops and the race begins. Riders tear into the ground for the race’s 20-25 minutes duration. Only those who finish in the top three spots will receive a trophy or plaque.

Dow competes in 5-10 races each year throughout Illinois, Michigan, Kentucky and Indiana. In the off-season he travels to Alabama and Georgia to practice. His favorite track is Hoosier Hilltoppers, a clay based track in Uniontown, Indiana.

During the motocross season, Dow rides three times a week and does cardio work on his off days. The cardio element might seem surprising, but motocross races require immense physical dedication. Dow wants people to understand the difficulty and dedication that racing requires. “No one realizes how physically demanding racing is – you have to hang onto the bike, gripping with your knees. You have to go as hard as you can go,” Dow states. Seeing the results of his efforts on the track is incredibly satisfying.

If you are interested in stepping into the world of motocross, Dow simply advises finding a place to ride and a dependable bike.

Emergency Preparedness

Though the Physical Plant provides its employees with a safe and comfortable working environment, emergencies inevitably arise. While we should not be in a constant state of worry about emergency events, we should be prepared for them.

Before an Emergency

- Know multiple exit points from the building in which you are located and where the alarms are situated. If your normal exit is not accessible during an emergency, it is advisable to know another route.
- Understand when and how to use a fire extinguisher. If the fire is small and contained, it is appropriate to use the fire extinguisher. Use the acronym PASS: Pull the pin. Aim at the fire’s base. Squeeze the trigger. Sweep the spray sideways. If the fire is large or caused by chemicals do NOT use the extinguisher, immediately exit the building and contact the fire department.
- Find the first aid kits and know the floor wardens. These staff members have first aid and CPR certification and are an excellent resource.

During an Emergency

- Call 911. Take initiative and report what is happening. You could save a life!
- Assess your surroundings and remain calm. Observe what is happening so that you can make an informed, rational decision.

If you are on campus during an emergency, look for an Emergency Evacuation sign. These are posted throughout campus buildings and provide information about the building’s exit routes, tornado shelters, first aid and AED locations, fire extinguishers and fire alarms, handicap accessible exits, and rescue pickup locations.

Responding to Tornadoes

Indiana is on the edge of the Midwest’s Tornado Alley and experiences an average of 22 tornadoes a year. Keep yourself out of danger by knowing how to identify and react to an imminent storm.

The most telling sign for an approaching tornado is clouds moving in two different directions in the sky. This indicates that rotation is occurring higher in the storm and has the potential to move downward. Seek shelter immediately.

Another way to prepare for a tornado is to listen for sirens. A long wail indicates a tornado, while an interrupted wail is for all other types of emergencies. Remember, just because a siren stops it does not mean that the danger has passed. You should also know the difference between a tornado watch and tornado warning. A tornado watch occurs when the weather conditions could cause a tornado, whereas a tornado warning is when a tornado has been sighted.

For more information about emergency procedure check out: protect.iu.edu/emergency/procedures
Top: Monte Koss, Tim Sears, Cherryl Tincher, Larry Campbell and Keith Wright of the Evening Mobile Crew (left); David Dwyer of the Afternoon Mobile Crew astride the riding scrubber in the Cyberinfrastructure building (middle); Monte Cross mentoring Keith Wright (right)

Middle: Stan Martindale’s sweet retirement reward (left); Martindale proudly stands with his plaque (middle); Delicious refreshments at the Martindale retirement party (right)

Bottom: Andrew Lowry enjoys the spam spread at Hank Hewetson’s spam themed birthday party (left top); Hewetson’s birthday decorated door (left bottom); Hewetson poses next to his spam sign (right)