



## ARCHULETA COUNTY, COLORADO

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### **IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Archuleta County Road & Bridge Departments’ Deanna Hibbert Invited to Present at Two State Snow and Ice Conferences**

**Pagosa Springs, CO** – Archuleta County Road & Bridge Departments’ own Deanna Hibbert was recently invited to speak at the American Public Works Association (AWPA) conference in Loveland, CO. Hibberts presentation “*Keeping Cool While Plowing Snow*”, was so well liked, she received a call from the Director of the Iowa State Conference asking her to do the same presentation at their state conference, and an all-expenses paid trip to do so.

Hibbert has worked for Archuleta County for just over seven years and holds many titles. “I tried to think of one title for all my positions,” she laughs. “But can’t figure out just one”. On a daily basis, she is an Equipment Operator driving both the water truck in summer, and the plow truck during winter months. In addition, she is a certified CDL (commercial driver’s license) Trainer, and the Public Works Safety Coordinator. She has created and added to the curriculums for both, complete with slide shows and examples that ensure employee safety while out on our roads.

Hibberts presentation focused on not just safety and the work itself, but the mental health aspect of doing what can be a very demanding and stressful job. “Lots of things happen out there that people don’t think about,” she explained. “In those big trucks, we do slide off the road and sometimes it takes awhile before we can get pulled out of the situation. People get mad because we go too slow, or they aren’t familiar with plow operations, and honk or yell. It can get very tough on your mental wellbeing. She added, “We work 12-14 hours a day sometimes so it can also be exhausting. Personal care becomes important, and I tried to highlight that in my presentation.” Hibberts topics also focused on why the position of snowplow operator is vital to the community. “It’s not just for people to get to work and school; we plow for Emergency Services, first and foremost. Without us, they may not be able to respond.”

Both presentations were in front of mostly men, (it is estimated 99% of public works roles are held by men). “I had to keep it light and tell some jokes,” she says. “I’ve done public speaking before, but not in front of 200 people!” The end of her presentation included the story of a Washington plow operator who had a gun pulled on him by an irate resident over a snow berm on his property. “It’s amazing how things can escalate,” she said. “But then here [showing her slide show] is a different story of another guy who offered the plow driver a case of beer if he would stop plowing a berm onto his property,” she shrugs and smiles. “It can go both ways.”

Archuleta County Road & Bridge will soon make plowing more interesting for residents with the addition of the app Plow Ops. The app will allow for live plow truck tracking so drivers can see what roads are safe for travel. The apps development specific to our County is still in the works and more information will be announced as it is provided.

In the meantime, the Road & Bridge Department wishes to thank residents for their patience this winter in all snow-related operations. Please keep in mind snowplow operators begin as early as possible, sometimes 2a.m., to ensure we can all get to our destinations safely and on time. Remember to have patience, wave to say thank you, and keep a safe distance at all times. More information on County plow operations and procedures can be found at <https://archuletacounty.org/260/County-Snow-Removal-Process>.

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