

## ON TRACK WITH MDT

If you ask the public what issue pleases or frustrates them the most when dealing with state government, the majority will likely tell you that customer service – or the lack thereof – is their biggest concern. For my part, I know that a lack of customer service frustrates me greatly, and I'm guessing it's the same with most folks.

While I know that everyone at MDT works hard to provide top-notch customer service, I also recognize that some customers are virtually dependent on the daily or even hourly services provided by MDT. The relationship between Montana's commercial motor carrier industry and the Licensing and Permitting Bureau of the Motor Carrier Services (MCS) Division is a good example.

For those of you not familiar with this relationship, it is the MCS Licensing and Permitting Bureau that 1) licenses and registers all interstate commercial motor vehicles based in Montana, and 2) administers Montana's oversize/overweight commercial vehicle permit program. These activities involve frequent contact between MCS and the customer that become even more critical during peak business periods like the last working day 1) before a holiday or long weekend, 2) at the end of each business quarter, and 3) at the end of the calendar year. During the most recent 12-month reporting period, the MCS Helena staff completed over 56,000 licensing, registration and permitting transactions. As these numbers indicate, MCS faces quite a challenge because there is no way for a government service provider like MCS to maintain a staff large enough to take care of all customer needs 100% of the time.

Unwilling to let that issue go unaddressed, and fully understanding that timely permit availability is of particular concern to customers, MCS developed the self-issuing Internet Permit Program. Simply stated, the Internet Permit Program allows a pre-registered customer to self-issue and pay for basic Montana oversize and overweight permits and Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW) fees over the Internet on an "as needed" basis.

The resulting service benefits are tremendous. First, Internet permits cost nothing beyond their statutory price and can be self-issued 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Second, it does away with waiting, either on the phone or in person, for MCS staff to become available. And third, over 80 percent of all required Montana permits can be self-issued over the Internet, meaning a big reduction in the average customer's need for direct contact with MCS and a proportionate increase in the amount of time MCS staff can devote to customers whose business can't be accomplished over the Internet.

What's more, the Internet Permit user pre-registration process is really quite simple. All you need to do is go to <http://www.mdt.state.mt.us/mcs/> and click on the *Truckers can issue their own permits!* link. A detail page will come up, allowing you to either get more information, register to become an Internet Permit customer, or provide feedback. If you choose to register after reviewing the opportunities, just submit the requested information online. Several weeks after your registration is submitted you'll receive a letter in the mail from MCS advising that your Internet account has been activated. You

will also receive a CD-ROM tutorial designed to help you learn to self-issue permits; to aid you in configuring your personal computer so that it will properly interact with the permitting software; and to act as a helpful refresher if you issue permits infrequently. It's that simple.

As you are probably aware, MCS recently discontinued Book Permits. Under the Book Permit program a carrier manually filled out a single blank permit each time the need to operate oversize or overweight occurred. Although permit customers liked the convenience of Book Permits, they didn't like the associated financial liability when permits were lost or stolen. These issues prompted MCS to discontinue Book Permits effective July 31, 2003. As the Book Permit's logical successor, the Internet Permit may also be self-issued anytime you need a basic Montana permit, and because you pay with your VISA or MasterCard when issuing the permit, your financial liability has been greatly reduced.

Whether your business is large or small, the self-issuing Internet Permit offers a viable and user-friendly alternative to the service delays you may have experienced during peak business periods and, for this reason alone, I encourage you to consider becoming an Internet Permit user today. MDT believes that developing a service-oriented tool such as the self-issuing Internet Permit System is the best way to stay "on track" with our customers.

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