

Department keeps the engines running

Cobb County Fleet Management does not lack for work to do.

The department is responsible for more than 2,000 county government vehicles and equipment, including everything from police cruisers to street sweepers. Fleet Management Director Al Curtis estimated that every week about 100 vehicles come through his department's shop on average.

The department only has 17 full-time mechanics.

"We're lean and we definitely have to be efficient to keep up with the workload," Curtis said.

Repairs and preventative maintenance are the main services provided through the shop on County Services Parkway. In the shop, one can see a variety of vehicles in various states of disassembly and a line of cars waiting their turn in the parking lot outside.

More than 70 percent of jobs are completed within 48 hours, Curtis said. Preventative maintenance visits usually only take 45 minutes or less and are key to reducing the expense to taxpayers.

Fleet Management sends reminders to other departments when their vehicles are overdue for those checkups.

"That helps things from breaking down at a later date," Curtis said. "Breakdowns cost more money."

Public safety vehicles, particularly those for law enforcement, take priority because of their importance to the community, officials said.

"We have to keep these vehicles on the road," Automobile Technician John Thomas said. "Without them, we'd be hard pressed to keep the world going round and round."

Thomas said the wide variety of day-to-day problems county mechanics have to fix, ranging from engine trouble to bent wheels, becomes the norm after a while. He added that even minor problems become major ones if they prevent the vehicle from getting on the road.

"I've been doing it so long, nothing surprises me," he said.

Curtis said his staff maintains its professionalism despite the sometimes-intense workload. During the past year, county mechanics handled more than 8,200 work orders.



Gary A. Witte

Cobb County Auto Technician William Seabolt works on a vehicle. More than 70 percent of work orders that Fleet Management handles are finished within 48 hours.



Gary A. Witte

"They do a really good job for what they have to deal with," he said.

They host meetings open to other departments where they discuss the status of vehicles and let customers provide feedback. Departments can reserve times to bring their vehicles in and even sign out a car

from Fleet Management for out-of-town county business trips.

Repairing vehicles is not the department's only duty. It also oversees the purchase of all county vehicles, fuels the county's emergency generators and has a mobile fuel truck ready to roll in case a county vehicle runs empty.

"We have a pretty broad spectrum of what we do," Curtis said.

The department remains budget conscious. During the past year it came up with a new tire patching process estimated to save the county at least \$18,000 that would have otherwise been used to buy new tires.

Fleet Management has pioneered the use of biodiesel since 2008 and sells used tires and waste oil rather than throwing them away. The oil not sold is used in the department's heater systems.

The department has been honored for its efforts. A major industry magazine named Cobb County as honorable mention for the 100 best fleets in North America and it was ranked the number 13 Green Fleet in North America for 2013.

Roadwork could cause delays

Major road construction will begin along the Windy Hill corridor later this year. Motorists may wish to consider alternative routes during heavy construction periods.

High crash rates and heavy congestion are the focus of the 2.5-year, \$34.5 million multi-project which will include widening roads, adding medians and providing enhanced pedestrian facilities. The main area of construction will take place from the Windy Hill Road and Cobb Parkway intersection to Powers Ferry Road.

In late 2015, the intersection of Windy Hill Road and U.S. 41/Cobb Parkway will undergo safety improvements and a diverging diamond interchange will be added over the Interstate 75 bridge overpass. Projects are expected to be complete by spring 2017. Updates and information about upcoming Windy Hill Road projects will be provided at cobbdot.org.

A ground breaking ceremony for the project will be held Monday, **Oct. 20**. More details will be posted on the Web site.

Help with cleaning out your desk

Residents have the opportunity to have their household documents securely shredded and donate gently-worn shoes to help people in need. Keep Cobb Beautiful will host a free Document Shredding Day and Shoe Collection 9 a.m.-noon, Saturday, **Sept. 13**.

The event will be held at Piedmont Church, 570 Piedmont Road, Marietta. Only paper products will be accepted. Plastics, CDs, floppy discs, electronics, cardboard and large binders with metal rings or clips will not be accepted. People are also asked to bind or tape shoes in pairs. For more information, call 770-528-1135.

Save water through workshop

A rain barrel is a rainwater harvesting system that is connected to a downspout from a house or building. By collecting rainwater, one can save energy, water, and money. Rain barrels also help reduce erosion and storm water runoff and increase water quality.

Come learn how to make a rain barrel and take it home with you at this free workshop noon-1 p.m., Tuesday, **Sept. 16** at the Cobb County Water System Water Quality Laboratory Training Center. It is located at 662 South Cobb Drive, Marietta. Limit one barrel per household, Cobb County residents only. Space is limited.

Register online <http://watershed.cobbcountyga.gov/files/rainbarrels.htm>.



Bob Padgett

Event to provide nature walks

Friends of Price Park will hold its third annual Bird 'n Butterfly-a-thon the weekend of **Sept. 20-21**. Price Park will be open from dawn until dusk. Volunteers will be present continuously at the park from 7:30 a.m. until 1 p.m. to assist visitors and lend out binoculars and bird/butterfly identification charts. Come to the park and learn about the sport of birding, how to use binoculars and how to identify birds and butterflies by their "field marks." Explore the park on a guided walk with a skilled birder or butterfly expert.

- Bird Walk, 8 a.m. Saturday and Sunday.
- Bird and Butterfly Walk, 11 a.m. Saturday and Sunday.
- Kids Craft Table and Scavenger Hunt provided all day.
- Water, snacks and T-shirts will be available for sale (cash and checks only) to help support the Friends of Price Park and its projects.
- Raffle tickets will be available for purchase for \$5 each and multiple prizes will be drawn.

Leone Hall Price Park is located at 4715 Stilesboro Road, Kennesaw, 1 mile east of Mars Hill Road.

State fair offers entertainment aplenty

The North Georgia State Fair will take place at Jim R. Miller Park Thursday, **Sept. 18-28**. It will feature live music, free attractions and shows, farm animals, flower shows, blue ribbon competitions, local entertainment, and fair foods.

There are also games and rides one of the largest carnival midways in the United States. Admission is \$7. Children 10 and under are free. Ride tickets are \$1.25 each, \$20 for 21 tickets, \$50 for 55 tickets \$100 for 120 tickets. All rides require more than one ticket.

Parking is \$3. Concerts are free with fair admission. For more information, go to northgeorgiastatefair.com.



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