



**State of Illinois**  
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**Illinois Department of Transportation**  
Randall S. Blankenhorn, Secretary

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## **Innovative IDOT Sign Program Means Earth Day is Every Day**

**CHICAGO** – If you plan on driving on Illinois roads this Earth Day, take a close look at the highway signs. As part of its commitment to green and sustainable practices, the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) reclaims and remakes roadside signs with the use of a one-of-a-kind process that utilizes recycled water.

“The Illinois Department of Transportation is committed to doing its part to help the environment, not just on Earth Day, but every day.” said Acting Illinois Transportation Secretary Randy Blankenhorn. “By using this method for recycling signs, we are significantly reducing waste, saving hundreds of thousands of dollars for Illinois taxpayers every year. It’s that kind of cost-saving innovation and creativity that IDOT constantly strives to deliver.”

The IDOT Highway Sign Shop in Springfield recycles 45,000 to 50,000 highway signs annually with the help of a four-jet Hydro-Stripper developed by Hydro Solutions, Inc. The signs make it back on the road shortly after they are reclaimed. The process, which was first implemented in 2001, conserves 427,500 pounds of aluminum every year, saving the state approximately \$600,000.

The multiple-step process includes collecting damaged and faded signs from throughout the State at IDOT’s Central Sign Shop in Springfield, where they are first straightened through a set of rollers. Each sign is then run through the Hydro-Stripper, which applies 36,000 pounds of pressure per square inch to the sign. Larger freeway signs are sheared down to smaller pieces to fit through the Hydro-Stripper. The signs or sign pieces are run through a belt sander to smooth out the surface and remove any glue residue. Finishing touches are applied before the signs are put back into service.

The environmental benefits of this effort include reducing waste, conserving water and preventing pollution by eliminating the need to produce new materials. The water in the hydro-stripping process is filtered and continuously reused, saving 190,000 gallons of water each year.

For more information on IDOT and its sustainability efforts, visit <http://www.idot.illinois.gov/home/environment-and-sustainability>

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