

## **Why does the County always have new equipment?**

---

All equipment wears out. County equipment often leads a busy, hard, and short life. Our funds are limited. So we work hard to keep costs down and still have reliable equipment. Reliable means people working instead of waiting for repairs. “Down time” is very expensive with three or four people getting paid to wait! So replacement can happen often.

State law requires counties to have a special fund to maintain and replace vehicles and equipment. It is called the Equipment Rental and Revolving Fund (ER&R). ER&R usually owns county vehicles and high value equipment. It is set up to replace equipment when the cost to repair and maintain it is higher than replacing it.

Many kinds of equipment are needed for all the things counties do. These include cars and pickups to move employees and materials to various work places. They include hauling huge amounts of soil to cover landfill garbage, grading roads, and seal coating hundreds of miles of county roads each year.

For instance, a building inspector will easily put 90,000 miles on a pickup in three to four years. The outside of that pickup may still look great. But 100,000 miles plus of wear and tear, over all kinds of roads, in all kinds of weather, likely means the insides are heavily worn. Today’s cost to replace engines and drive trains quickly mean replacing the pickup is cheaper.

Departments pay a fee to cover operations (fuel, tires, etc.) and depreciation, or replacement. With a 20 cent per mile charge, we can operate and maintain the pickup during that time. By adding the \$550 per month, we can replace it at the end.

Working this way helps us have enough cash on hand to replace the pickup when needed. There’s an even bigger advantage of doing it this way when the equipment has a very high value. Like buying your new car, it is much easier to pay a smaller amount each month as you go rather than trying to find a lot of money in 10 or 15 years!

So, for necessary equipment, it is important to plan for the future. And we want to make sure the equipment is properly maintained and available!

---

Dave Heilman, Asst County Engineer  
Grant County

Questions about this article, or any of the series, or on other topics related to County Roads, may be directed either to your County Engineer, or to Al King, P.E., County Road Administration Board, Olympia, at [Al@CRAB.Wa.Gov](mailto:Al@CRAB.Wa.Gov).