

RoadSoft

May 2008 Vol. 8, No. 3

Do you have a question?
Call Technical Support at 906-487-2102

RoundUp

"The sign module is fantastic. We are able to easily track our sign inventory, schedule maintenance, and manage work orders using RoadSoft. The filters and network builder really streamline the process."

Brian Burlingham, Traffic Engineer Technician
City of Kalamazoo Public Services Department

RoadSoft Backups Are Best Practice

The information collected by RoadSoft users is extremely valuable in terms of time, money and future decision-making. This information, or data, is necessary for effective asset management.

A crew of three people collecting PASER ratings for two or three days could mean an agency investment upwards of \$3,000. What if the agency's network server crashed? If the agency had not been performing routine database backups, the recently collected PASER ratings—and possibly years worth of information—would be lost. The agency would need to start collecting ratings, inventory and other data from scratch, while any plans to use that lost information for effective asset management would no longer be possible.

Most people routinely save an important *Word*® document or spreadsheet several times a day, but think nothing of working for weeks without backing up a database. Like financial data, the PASER ratings and other RoadSoft data collected by counties and cities is a valuable asset to an agency. Agencies should have a backup plan in place, in case something goes wrong. An agency's RoadSoft database is like any other management system. It needs a backup after new information like PASER ratings is added and before importing RoadSoft data or updating because unpredictable things can occur and data can be lost. The backup is an agency's safety net, a snap shot of the database that allows it to be restored when disaster strikes.

Information Transfer Shouldn't Be Risky Business

"Agencies should perform backups before any import or update, after data collection and as good business practice," said Mike Pionke, TDG Software Engineer. "Even seemingly innocent actions could put data at risk."

For instance, a county engineer needs to share road inventory and ratings with a city engineer, so runs a RoadSoft export and sends it to the city. The city engineer then imports that file to their version of RoadSoft. The potential problem lies within the exporting process.

The RoadSoft export window contains options to filter for a specific jurisdiction, function class, legal system and data type. The city may only need data for federal aid roads, but during the export the county may not filter out options like local roads, whether the county has data on local roads or not. The export file created by the county is imported

into the city's RoadSoft database and could overwrite the city's local road data, meaning that all the city's local road data would be gone. It is important to include only the information that is needed by the recipient when creating an export.

Prepare for the Unexpected

An agency must also protect itself from events beyond its control. "A program could fail during an update, lightning may strike causing a power surge, or a hard drive or server could crash. These things happen," Pionke said. The Technology Development Group (TDG) and the Center for Geographical Information (CGI) have data sets such as base maps and crash data, but do not have the data collected by users. Once that information is lost, it could be gone forever, unless backups have been made. These backups should not only be stored in the hard drive or server, but off-site as well.

Recently, the Gogebic County Road Commission's server crashed. After hours of work, and worry, their data was recovered and reconstructed successfully, but easily could have been completely lost. "We had a near miss. The copy of the database I had only contained data up until last year," said Gogebic County Engineer Technician Tom Leaf. "I would have lost the ratings from 2007 if the data hadn't been recovered from the crashed server." For situations like this, backups that are kept off site are extremely important because the ones stored on the server are useless if the server crashes.

What You Can Do To Prevent Data Loss

→ **When exporting data, select only the information needed**—Selective exporting prevents blank data fields from replacing existing ones. This can be done in the Export RoadSoft window by changing all jurisdictions and function classes to custom, deselecting all legal systems and data types and then selecting only the options you wish to export.

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Join TDG & other RoadSoft users at the next Users Group meeting:

Wednesday, June 18th in Harris, MI, 9:00 - 10:00 a.m.

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→ **Always backup your RoadSoft database before importing any new data**—A database backup should be done before importing new data, before an update and after new data has been collected. Using the backup function in the Database Manager creates a snap shot of your entire database. If you lose any data you can restore the database using the backup.

→ **Limit the number of administrators in your RoadSoft program**—RoadSoft allows you to set restrictions on users, and only users listed as administrators can actually import or export data. Having one administrator and one person as a backup administrator can decrease the chance of problems occurring while transferring data.

→ **Backup your database to a separate storage device, preferably in a different building**—You should not only keep backups within the hard drive on your computer or on the server, but store them in a tape, CD or flash drive that can be kept in a safe place in case of a failed computer system or fire. All the backups in the world are of no use if they are located on the hard drive that fails.

→ **Conduct regular backups**—Whether you are working within a large agency or in a two-person operation it is crucial to have a regularly planned procedure for backing up your data.

→ **Call the TDG for help**—Don't wait till catastrophe strikes. Call 906-487-2102 when you have any RoadSoft questions.

RoadSoft Users Group Meeting Superior Region

All RoadSoft users are welcome.

Join us at the U.P. Road Builders Association 100th Annual Summer Meeting on June 18, 2008, for the *RoadSoft* Users Group (RUG) meeting. Learn more about using *RoadSoft*, influence development direction, and share your questions, comments, and ideas with the developers and other users.

**Wednesday, June 18, 2008
9:00 - 10:00 AM
Island View Resort & Casino
W399 Hwy. 2 & 41
Harris, MI 49845**

Call **906-487-2102** for more information about *RoadSoft*, RUG meetings, or communicating with the *RoadSoft* development team.

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