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## Northwest Pa. has smoothest roads in state

*PennDOT gives high ranking to Erie, Crawford highways*

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Drivers in northwestern Pennsylvania don't have to look far to find the smoothest highways in the state — they're right under their tires.

Mercer County has the overall smoothest state roads in the Pennsylvania, according to new statistics compiled by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation.

Erie County was ranked third among the state's 67 counties for smoothness of the state routes and interstate freeways within its borders. Crawford County was fourth.

Overall, PennDOT's northwestern district — which includes Erie, Crawford, Mercer, Venango, Warren and Forest counties — continued its run as having the smoothest roads of PennDOT's 12 districts.

"Systemwide, we have the smoothest roads in the commonwealth," said William Petit, PennDOT's district engineer. "We are the best of the best in terms of pavement quality delivered."

Petit also told the planners the district finished first in the state in the Highway Administration Customer Survey, which measures overall performance based on public comments.

It wasn't the first time District 1-0 has laid claim to the smoothroad title.

"We have been No. 1 for the past four years ... and we have been No. 1 for six of the last seven years," said Jerry Brosius, PennDOT assistant district executive for maintenance.

Smooth roads are the trade-off drivers receive for the inconvenience of highway maintenance and construction work, he said.

Brosius credited the maintenance-first approach of local transportation planning agencies — the Erie and Mercer metropolitan planning organizations, and rural planning organization that serves Crawford, Venango, Warren, Forest and Clarion counties.

Brosius also credited the work of PennDOT maintenance crews and contractors. "This tells you we have some very good people out there doing great things," he said.

"The basic maintenance we do on the (highway) system helps these numbers. Our guys are really good at doing those things you have to do to maintain the roads."

Specially equipped vehicles measure the bumps and dips in a mile of highway and express that smoothness measurement in a rating system called the International Roughness Index, or IRI. The fewer bumps and dips, the lower the IRI number.

Brosius said the smoothness rating is one indicator of the health of the highway system.

The 2004 IRI numbers, which are the latest available, show the northwestern district slightly behind only District 10 for smoothest interstates. District 10 comprises Butler, Clarion, Armstrong, Jefferson and Indiana counties. When other roads were included, the northwestern district rose to No. 1 for smoothest roads in the state.

### HIGH PERFORMANCE

Counties with the smoothest roads, according to state International Roughness Index ratings.

1. Mercer 2. Cameron 3. Erie 4. Crawford 5. Centre