

# Focus on the DOT's switchboard operator/receptionist



Dianne Eppert

by Rick Murray

Meet Dianne Eppert, who staffs the main switchboard and reception area at the central complex. She answers an average of one telephone call every 20 seconds, and greets employees and visitors as well.

Eppert says the key to doing her job well is taking the time to learn a little about every office in the DOT, since people don't always know exactly who they need to speak with or which office they're looking for. "You're looking for the fraud department?" she'll ask politely, before discovering that the caller wants to speak with someone at Driver Services.

Knowing where to route calls and send visitors is a point of pride with her, says Eppert. "I'm a people person—I like helping others. I knew this job fit my personality." She must also be familiar with many departmental policies and procedures, both official and unofficial. Among those that she's asked about the most:

1. The switchboard and reception desk are staffed Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

2. The Ames in-WATS line is for:
- use by departmental employees calling Ames from outside the state; and
  - use by departmental employees calling Ames from within the state *if the desired extension is unknown.*
3. If you schedule the use of a conference room on OfficeVision, make sure all information about time and location is included. That way, Eppert can pass along complete information to those coming in for the meeting.

4. Remember: you're not saving money for your office, and likely not saving money for the department, by calling the main switchboard and requesting a call be placed to a DOT office in another area. Long distance calls are *not* charged to individual divisions, transportation centers or offices.

There are times, Eppert says, when even she is stumped by an inquiry. "Are the whales running today?" asks the caller. "I really don't know," she concedes.