



The Blaze

A Publication of the Idaho State Fire Commissioners' Association

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

One of the very valuable benefits I've discovered from being a member of ISFCA and going to ISFCA conferences is the contacts you build with other fire district commissioners throughout the state. While at the conference, I've met other commissioners, and heard about what was going on in their districts. Knowing about what issues they have dealt with can save you a lot of heartache, time and money. For example, our district was in the process of finishing and outfitting a satellite fire station. We already had all the fire trucks for the new fire station, except for a tender. We had planned to build our funds back up for a few years before purchasing another tender. It's a bit of long story, but to keep it short, due to insurance reasons, we had to have a new tender in just a few months. I called around to the suppliers we usually buy our fire apparatus from, and it was looking like it was going to cost over \$200,000 for a new tender, and were not having much luck finding a used tender that we liked with the funds we had available. We didn't have time to go to the voters for a bond, we're in a bind. Then I recalled a commissioner from southwest Idaho who while at convention, I heard him talk about how his district had "built their own" tender, for a whole lot less money than buying a new one through the usual sources. I called that commissioner and talked to him about how they did that. From the information I gathered from him, we were able to put together a "build your own" tender in just a few months for around \$70,000, which we could afford. Having that contact saved the day for us, allowing us to meet the time and funding needs. Another situation where having these contacts from around the state, is that we wanted to put together a personnel manual for our volunteer fire department. Again, by having that contact, we didn't have to re-invent the wheel. We were able to get a personnel manual from a fire district in north Idaho, that with a little editing, fit our needs.

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Continued ... President's Message

Even though we are still enjoying early fall weather, in just four months, our illustrious state legislation will be back in session. Our association is already looking at new legislation that will help provide resolutions for issues impacting fire districts. We are also busy checking around to find out what proposed legislation is being planned by other groups and legislators to get an idea of what we might be up against during the next legislative session. If your fire district has a particular issue that is causing problems and has come to the point that something has to be done, you are encouraged to give ISFCA a call, and we might be able to help you with some legislation to cure the problem.

COVID-19 is having a large impact on every person and association in the state. One of the issues ISFCA is working on due to Covid, is what to do for our next convention. You might remember that the ISFCA board had decided to move our convention from November to March, and the plan was to hold our convention in Boise in March of 2021. Due to other groups and associations having to postpone their conventions to next spring, we've not been able to find a location that fits our needs and that both ISFCA and attendees can afford. We're working on how and when to hold the next convention. This is a work in progress and when we decide what we're going to do, we will notify all the fire districts of our plans.

One last thing, like all of Idaho, our area is experiencing explosive growth unlike anything we've seen since the gold rush days. Our fire district is starting to take a hard look as to what impacts the added demands will have on how we do business and what we can do to prepare for that. Does your fire district have a plan for this unprecedented growth? One thing is for certain, you either plan for the growth, or it will run right over the top of you. The choice is yours as to what happens to your ability to protect your community.

Enjoy the fall and stay healthy.

Sincerely,

Steve Frazee
ISFCA President

Keep Training and Stay Safe - *Wayne Cavender, Region 1 Director*

The Covid is here!! I guess there's no doubting it any longer. I even saw it on the news the other night in a story about the virus and it's effect on our wildfire season and how the lack of the usual spring-time training tune-up and the need for social distancing has put a big wrinkle into wildland fire responses. I thought it might be helpful or interesting, or both, to see how some other fire depts are handling the pandemic.

I spoke to some fellow commissioners and a few fire chiefs to see how they were making out. As you might guess, the degree of response to lockdowns, social distancing, masks and sanitizing would depend on what a given organization has for responders. Some smaller companies, 4-5 responders, can not separate their men and women into groups because they may be lucky to have a 'group' at an incident. The problem and extra danger being that if one of them becomes infected, there's a chance for taking out the whole company.

Larger companies can assign 'units' that work together, but not so much with the other 'units' in their company, depending on the size of the incident, of course.

Some even larger companies found they could use the Cares Act to subsidize their paid staff when quarantining was necessary. A big help with the extra costs and drain on the budget. (I don't think many of us had "Pandemic" as a line item.)

We are fortunate here at South Boundary Fire Protection District in Naples. With the facilities we have and our number of responders up (21), we can still work and train safely. Having 3 stations we can have 3 sets of firefighters who try to limit there exposure from group to group to prevent contamination. If one station becomes quarantined, we still have resource to protect the community. Even with that, we require masks in vehicles and some distancing in the station. This was a plan that most of those I talked to were trying to make work.

Our Station One has a community room which, without the virus, would be busy most nights of the week. From Karate, AA meetings, Naples Helping Hands and Soup's On, it really is a Community Room. Unfortunately, as commissioners we needed to suspend these activities, temporarily, for them and for us, as first responders for our community.

We try to keep to our 'groups' on training nights, having timed competitions between groups and being outside, we feel pretty secure. Group meetings we have outside with spacing. When together inside we are supposed to be masked. It works pretty well for us.

That's about it. We can only do so much to stay safe. So much depends on what others choose to do. We have our county fair this week and as a former 4-H pig leader I know there is not much social distancing in the pig barn!!! Usually the county fire departments have a presence at the fair, but this year we did not so we could be safe so those who depend on us could stay safe.

If your organization is struggling with this new normal, check with neighboring departments and see what they are up to. I am sure they would be glad to help or at least sympathize. We are all in this together.

So . . . make smart choices. Follow the recommended guidelines to keep our Firefighters safe and therefore able to protect our communities.

New Legislation May Provide Funds for Local Wildfire Risk Mitigation

Charles "Hoey" Graham, Region 2 Director

Members of both houses of Congress and from both major political parties joined together in early August to introduce new legislation to reduce wildfire risk and increase forest management in the West.

The primary purpose of the Bipartisan Emergency Wildfire and Public Safety Act is to "protect the West from catastrophic wildfires" through wildfire mitigation and prevention projects. It includes measures to help businesses and homeowners protect homes and other structures from wildfire risk, and we're hopeful it will provide another source of funds for local fuels management projects and mitigation efforts.

If passed, the legislation will:

- Require the U.S.D.A. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management to work collaboratively with states to implement wildfire prevention projects in areas most in need of restorative forest management;
- Allow disaster mitigation and preparedness funds to be used to reduce wildfire risk posed by utility lines;
- Expedite the permit process for wildfire detection equipment such as sensors, cameras, and other relevant equipment and expand the use of satellite data to assist wildfire response;
- Create incentives to harvest and recover woody biomass such as dead and dying trees, and to expand biomass processing facilities such as electrical generation plants, to make biomass more economically viable.
- Create a program to train a new generation of workers to address wildfire and forest health; Establish a fire center in the western U.S. to train new firefighters and forestry professionals in the use of prescribed fire;
- Lift the current export ban on unprocessed timber from federal lands in the west for trees that are dead or dying, or if there is no demand in the United States. (California currently has nearly 150 million dead and dying trees on thousands of acres that are at risk of wildfire);
- Expand the Energy Department's weatherization program to retrofit homes to make them more resilient to wildfire by using fire-resistant building materials and other methods;
- Establish a new grant program to assist facilities such as hospitals and police stations to become more energy efficient and adapted to function during power shutoffs. The new program would also provide funding for the expanded use of distributed energy infrastructure, including microgrids.
- Direct the USDA Forest Service to identify three landscape-scale collaborative forest projects to restore forest health and reduce wildfire risk. Somewhat controversially, these projects will "benefit" from streamlined environmental reviews, intended to allow for faster project implementation. Challenges to the projects would be subject to a higher threshold before the courts could impose an injunction stopping or delaying implementation.
- Establish a categorical exclusion in the National Environmental Policy Act for constructing fuel/fire breaks.

It remains to be seen how available funds would be distributed to state and local governments, and the kinds of projects that would be given priority. The bipartisan support for these measures is, however, encouraging at a time when bipartisanship is hard to find. Our collective response to the very real risk of catastrophe may be one of the few remaining things that unite us.

Consider contacting members of the Idaho congressional delegation to encourage their support.

Sleep When The Wind Blows – *Jack Hellbusch, Region 3A Director*

I recently read an article in our local newspaper entitled “I can sleep when the wind blows” by Bishop Lee Bingham. As Fire Commissioners can we “sleep when the wind blows”? Have we done all that we can to prepare our firefighters and EMT’s to face any and all emergencies, especially the ones we have not seen yet? Who thought a year ago that we would be facing a pandemic, and be asked to wear a face mask to help stop the spread? Although it may not be possible to plan for everything, we can do things to be ready for the next call. Have we provided our people with appropriate protective gear for the jobs they are called to do? Our firefighters need appropriate protection against carcinogens that can cause cancer.

We have come a long way in providing this type of protection. I remember years ago when I first joined the fire service, all we had was a helmet and a coat (not much protection). Now almost every fire department provides full turnouts with cuffs to help protect from carcinogens. Our EMT’s have some of the best lifesaving equipment available for the “Golden Hour”. We do our best to ensure all of our apparatus is in good repair and not going to break down on the way to a call. The same goes for water supply, both in the cities and the rural areas. We ask cities to provide the fire flow we need at the hydrants, and rural subdivisions and others to provide some type of water supply such as an underground tank available in all seasons. With all the best equipment and protective gear we can provide, the most important thing is TRAINING. What good is the best equipment in the world if we do not know how to use it properly. Has your district done all it can for your people? Can you “sleep when the wind blows” when the next “storm” comes knowing your people are prepared for whatever they are facing?

Job Openings

1. Meadows Valley Fire Chief - [Application Deadline \(November 30, 2020\)](#)
2. Kamiah Fire/EMS Chief - [Job Announcement](#)
3. Weiser EMS Director - [Job Announcement](#) Interested persons should inquire by contacting Debbie Warren, with the Washington County Clerk’s office, 208-414-2092 or dwarren@co.washington.id.us

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