



# The Blaze

A Publication of the Idaho State Fire Commissioners' Association

## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Well, welcome to the summer of 2019 and we are off to a potentially early fire season. On the first of June in northern Idaho, we reached the mid 80's and the woods are dry. With that said, remember those mutual aid agreements/cost sharing agreements as well as ensuring the wildland fire trainings are completed.

Can you believe that the association has been serving the elected fire commissioners for 58 years this month! Thank you to all of the members and volunteers of the association for your support as we continue to fight for the betterment of the fire districts in Idaho.

Between April and May, the association scheduled 3 regional trainings where members and nonmembers were in attendance. Our first was in northern Idaho and hosted by the North Idaho Fire Services Academy. The attendance was the largest up north with a lot of good discussions and networking. We then went to the southern part of the state in Mountain Home. Mountain Home Fire District/Dept. hosted the training and had minimal participation. However, we are grateful for those that did travel the 1-2 hours to attend. We were headed to the eastern part of the state and unfortunately had to cancel the training in Pocatello due to lack of registration. ISFCA's leadership team needs our members to attend the regional trainings as we bring these based on the request of membership.

We want to thank Anne Wescott, ICRMP and Knute Sandahl for giving up their weekends to come and provide training to the elected officials and their staff.

As we go into the summer months, let us not forget about statutes and rules that need to be changed through legislation. We need to know what needs to be changed so you may operate and manage your fire district more effectively and efficiently.

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## 2nd Quarter Blaze 2019

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**President's Message Continued..**

We will be meeting with the Idaho State Fire Chiefs, Idaho Association of Cities and the Professional Firefighters of Idaho to discuss legislation from last year and any joint legislation we may desire to pursue together. Your input is valuable and needed on legislative topics and concerns.

Speaking of budget planning, don't forget to consider the AD&D policy that is now available to member districts. \$25,000 off duty and \$50,000 on duty benefit for only \$30.00 per member. If your district chooses to not participate, the members of your district still can purchase on their own.

Let us discuss a topic that many may not realize can be a problem in your fire district: Discrimination, Sexual Harassment and/or a Hostile work Environment. Some members have requested to bring more training in this area. We all have sat through numerous trainings and yet for some reason across the state, insurance carriers and attorneys from large to small volunteer departments are experiencing a continued uptick in these types of complaints. What can you do? Elected commissioners should ensure your district has sound policies and frequent trainings. Within the fire service, this is necessary. It begins from the commissioner, to the fire chief, and down to every person employed or volunteering in your district. If you should need help with your policies, contact your district attorney or insurance provider.

PSTD/PTSI IS REAL!!!! This is another area where solid policies, constant training to not only recognize symptoms, but more so, how to bring it to the attention of their designated representative. As reports across the state show, many times the members whom are in supervisory roles and trained in many specialized areas tend to be affected more than you may think. This requires a culture change from being a perceived weakness to an actual strength of self-recognizing and getting treatment. Again, training is available on many levels free (Google" PSTD and firefighter prevention training").

We need your feedback on when you would like to have the conference in the future. If we moved it to the spring, it may position your district to have better legislative input and budget planning. Please contact Krystal at [office@isfca.org](mailto:office@isfca.org) if you would like to move it to the spring or keep it in the fall.

In closing, ISFCA wishes all districts a safe and quiet fire season. We hope to see you in November at our 39<sup>th</sup> Annual conference. Remember to discuss the Blaze topics amongst your fellow commissioners, your fire chief and administrative staff. Call Krystal at the office for any questions or requests you may have.

Sincerely,  
David "Rudy" Rudebaugh  
President

## Additional Help to Protect the Lives of Your First Responders

*Steve Frazee, ISFCA Vice President*

Suicide is a tragic event which has traumatic effect on the family and your department. Idaho to begin with has a higher than average suicide rate in the nation. The nation average is 14.0 suicides per 100,000 persons. Idaho's average is 23.2 per 100,000 and ranks 5<sup>th</sup> in the nation for suicides.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and depression among firefighters and police officers is as much as 5 times higher than the rates in the civilian population. Nationwide, first responders are more likely to die from suicides that in the line of duty and in Idaho First Responders are 10 time more likely than civilians to commit suicide.

This year the Idaho State Legislation took steps to help reduce the number of needless deaths among first responders by passing a bill to help first responders with PTSD. Before they passed this legislation, workman's comp for PTSD among first responders would only consider authorizing psychological help when it was associated with a physical injury. They passed Senate bill 1028 which makes dealing with PTSD eligible for workman's comp and the state legislation went a step further by changing the acronym for PTSD to PTSI, Post-Traumatic Stress Injury.

Bad incidents, be them fire related, bad vehicle wrecks or other accidents can build on the first responders to the point they begin to have PTSI and depression. The buck stops with you as a fire district commissioner when it comes to the safety of your first responders. I suggest you work with your department leaders to recognize PTSI and depression, and then take action.

The following paragraph is just my own personal opinion, so please keep that in mind when reading this. I've been on the local fire department for 14 years and my dad was on the department for 28 years and I went to many fires with him. With my experience on the department, being around many other fire departments, I've noticed an attitude throughout the emergency services. While being on the local fire department, and we had our number of "bad" fires, including 5 fatality fires, claiming 6 victims. The worse was when a 4-year-old didn't survive an apartment fire. It was a horrible experience for us. In the "good old days" the attitude was "firefighter up (aka cowboy up), move on and deal with it, it's part of the job you signed up to do". But fortunately for us, our leadership was more progressive and the very next morning, a counselor from out of town was at our fire station to meet with us at 9:00am with all the fire department involved. That simple step helped a lot, and who knows, it may have made the difference to stop someone from doing the unthinkable.

Even though the legislation is a big step forward, we've been hearing some discussions about adding some proactive measures to the bill to try and prevent the PTSI from getting to the point of having to use workman's comp. For example, having a counselor available at a moment's notice and mandatory training. ISFCA would like to hear your thoughts and suggestions on this.

If your department is still under the "good old boy" system and attitude, maybe it's time to change that. Your first responder's life could depend on you dealing with this.

Be safe out there.

## Don't Miss Untapped Resources

Wayne Cavender, Region 1 Director

Of the many challenges facing rural fire districts, one could be finding enough **volunteers**. Sure, a new, young couple moves into your district and it's "Let's get **him** on the Fire Department. I'll bet he can carry that 24' ladder!" Well, maybe he can, but, gosh, give the guy a chance to unpack!

There may be an untapped source for volunteers going unnoticed! And I may have only noticed because I find myself in that group!

This group consists of older folks, even into retirement, who continue to be active and in pretty good shape. Maybe not capable, *or desirous*, of crawling into a burning building on their hands and knees but, with training, certainly able to drive a piece of apparatus to a scene, engage and run the pump deck, handle 'Rehab' or 'Staging' responsibilities. And the ever popular, 'Traffic Control'!

While this group has put on a few years and maybe a few pounds they didn't trade their brains and good sense for a Medicare card! They are still as smart as they always were, maybe smarter. Still as willing to help others in need and serve a very important purpose.

Another benefit of this group is its flexibility. Being at home during the day and available to respond to calls more quickly than some of their working counterparts. Granted, it's a niche, but maybe one worth looking into. We're getting older, but we still want to serve our communities and mankind!



Fire Districts, we have a fire district in serious need of resources to continue to provide life/property saving measures to their small community.

The North Bannock Rural Fire District is in a situation none of us ever want to be in. No equipment, no resources, no volunteers. Just recently, the City of Chubbuck ended their contract with the fire district to provide fire suppression to their constituents. After exhausting all efforts to secure a contract with a neighboring department, they are now faced with starting from scratch without a budget to help buy the necessary items to restart their volunteer force.

They are reaching out asking for any surplus equipment to get them up and going. The commissioner are willing to travel to obtain the items.

If you can help in anyway, please reach out to their Chairman, Roy Allen at [royallen2@cableone.net](mailto:royallen2@cableone.net).

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