



The Blaze

A Publication of the Idaho State Fire Commissioners' Association

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

There is no doubt that 2020 has been a very challenging year for all of us. The Idaho State Fire Commissioners' Association (ISFCA) has not been spared from the onslaught of COVID 19, we have struggled along with you. However, this crisis will pass and if the news is correct, relief may be coming soon.

It is now time to look forward and plan for the future. We have all seen the dramatic changes sweeping America and our own communities. To be best prepared for the inevitable changes and challenges, ISFCA needs your help. ISFCA wants to insure 2021 is a better year for all.

What can you do? Several things. The majority of our income comes from membership dues, so first of all, if you are already a member of ISFCA renew your membership, and if you aren't already a member of ISFCA please become one. Maintaining and increasing membership is even more important next year because ISFCA will not be hosting a convention in 2021 (more about that later in this addition of the BLAZE).

Getting new members helps us in at least two ways, the first is that there is strength in numbers, the second is it increases our income. The larger the membership, the more impact ISFCA has on looking out for your interest particularly regarding legislative issues. The more members we have, the larger our conventions will be, making it easier for us to attract vendors and sponsors. Membership, conventions, sponsors and vendors go hand in hand with providing detailed training and knowledge to help each commissioner fulfill their elected responsibility.

While we are on this subject, here are some of the benefits that come with being a ISFCA member:

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1. The Accidental Death and Dismemberment insurance we offer; gives your fire district the ability to offer this insurance to your commissioners, firefighters and staff at a reduced group rate. If your district opts not to do this as a group, the insurance can still be purchased by individual employees of your district if they would like to have this coverage.
2. The ISFCA attorney offers one hour of his time at no cost to any member district, plus he will give you a reduced hourly rate if you need further assistance from him. This is an especially valuable resource to the smaller districts, and is a benefit that even our district has taken advantage of.
3. Another benefit that I have drawn on, is the personal contacts you made with meeting fire district commissioners from throughout the state. These connections have proven to be a very valuable resource when our district was dealing with a challenging issue. More than once I have recalled that while at the convention, I had heard someone talking about the same problem. I would give them a call or an email about what they had done to deal with it, and they usually had come up with a solution. Those connections have made it possible to resolve an issue in a timely manner, and has saved my district a lot of money.
4. This next benefit is something that many of you are not aware of. Our Executive Director is available to offer advice to fire districts that might need help. The bulk of the phone calls Krystal gets, are not from fire district commissioners, but from their secretaries. Many of these secretaries are new and are still learning the ropes, and unfortunately, some times they are not getting adequate or no help from the previous secretary. Even seasoned secretaries sometimes run into situations that are new to them and aren't sure what to do. Secretaries are a valuable asset to fire district and do far more for the district than just take and write meeting minutes and pay the bills. They also keep the budget accurate and up to date, usually using accounting software that is not necessarily user friendly. They do payroll, which includes having to deal with tax with-holdings, Persi, as well as a many other tasks. The help that Krystal provides the fire districts by itself is well worth the cost of membership dues.

Shifting gears – it's getting close to that time of the year when the State Legislature will be going back into their annual session. At this point in time, there are a lot of drafts being proposed for reducing property taxes that will not be in the best interest of the Association. We'll be following this one closely, as well and any other legislation that is introduced that might have an impact, be it good or bad, on fire districts. If you have any particular issue that requires action by state legislation, please let ISFCA know about it. It is very likely that there is something we can do to help.

Till next time, stay healthy and have a happy holiday season.

Sincerely,

Steve Frazee
ISFCA President

Training Ideas Coming Your Way - *Todd Belnap, Vice President*

We have missed the opportunity to get training for critical needs as commissioners this year. We bear a great responsibility when we step into our jobs as commissioners and most of us come to the job with a blank slate and little knowledge. This is the greatest on the job training experience I have ever had. As a Banker/Stockbroker I had College and training courses, but as a fire commissioner I had nothing. I was elected and told to show up to a meeting in which I was sworn in and given the responsibility to oversee a fire district that I knew nothing about.

At my first meeting I was given a binder that included our district operating details and I thought I was educated. Then the next meeting we went through the financials and I felt lost again. I wanted to look through them in greater detail and evaluate the income statement and balance sheet, after all I was a Commercial Banker in my day. It took me a year to feel comfortable with everything, and then I went to my first ISFCA conference. I listened to the legal team, the insurance people, the fire marshal, the sponsors and was again overwhelmed.

We have the constant need to obtain knowledge. We will be trying several different options in 2021 and we need your feedback on which learning model works best for you, but here are some of our ideas:

1. Recorded training sessions you can view at your convenience from Legal and Insurance
2. Virtual training sessions where we will be online face to face learning and discussing subjects
3. Video presentations from sponsors to view what they can do to help make the job of fighting fires safer, more efficient and fiscally responsible

Covid19 has changed the way we are looking at training, but it has possibly given us the chance to do this on a more personal level and make it more convenient for you

If there is any specific topic you have in mind, please send it to the office email. We always appreciate any feedback from you, our members.

40th Annual Conference Update— With the promise of a vaccine on the horizon, we have the hope of the restoration of life before us. With that said, we are looking forward to a big celebration for the 40th ISFCA Conference. We are looking at March of 2022 for the most likely date this celebration will take place. That gives all of us plenty of time to plan and prepare for this conference. We are looking at speakers and sponsors that will add value and make this conference the best one you've ever attended.

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Benefit - AD&D – *Doug Martin, Region 6B Director*

As Regional Directors, we are responsible for providing information to our Member Districts about benefits of the association.

A benefit that is available to all member districts in ISFCA is the AD&D coverage through Provident Insurance Company.

1. Coverage - \$25,000 for 24-hour AD&D and \$50,000 for Line of Duty AD&D
2. The cost is \$30.00 per employee or volunteer of the district per year. This can also include Elected Officials and Administrators.
3. The policy will begin February 1, 2021
4. You may not add or remove employees/volunteers until the renewal in 2022
5. The employee/volunteer can pay for the policy if the district elects to not pay the premium. We cannot take payment from individual employees/volunteers, they must pay the district and the district pays ISFCA directly.
6. You may have duplicate policies with other agencies including Provident
7. Spouses cannot participate in the policy unless they are a volunteer or a paid employee of the district
8. If you contract with a city, those employees may participate in the plan as long as the payment comes from the fire district.
9. You must be a Member District of ISFCA to participate in the AD&D policy
10. ISFCA facilitates the policy on the member districts behalf

Many of the fire districts in rural Idaho have only a volunteer district made up of men and women who work other part-time or full-time jobs in their community. Some may have limited or no insurance coverage of any kind. I feel that the insurance coverage provided by your district is a way of saying “thanks” to those who put their lives on the line to protect the communities they live in.

Nothing could be worse than having the loss of a fire fighter with a spouse and young family facing devastating change in their lives.

As a Fire Commissioner, I think it is important that we encourage our Fire Chiefs to discuss the AD&D coverage in their weekly training meetings. If your Chief feels inadequate discussing the policy with their employees, they can contact Robert McIntyre with Provident at 800-447-0360, Ext 255.

We really hope that none of your employees will ever have to use the coverage.

Take care and stay safe.



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