



# The Blaze

A Publication of the Idaho State Fire Commissioners' Association

## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

“May you live in interesting times” is an old proverb attributed to the Chinese that actually means the opposite... “May live in bad times”. Seems the Chinese have delivered.

Your community is likely feeling the strain brought on by social distancing, anxiety and the repercussions of the disease itself.

As commissioners, you are known and likely highly regarded in your communities. You are community leaders and will be counted on to set a good example, provide leadership and a calming influence. As you approach each day, I am sure you will take this responsibility most seriously.

At the time of writing this, infected Covid-19 cases in Idaho have exceeded 1,200 cases and the death toll continues to rise. The forecasts indicate that the state wide cases are not expected to peak for another 2 to 3 weeks. Like it or not, coronavirus is very real, and a threat to all in Idaho. The good news is that Idaho is somewhat behind the curve and time is on our side.

The number one priority for fire districts has always been, and will continue to be, the safety of your first responders and the public at large. During this deadly pandemic, because of what our first responders are called up to do, they are at a higher risk than the general public. Are you, as commissioners of your fire district, taking care of your staff and first responders during this national emergency? When your fire department firefighters provide assistance to the ambulance crew, say at a motor vehicle accident, do your firefighters have the proper PPE for protection against Covid-19, such as N-95 masks, latex gloves and face shields? Our local volunteer fire department doesn't usually carry these items on their fire apparatus.

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## 1st Quarter Blaze

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## Continued ... President's Message

Are you providing means and supplies for your first responders to clean and disinfect when returning from a call where they may have been exposed to Covid-19? Do you have provisions for your firefighters to wash their turnouts at the firehouse? Many volunteer departments firefighters typically have their turnouts with them 24-7, and if they take contaminated turnouts home, they could be exposing their families to this deadly virus.

Are you adequately protecting all of your commissioners and the fire district administrative staff? Is your district abiding by the "Staying at Home" order that Governor Little issued? Is your staff working from home when possible? Are your offices and fire stations closed to the public, except for visits by appointment only? Have you canceled your regular commissioners meetings? If that's not possible, then are you using the modified Open Meeting Law procedures that allow telecommunication meetings?

I could go on with questions and suggestions, but too often there simply aren't answers for all of the questions. Always remember, you as fire district commissioners, are responsible for the safety of all who are under your authority and all that can be asked of you is to do the best you can with what you have to work with.

We are all in this together, and together we can get through this.

Let's be safe and pray for a quick return to "less than interesting times".

### Tips for Fire Departments in Dealing with Covid-19

When writing my President's message, I was considering adding some advice specifically for fire departments that the fire district commissioners could pass on to their Fire Chiefs. I spent a fair amount of time surfing the web trying to find guidelines or any other information for fire departments regarding the Covid-19 pandemic. There was an abundant amount of information for EMS, but very little for fire departments. I called the State Fire Marshal, Knute Sandahl, to see if he could help me out. He said that he also had not been able to find much on the internet, but has this advice for all types of fire departments when responding to a call.

- Use plain old everyday common sense.
- Follow the recommendations you will find on the Center of Disease Control (CDC), FEMA and other federal websites.
- When responding to assist EMTs, keep your distance while the EMTs are doing their coronavirus interviews and assessing the scene. After they give the ok, move in wearing the appropriate PPE at all times.
- When responding to a fire call and firefighters have to enter a house or other structure that may have been inhabited, all personnel who go inside should be in full PPE, including SCBAs. When it is determined that SCBAs are no longer needed, wear, at the minimum, goggles, masks that protect you from airborne viruses and good latex gloves. Remember, the coronavirus can survive on flat surfaces, handles, etc. for many hours.
- Before leaving the scene, decontaminate the tools you've used on the incident and yourselves. Error on the side of caution.
- Once back at the station, disinfect tools and other items used at the incident.
- If your station has a turnout washing machine(s), launder your turnouts using normal procedures. Do not take your dirty turnouts home, that could expose your family and others to the coronavirus. Do not use the turnouts until they have been washed.
- If you have showers at the fire house, shower and put on clean clothes before leaving the station.
- Thoroughly document any exposure to coronavirus.

## Continued ... President's Message

I was able to find one more bit of advice from a web page for a volunteer fire department in Connecticut, which is as follows:

“For many calls, a single firefighter, often an officer, will come to the door and ask about the health of those in the home. If anyone in the home has a fever, flu-like symptoms or has traveled to certain areas, that firefighter will take an extra minute to take precautions, such as putting on an air mask. He or she will then attempt to resolve the problem without having other firefighters enter the building”

Sounds like some good advice to me.

New Convention Dates: I mentioned in the last newsletter that the association was considering changing the date of our annual convention. As part of the board meeting held in February, the board voted to move the date of the annual convention from the first part of November to the first or second week of March. The logic behind this change is that the spring date will make it more convenient for everyone to attend. Plus, on the years that the convention is in Boise, the new date will provide the opportunity for a visit to the state house while the state legislation is in session. Out of town commissioners attending the convention would have the chance to observe the complex political process.

Legislation Update: We were hoping for a quiet, somewhat uneventful legislative session, but it didn't turn out that way. We have several pieces of legislation which we hadn't anticipated and it became very hectic at the end of the session with many last-minute bills.

Just hitting the high points, here is what occurred this year. The big emphasis of this year's session was dealing with the rapidly increasing property taxes occurring in the larger urban areas of our state. There were numerous bills introduced to reduce the property taxes in those areas. For example, one bill proposed to raise the home owner exemption, another would have reduced the amount of agricultural exemption, and so on, but these bills didn't make it through. One bill, HB409 gave us a scare. The intent of House Bill 409 was to freeze for three years the property tax income to counties, cities and special taxing districts, including fire districts. This freeze included the 3% increase for inflation and the increase from new construction. For those districts with plush budgets, this was not going to be the end of the world, but for those who don't, it could have been catastrophic. HB409 passed the house and went to the Senate, came up on the Senate floor, and was voted down close to the end of the session.

Some bills that we supported and passed include HB486, which made it legal for fire districts and fire departments to use drones on incidents. Another was a bill that removed the sunset clause from the bill that makes it possible for Post Traumatic Stress Injuries. Had the sunset clause remained in the bill, it would have automatically been voided.

There were a few bills that we were disappointed to see not make it. One bill, SB1311 would have restricted use of exploding fire arm targets, but didn't make it to the Senate floor. Make sure you check our website for legislative updates while the session is ongoing. [www.isfca.org/alerts](http://www.isfca.org/alerts)

Sincerely,

Steve Frazee  
ISFCA President

## Challenges Associated with Providing Emergency Services during the COVID-19 Pandemic – *Tim Vargas, Member At Large*

Responding to the needs of our firefighters during this pandemic is and will continue to be a challenge. I know the situation weighs heavily on the minds of first responders when they roll out the door to answer a call. What can we do as commissioners to make sure our first responders are adequately protected?

Most departments have zero-tolerance policies in place requiring their firefighters and emergency services personnel to use proper personnel protective gear at all times. These policies generally stipulate the type of gear needed to be used when answering an emergency call. Instances can arise when a volunteer might show up without standard protective gear. These instances, while generally are rare, can no longer be tolerated when living under the threat of COVID-19. We must do everything we can to enforce a zero-tolerance policy requiring our first responders to always wear the proper gear for the activities they are performing. We should be talking to our chiefs and command personnel to make sure there are no exceptions regarding PPE. Our department under the guidance of our chief has initiated some new requirements to further protect our emergency personnel when assisting on medical calls. We are requiring the use of goggles or face shields, gloves and N95 respirators to now be worn when assisting with all medical calls.

Other restrictions have been put into place for the firefighters and the commissioners relative to meetings. While under stay at home orders all regular monthly firefighter meetings have been cancelled. At the same time, commissioners will not meet for our regular monthly business meetings. We will have our secretary prepare the bills as customary and we will come in and sign checks and the secretary will send them out. A sign has been placed on the door where our meeting notifications and agendas are normally posted explaining that all commissioner monthly meetings have been cancelled until further notice due to COVID-19 and will resume when it is determined by our public health officials that it is safe to do so.

These are the main adjustments we have made to try to keep everyone safe at this trying time. Many of you have other good suggestions and ideas worthy of consideration and I would encourage you to share your thoughts and ideas with the membership. I'm sure Krystal would be more than happy to serve as a clearing house for any ideas or solutions to problems you would like to share, as a result of COVID-19.

**STAY SAFE OUT THERE!**

## 2020 Legislative Session

Passed Legislation

Bill Number	Description	Last Action	Support/Opposed
<a href="#">HB 347</a>	BOND ELECTIONS – Amends existing law to revise provisions regarding the holding of another bond election after a voter rejection.	1/30 - Read Third Time in Full – PASSED - 48-21-1 1/31 - Received from the House passed; filed for first reading Introduced, read first time; referred to: State Affairs	Neutral - Watching
<a href="#">HB 353</a>	TAXING DISTRICTS – Amends existing law to revise provisions regarding taxing district budget limitations.	1/23 - Reported Printed and Referred to Revenue & Taxation	Neutral - Watching
<a href="#">HB 354</a>	TAXING DISTRICT BUDGETS – Amends existing law to revise provisions regarding a taxing district's process for recovering forgone budget increases.	2/4 - Read Third Time in Full – PASSED - 70-0-0 2/26 - Read third time in full – PASSED - 34-0-1 3/03 - Reported Signed by Governor on March 3, 2020 Effective: 07/01/2020	Support
<a href="#">HB 355</a>	TAXING DISTRICTS – Adds to existing law to freeze taxing district budgets and property tax levies for one year.	1/23 - Reported Printed and Referred to Revenue & Taxation	Moved to HB 409
<a href="#">HB 359</a>	TAXES – Amends existing law to repeal the property tax and to increase the sales tax.	1/27 - Reported Printed and Referred to Ways & Means	Neutral - Watching
<a href="#">HB 360</a>	GROCERY TAX – Adds, repeals, and amends existing law to repeal the tax on the sale of food.	1/27 - Reported Printed and Referred to Ways & Means	Neutral - Watching
<a href="#">SB 1263</a>	WORKER'S COMPENSATION – Amends existing law regarding occupational diseases to remove a sunset provision.	2/11 - Read third time in full – PASSED - 35-0-0 2/24 - Read Third Time in Full – PASSED - 68-0-2 3/2 - Signed by Governor on 03/02/20 Effective: 07/01/2020	Support

Bill Number	Description	Last Action	Support/Opposed
<a href="#">SB 1265</a>	LOCAL GOVERNING ENTITIES CENTRAL REGISTRY – Amends existing law to remove obsolete language, to revise a provision regarding revenues and expenditures, and to remove a provision regarding notification by a local governing entity.	2/13 - Read third time in full – PASSED - 34-0-1 3/18 - U.C. to hold place on third reading calendar one legislative day	Neutral
<a href="#">SB 1277 a</a>	PROPERTY TAXES – Amends existing law to provide requirements for the homestead exemption application form. PROPERTY TAXES – Amends existing law to revise provisions regarding the homeowner exemption.	2/13 - Read third time in full – PASSED - 34-0-1 3/16 - Rules Suspended: Ayes 60 Nays 10 Abs/Excd 0, read in full as required – PASSED - 49-21-0 (after amendment) 3/18- Senate did not Concur in House Amendments	Oppose
<a href="#">SB 1280</a>	CAMPAIGN FINANCE – Amends existing law to revise campaign finance reporting requirements pertaining to candidates for judicial office.	2/18 - CAMPAIGN FINANCE – Amends existing law to revise campaign finance reporting requirements pertaining to candidates for judicial office. 3/4 - Read Third Time in Full – PASSED - 67-0-3 Signed by Governor on 03/09/20 Effective: 03/09/2020	Neutral
<a href="#">HB 408</a>	SALES TAX – Amends existing law to revise the sales tax revenue distribution to cities in Idaho.	2/20- Read Third Time in Full – PASSED - 53-16-1 3/12 - 03/09 Read third time in full – PASSED - 30-4-1 3/18 - Reported Signed by Governor on March 16, 2020 Effective: 07/01/2020	Watching
<a href="#">HB 409a</a>	TAXING DISTRICTS – Adds to existing law to provide a limitation on taxing district budget requests and levies for the year 2020.	2/25 - Read Third Time in Full – PASSED - 46-23-1 3/12 - Read third time as amended in the Senate – FAILED - 11-24-0	Oppose

Bill Number	Description	Last Action	Support/Opposed
<a href="#">SB 1302</a>	LABOR – Amends existing law to provide for mediation, to provide a process for fact-finder selection, and to provide that strikes shall be prohibited during dispute resolution and for two weeks thereafter.	2/10 - Reported Printed; referred to Commerce & Human Resources	Watching
<a href="#">SB 1311</a>	EXPLODING TARGETS – Adds to existing law to provide restrictions regarding the use of exploding targets.	2/11 - Reported Printed; referred to State Affairs	Support
<a href="#">SB 1332</a>	AMBULANCE SERVICE DISTRICTS – Amends and adds to existing law to provide for the formation and governance of any new ambulance service districts.	2/24 - Read third time in full – PASSED - 31-4-0 3/17 - Read Third Time in Full – Previously Read in Full – PASSED - 63-2-5 3/19 - Signed by Governor on 03/19/20 Effective: 07/01/2020	Support
<a href="#">HB 472</a>	IDAHO BUILDING CODE – Amends existing law to revise a certain exemption regarding fire sprinkler systems.	2/11 - Reported Printed and Referred to Business	Oppose
<a href="#">HB 486</a>	AERONAUTICS – Amends existing law to update restrictions on the use of unmanned aircraft systems and to provide for exceptions.	2/26 - Read Third Time in Full – PASSED - 69-0-1 3/17 - Read third time in full – PASSED - 31-0-4 3/20 - Reported Signed by Governor on March 24, 2020 Effective: 07/01/2020	Support, need to add fire districts into language
<a href="#">HB 491</a>	AMBULANCE DISTRICTS – Amends existing law to authorize ambulance districts to enter into cooperative agreements with fire protection districts and others.	2/24 - Read Third Time in Full – PASSED - 68-0-2 3/16 - Read third time in full – PASSED - 34-0-1 3/18 - Reported Signed by Governor on March 18, 2020 Effective: 07/01/2020	Support



Bill Number	Description	Last Action	Support/Opposed
<a href="#">HB 497aa</a>	HEALTH AND WELFARE – Adds to existing law to provide for yellow dots on motor vehicles that contain medical information that may be used by first responders on the scene of an accident or emergency situation.	3/4 - Read third time in full as amended – PASSED - 36-32-2 3/18 - Read third time in full – PASSED - 25-7-3 3/20 - Reported Signed by Governor on March 24, 2020 Effective: 07/01/2020	Neutral
<a href="#">HB 503</a>	HOMEOWNER’S ASSOCIATIONS – Amends existing law to provide limitations on restrictions that homeowner’s associations can put on the display of political signs and certain flags.	3/2 - HOMEOWNER’S ASSOCIATIONS – Amends existing law to provide limitations on restrictions that homeowner’s associations can put on the display of political signs and certain flags. 3/17 - Read third time in full – PASSED - 31-1-3 3/20- Reported Signed by Governor on March 24, 2020 Effective: 07/01/2020	Neutral
<a href="#">HCR030</a>	PERSI – Stating findings of the Legislature and amending the retroactive cost of living adjustment approved by the PERSI board at its December 2019 meeting.	2/7 - Reported Printed and Referred to Commerce & Human Resources	Neutral
<a href="#">SB 1321</a>	WORKER’S COMPENSATION – Amends existing law to provide for a clear and convincing evidentiary standard with respect to intent to harm in a case involving physical aggression.	3/4 - Read third time in full as amended – PASSED - 35-0-0 3/17 - Read Third Time in Full – Previously Read in Full – PASSED - 67-0-3 3/19 - Signed by Governor on 03/19/20 Effective: 07/01/2020	Support
<a href="#">SB 1338aa</a>	PUBLIC RECORDS ACT – Amends existing law to provide that certain personal information shall be exempt from disclosure.	2/28 - Read third time in full as amended – PASSED - 34-0-1 3/17 - Read Third Time in Full – Previously Read in Full – PASSED - 67-0-3 3/19 - Signed by Governor on 03/24/20 Effective: 07/01/2020	Support



Bill Number	Description	Last Action	Support/Opposed
<a href="#">SCR134</a>	PROPERTY TAXES – Stating findings of the Legislature and authorizing a legislative interim study committee on property taxes.	2/20 - Read in full – ADOPTED - 34-0-1 3/11 - Read Third Time in Full – ADOPTED - 65-1-4	Watching
<a href="#">HB 518a</a>	PROPERTY TAXES – Amends existing law to revise provisions regarding property tax notices.	3/20 - Reported Signed by Governor on March 19, 2020 Effective: 07/01/2020	Neutral
<a href="#">HB 530</a>	OPEN MEETINGS – Amends existing law to authorize executive sessions for certain consultations.	2/24 - Reported Printed and Referred to State Affairs	Support
<a href="#">SB 1350 aah</a>	INITIATIVES – Amends existing law to provide for a proposed funding source and fiscal impact statements for ballot initiatives.	2/27 - Read third time in full – PASSED - 28-7-0 3/16 - Rules Suspended: Ayes 69 Nays 0 Abs/Excd 1, read in full as required – PASSED - 55-14-1 3/19 - Read second time as amended in the House, filed for Third Reading Rules Suspended (2/3 Vote - Read in full as required) – Read third time as amended in the House – PASSED - 27-4-4 Signed by Governor on 03/26/20 Effective: 07/01/2020	Watching
<a href="#">SB 1372</a>	FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICTS – Adds to existing law to provide for the division of a fire protection district and to provide for elections for division of a district.	3/5 - Read third time in full – PASSED - 30-2-3 3/18 - U.C. to hold place on third reading calendar one legislative day	Watching

Bill Number	Description	Last Action	Support/Opposed
<a href="#">HB 583</a>	PROTECTION OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES – Amends existing law to revise a provision regarding adverse action by an employer and to provide a limit on certain damages.	3/6 - Rules Suspended: Ayes 66 Nays 0 Abs/Excd 4, read in full as required – PASSED - 56-9-5 3/18 - Read third time in full – PASSED - 31-1-3 3/20 - Reported Signed by Governor on March 24, 2020 Effective: 07/01/2020	Watching
<a href="#">HB 582</a>	CIVIL ACTIONS – Amends existing law to define the term “willful or reckless misconduct.”	3/9 - Rules Suspended: Ayes 66 Nays 0 Abs/Excd 4, read in full as required – PASSED - 67-0-3 3/18 - Read third time in full – PASSED - 31-1-3 Reported Signed by Governor on March 24, 2020 Effective: 07/01/2020	Neutral
<a href="#">HB 601</a>	PUBLIC RECORDS – Amends existing law to provide an exception, to clarify record request requirements, and to provide certain exceptions regarding legislative communications.	3/10 - Rules Suspended: Ayes 67 Nays 0 Abs/Excd 3, read in full as required – PASSED - 42-27-1 3/18 - Read third time in full – PASSED - 27-6-2 3/20 - Reported Signed by Governor on March 30, 2020 Effective: 07/01/2020	Support
<a href="#">SB1362</a>	OPEN MEETINGS – Amends existing law to provide that the Attorney General shall have a certain duty regarding open meetings.	3/5 - Reported out of committee; to 14th Order for amendment	Watching
<a href="#">SB 1416</a>	PROPERTY TAXES – Amends existing law to increase the homeowner exemption to \$120,000 and restore the inflation index.	3/19 - Referred to State Affairs	Watching
<a href="#">SB 1417</a>	PROPERTY TAXES – Amends existing law to revise provisions regarding income limitations and tax reduction amounts for the property tax relief program.	3/18 - Read third time in full – PASSED - 31-1-3 3/19 - Read First Time, Referred to Ways & Means	Watching

## UPCOMING GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

1. Safer Grant—Deadline—May 15th (type safer into keyword)  
(Opportunity Number— [DHS-19-GPD-083-000-99](#) )  
<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/search-grants.html>
2. Fire Prevention and Safety—Deadline— May 29th  
(Opportunity Number— [DHS-19-GPD-044-000-98](#) )  
<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/search-grants.html>
3. FEMA COVID 19 Supplemental Grant—Deadline— May 15th  
(Opportunity Number— [DHS-20-GPD-044-00-99](#) )
4. Rural Fire Capacity Grant Program—Deadline—June 1st  
[www.idl.idaho.gov](http://www.idl.idaho.gov)
5. 2020 Idaho Fire Fighter’s License Plate Fund—Deadline—June 26th  
<http://www.idahofirechiefs.org/Grant-Info>

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