

Winter 2015

The COMMUNIQUE

A Publication of the Oregon Fire District Directors Association

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A Publication of the
Oregon Fire District
Directors Association

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Winter 2015

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Mission Statement

To serve and strengthen through the provision and coordination of timely information, education, and legislation.

Published on a quarterly basis, *The Communique* is the official newsletter of the Oregon Fire District Directors Association. Complimentary subscriptions are provided to member districts and boards. Annual subscriptions may be purchased for \$3.00.

Cover photo courtesy of the Oregon Fire Service Museum
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OFDDA President's Message

By Mark Kreutzer
OFDDA President



Another year has come and gone. It has been my pleasure to represent you as the President of OFDDA. This year's conference was a success as usual. I would like to personally thank Jack Snook for stepping up at the last minute to make a presentation when one of our speakers became unavailable the week before the conference. I would also like to thank your OFDDA staff of Genoa, Jessica, and Laoreal for their hard work not only on the conference, but throughout the year. They have made the job of President much easier.

Jack Snook made a great comment during his presentation. "The fire service is good at being effective but not always efficient." The fire service is very good at operations, fighting fires, and providing EMS, but we are not always efficient in providing these services. For example, if we have the same number of firefighters on duty at night when call volume is low as are on duty during the day, that is not efficient. This is just one example, but as elected officials we need to look outside the box and examine different thoughts and opportunities to be more efficient, including partnerships with adjacent Fire Districts and Special Districts as well to look at cooperative efforts, joint purchasing agreements, shared staff, apparatus maintenance—the list goes on, just use your imagination.

As elected officials, we represent the people, our fire chiefs work for the people. Too often we rely solely on the fire chief for information and recommendations. That is good, but we need to be knowledgeable ourselves, so we can make an informed decision regarding issues of the fire service on a national, state and local level. With our sometime

(Continued on page 7)

Building Bridges

By Dennis D. Rogers
OFDDA President-Elect



Building Bridges is a slow and tedious process. From a good design to a well engineered set of plans followed by the actual building of a bridge with capable hands. Each step takes time and well thought out planning to get to the end product. I see your OFDDA directors somewhat in the same planning and building process for the fire services in our state.

We must always be planning and looking towards the future. In today's world of fast changing technology, ever changing safety requirements and of course the endless reporting that is required to support our actions on the job each and every day, a daunting task to say the least. However with the help of our many supporting groups and agencies, the tasks are made much easier, knowing we have somewhere or someone to get assistance when needed.

As I begin this new year as president of your organization, I too will be looking to and for support from many of you throughout the year to accomplish our goals and objectives. One way each of you can help us accomplish our goals is to renew your membership in the OFDDA. There is power in numbers and it strengthens our voice when we address issues at the legislature and our local government bodies. Along these lines I would like to count on you renewing your membership early when you receive your notice in January. Your membership support is vital to the life of OFDDA.

OFDDA would not be as successful as it is without our very capable staff and past directors' leadership that we have enjoyed over the years. Thanks to Mark Kreutzer's leadership this past year, OFDDA continues to have a strong voice in the fire service throughout the state. Also a big thank you is in order for Genoa Ingram and her staff for making things happen in a very timely process of keeping everyone advised on legislative activities that directly and indirectly affect the fire service.

As the 2016 year begins may our bridge building process continue with each one of us as we serve our individual communities and seek for the betterment of our organizations.

The Legal Beagle:

By Christy Monson

[Local Government Law Group](#)

Most Oregon fire districts already provide generous sick leave benefits to their employees, but you may have heard that a new state law (SB 545, effective January 1) now requires your district to provide *specific* sick leave benefits. Does your sick leave policy comply with this new law? This article provides you with some guidance on how to evaluate your policy and determine whether your policy is already compliant or if you need to make some changes.

Starting January 1, the general rule is that employers with 10 or more employees (outside of Portland) must provide each employee with up to 40 hours of paid sick leave each year. If your District has fewer than 10 employees, you must still provide up to 40 hours of sick leave, but it can be unpaid leave. However, if your district already provides sick leave or any other paid time off and your program is substantially equivalent to or better than the new sick leave benefits in the new law, you do not need to change your program. The big question fire districts are asking is: How do I know if my program is “substantially equivalent?”



First, you (or your legal counsel) should review your entire program to see if it generally meets the new law’s requirements, paying particular attention to the following areas:

- Does your program provide at least one hour of sick leave for every 30 hours worked by a full time employee (employers with less than 10 employees may provide this leave unpaid);
- Can your employees use their sick time under the same or more lenient conditions as are provided in the new law?
- Is your rate of accrual comparable to the new law’s accrual rates?
- Do you provide (at least) quarterly notice of sick leave amount accrued/used?
- Are your qualifying absences similar to the qualifying absences in the new law?
- Are your conditions of notice and documentation similar?
- Do you offer similar employment protections for employees who take sick leave?

Remember also that your district must provide written notice to all employees by the end of your first pay period in 2016. BOLI’s notice form may be obtained at <http://www.oregon.gov/boli/TA/SiteAssets/Lists/FeaturedContent/EditForm/Sick%20Time%20Notification.pdf>. (To better compare your program’s specifics to the new legal requirements, go to <http://www.oregon.gov/boli/TA/docs/2015%20Sick%20Time%20Rules.pdf>.)

If you believe your program does not compare reasonably favorably to the new law or if your district does not provide at least one hour of paid sick leave for every 30 hours worked by a full-time employee, you should call your attorney to review your program and possibly assist you in drafting some amendments to your policies so that it meets the State’s new minimum standards.

Below I provide you with a short Q&A about the new law. If you’d like to read the entire bill, go to <https://olis.leg.state.or.us/liz/2015R1/Downloads/MeasureDocument/SB454/Enrolled>.

Do we need to pay out the sick leave after the employee quits? No, employers are not required to pay out unused sick time at termination.

Which employees qualify for the leave? Almost every type of employee qualifies for this new leave, including full and part-time employees and temporary or seasonal employees. However, certain employees are exempted. For fire districts, the most important exemptions are true independent contractors and work study/vocational education

(Continued on page 7)

Tangent Fire District Named 2015 Fire District of the Year

Excerpted with permission from the [Albany Democrat-Herald](#)
Original publication date 11/12/2015

[Tangent Fire District](#) was honored by the Oregon Fire District Directors Association as the 2015 Fire District of the Year at the recent Oregon Fire Service Conference. The award puts Tangent at the top of 250 fire districts statewide, and marks the first time the district has received the honor.

Fire Chief Scott Casebolt said the award is the direct result of the many volunteers in the district. "We have a very active and dedicated core group of volunteers here," he said. "Volunteer recruitment and retention is a real challenge nationwide, and we actually have a waiting list over here."



Casebolt said the district's volunteers allow for the daily operation, as well as the many district programs, to run smoothly. Such programs include fire safety prevention education at public schools, a monthly school lunch program, a bicycle helmet program, a smoke alarm replacement program, a disaster response team, participation in the Linn-Benton fire investigation team, and a community assistance fund.

OFDDA's District of the Year Award is presented annually to a member district in recognition of innovative and progressive achievements. The 2016 District of the Year Award will be presented at the Oregon Fire Service Conference (October 27-29 in Bend); nomination forms are available at the OFDDA website (www.ofdda.com). Completed nomination forms are due no later than October 7. Please contact the OFDDA office at 1-800-223-9708 if you need additional information.

About that Cover Photo

This issue's cover photo was provided courtesy of the Oregon Fire Service Museum (OFSM). The apparatus is a 1944 Seagrave 85' aerial ladder truck. The truck originally served in Centralia, Washington, and then provided service in Clatskanie, Oregon. At the end of its service life, the truck was purchased by Jeff Dahl, a former OFDDA Board member. After Jeff's passing, his family donated the truck to the OFSM, which restored it in 2005.

The Oregon Fire Service Museum is dedicated to establishing and maintaining a statewide fire museum and is nearing its fundraising goal to construct a permanent museum building at Antique Powerland in Brooks, Oregon. Through the generosity of several fire service organizations and private supporters, the museum's collection of antique and vintage fire trucks, historical photos, and related memorabilia is currently housed at various facilities around the state and largely unavailable for public viewing. With the completion of a permanent structure, the collection will be accessible for all to enjoy.

For additional information about the Museum, visit its website at www.oregonfiremuseum.org. All contributions made to OFSM are tax deductible.



Strengthening Your District's Health Program

Special Districts Insurance Services

Administered by the Special Districts Assn of Oregon

One of the most heavily relied upon benefits your district provides is your health program. Offering a strong health program to your employees not only keeps your staff healthy, but can improve work performance. The SDIS Employee Benefits Program can help you sustain a healthy workforce while putting your mind at ease with solid coverage and a reliable plan. Our plans offer broad provider networks, great brand recognition, and generous wellness benefits at reasonable rates.


As an SDIS participant, you can have confidence in knowing your district is part-owner of a strong program; a program with low loss ratios and extensive benefit offers. Our strength is based on the fact that all surplus funds are reinvested in the program rather than distributed to shareholders. Reinvestment of these funds allows us to maintain stable rates. Last year, we were able to offer health program participants an average **14% decrease** to existing rates. Not only did we reduce our members' out of pocket costs, we were able to expand coverage with better provider networks.

Over 55 of Oregon's fire districts are members of our health program. If your district is not a part of our program, request a quote today by contacting your local insurance agent or Chet Weichman, SDIS Employee Benefits Marketing Consultant, at 800-599-2387.

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Interested in submitting an article or advertising in The Communiqué?

Contact the OFDDA office at info@ofdda.com or 1-800-223-9708.

Save The Dates—Upcoming Oregon Fire Service Events

Dates	Event	Location	Add'l Info
January 26-27	Train the Trainer: Become a Certified Instructor for CPR, First Aid, and AEDs	Klamath Falls	sdao.com
February 5-7	Specials Districts Assn of Oregon Conference	Sunriver Resort	sdao.com
March 2-4	Northwest Leadership Seminar	Red Lion-Jantzen Beach, Portland	nwleadershipseminar.com
April 7-8	Oregon Fire Service Office Administrators Workshop	Tualatin Valley Fire & Rescue	ofsoa.com (coming soon)

Hermiston Fire & Emergency Services Receives Grant

OFDDA congratulates [Hermiston Fire & Emergency Services](#) as a recipient of grant monies from the [Wildhorse Foundation](#) (Pendleton). The \$18,165 award was part of the Foundation's third quarter grants, which totaled \$201,447. Hermiston Fire has earmarked the grant for purchasing and installing mobile reporting hardware in each of the district's ambulances. The system provides precise time documentation when medication or procedures are provided and can be linked to cardiac monitors to download relevant patient vital signs.

President's Message (continued)

hectic lives, it seems impossible to be up to speed on all issues that affect our districts. It is incumbent upon us as elected officials to be at least aware, if not knowledgeable of the issues. Stay informed—that is what the people who elected us expect.

I welcome incoming President Dennis Rodgers and am confident OFDDA will continue to be a leader in the fire service for elected officials and all members of the fire service community. Thank you for your continued support of OFDDA.

Legal Beagle (continued)

workers (such as fire science students).

Employees can use the leave for their own illness or health condition, for a family member's illness or health condition, or for absences due to domestic violence, harassment, sexual assault, or stalking. (Remember that other leave laws, such as OFLA and FMLA leave, ADA leave, and worker's compensation leave may also apply, depending on your individual situation.) You may still verify an employee's prolonged sickness by requiring a physician's note.

How does the leave accrue? Under the new law, employees accrue one hour of sick time for every 30 hours worked--up to a cap of 40 hours per year. Accrual begins on the employee's first day of work. Qualifying employees may expend sick leave after their 90th day of work. Your district may establish an earlier date for leave expenditure. You can also establish greater accrual caps or more generous leave policies. If your employees accrue sick time each month, you must allow them to carry over up to 40 hours of unused sick time each year. If your employees accrue sick leave in a lump sum, you are not required to allow carry over.

Where do I go for more information? BOLI's frequently asked questions regarding the new law may be found at http://www.oregon.gov/boli/TA/Pages/T_FAQ_OregonSickTime.aspx

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Feb 2013

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