

The **COMMUNIQUE**

JULY-AUGUST 2010

A Publication of the Oregon Fire District Directors Association

Volunteer CONFERENCE

**Oregon Incident
REPORTING**

On the Cutting Edge

Membership Asked to Approve Bylaws Amendments *Page 3*

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A publication of the Oregon Fire District Directors Association.

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JULY-AUGUST 2010
VOLUME 29 – ISSUE 4

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

SK2R
Publishing

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Beaverton, OR 97008
503-941-9513

Publisher
Ken Raddle

Senior Graphic Designer
Sharon M. Hildebrandt

Published bi-monthly, The Communique is the official newsletter of the OFDDA. Complimentary subscriptions are provided to member districts and boards. Annual subscriptions may be purchased for \$3.
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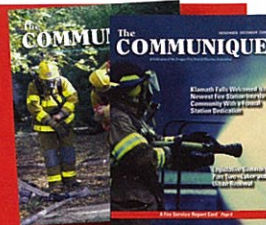


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Not Too Early to Prepare for Conference

By Connie L. Barton



OFDDA President Connie L. Barton

This year I have had the opportunity to participate in some of the planning for the 2010 OFDDA/OFCA Joint Conference scheduled for November 11-13 in Bend. If you have not yet made your room reservations at your hotel of choice, you'll want to do so soon, as the hotels tend to fill up very quickly.

By now you should have received your "Save the Date" notification, reminding you to mark your calendars and plan to attend. This year we've moved the Directors Toolbox to just after noon on Saturday, making it the last event of the Conference. This will allow all

Conference attendees the ability to leave early or mid-afternoon, making your travel less hazardous.

Additionally, the Conference Committee has planned for some amazing speakers as well as plenty of social and networking opportunities. Watch the OFDDA website for additional information regarding the Conference Schedule and to register online.

OFDDA will be conducting some important business during the Conference. We will be asking our membership to approve Bylaw changes summarized in this edition of the Communiqué. A

copy of the amendments appears on the OFDDA website for your review, as required.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Bylaws Committee: Kevin VanDyke of Forest Grove Fire, David Jones of Jefferson Fire, and especially our Committee Chair Don Trotter of Clackamas Fire District 1 who spent countless hours researching and drafting the proposed changes. It is our hope that these amendments will provide clarity and certainty to our governing process and help us better serve you, our members. ♦

Membership Asked to Approve Bylaws Amendments

During the past year, the OFDDA Board of Directors undertook an extensive review of its governing documents, particularly the OFDDA Bylaws. The Bylaws require that amendments be made available to the membership at least 30 days prior to a vote on the changes at the annual Joint Conference, or 60 days if voting by ballot outside of Conference.

The proposed Bylaw amendments have been prominently posted on the OFDDA website at www.ofdda.com for review. In summary, the amended document addresses the following issues:

1. Clarifies Association membership and certain membership rights;
2. Provides clarity and certainty with regard to OFDDA leadership advancement through the chairs;
3. Clarifies provisions relating to quorums;
4. Provides clarity and certainty of provisions relating to Board vacancies;
5. Provides clarity and certainty of provisions relating Board nominations and elections;
6. Provides additional oversight regarding Association accounting and finance;
7. Provides flexibility in adoption of amendments to Bylaws

Please take time to review the proposed changes in their entirety and be prepared to vote on them in November. If you have questions, contact a member of the Board or OFDDA staff at 1-800-223-9708.



Driving Defensively

More than 41,000 people lose their lives in motor vehicle crashes each year and over two million more suffer disabling injuries, according to the National Safety Council. The triple threat of high speeds, impaired or careless driving and not using occupant restraints threatens every driver—regardless of how careful or how skilled.

Driving defensively means not only taking responsibility for yourself and your actions but also keeping an eye on “the other guy.” The National Safety Council suggests the following guidelines to help reduce your risks on the road.

- Don't start the engine without securing each passenger in the car, including children and pets. Safety belts save thousands of lives each year! Lock all doors.
- Remember that driving too fast or too slow can increase the likelihood of collisions.

- Don't kid yourself. If you plan to drink, designate a driver who won't drink. Alcohol is a factor in almost half of all fatal motor vehicle crashes.
- Be alert! If you notice that a car is straddling the center line, weaving, making wide turns, stopping abruptly or responding slowly to traffic signals, the driver may be impaired.
- Avoid an impaired driver by turning right at the nearest corner or exiting at the nearest exit. If it appears that an oncoming car is crossing into your lane, pull over to the roadside, sound the horn and flash your lights.
- Notify the police immediately after seeing a motorist who is driving suspiciously.



- Follow the rules of the road. Don't contest the “right of way” or try to race another car during a merge. Be respectful of other motorists.
- Don't follow too closely. Always use a “three-second following distance” or a “three-second plus following distance.”
- While driving, be cautious, aware and responsible.

Following these tips will help assure safe arrival at your destination!

If your organization needs Defensive Driving Training, please contact Loss Control Specialist Ryan Massey at 541-284-5851 or by email at rmassey@whainsurance.com. ♦

OVFA President's Message

First off I would like to say how thankful I am that you have in-trusted me to lead our organization for the next year and just how very humbling that is not to mention that it's down right intimidating also. Over the past several years the OVFA has been going through some changes and that's to be expected as change is the one constant in our lives so it shouldn't be any different for your organization. How we deal with these changes is how we will have to measure our success.

The Board has taken a very proactive and progressive approach on how to deal with these changes. We (OVFA) have had to redefine who we are and how we are going to approach the future of our organization. The past leaders of this organization have built us up and brought us into the lime light of the fire service in Oregon and Nationally. It is my intent and the rest of

the Board's intent to not let that falter. Too much hard work and dedication has gone into bringing us to this point. I have to say that with the state of the economy and the world today we can't do things like we have in the past, the board has made a commitment that every decision you entrust us to make on your behalf will be made with forethought and what is best for us and how it will impact us in the future.

Hopefully by now you have heard the message we have been putting out there for all the volunteer firefighters in our state to hear and that is: representation for all, more members, more conference attendee's, better fiscal management and planning for the future. I truly believe that if we are successful with these redefined guidelines we will continue to be a strong organization that others will turn to. The Board of Directors is committed to make



Scott Mullen, OVFA President

this happen, but we can not make this happen by ourselves so please if you can do anything for our organization contact anyone of us and we'll let you know how to help and we can continue to grow and strengthen. I am proud to be a part of the Oregon Volunteer Firefighters Association and I truly hope you are to, so I truly look forward to working with you and for you to make our organization the best it can be.

Thank You

The Changing Landscape for Employers Conducting Background Checks



By J. Kenneth Jones, Carolyn H. Connelly, Christy K. Monson and Ross M. Williamson
Local Government Law Group, PC, a member of Speer Hoyt, LLC.

Information obtained from a consumer reporting agency is often used by Fire District employers as part of a background check on applicants for employment. Employers can learn about an applicant's previous employers, financial history, and conviction history, among other things. Now, in addition to existing federal regulations, Oregon employers must also comply with new state legislation that will likely change how background investigations are conducted.

For several years, Oregon employers have operated under the federal Fair Credit Reporting Act ("FCRA") which sets limits on employers obtaining information concerning prospective employees from consumer reporting agencies. Under FCRA, employers must get consent before making certain background inquiries. FCRA also places several requirements on employers when information from a consumer reporting agency is used to make an employment decision. For instance, if an employer decides not to hire an applicant based upon information obtained from a consumer reporting agency, there are requirements under FCRA as to how the employer communicates that information to the prospective employee.

These FCRA requirements have been in place for quite a while, and should already be part of your hiring practices if you use information from a consumer reporting agency. However, even if you are up-to-date on FCRA requirements, other changes in your hiring practices are now required.

The 2010 Oregon Legislature took FCRA regulations a step (or two) further. As of July 1, Senate Bill 1045 is in effect.

SB 1045 forbids employers, including government employers, from obtaining or using credit history information (such as that on a credit report) for employment purposes, unless an exception is applicable. Specifically, the new law establishes that it is an unlawful employment practice for an employer to "obtain or use for employment purposes information contained in the credit history of an applicant for employment or an employee." "Credit

statutes to allow applicants and employees to file State Bureau of Labor and Industries claims and bring civil lawsuits for violations.

As applied to Fire Districts, the exceptions under SB 1045 will not come into play very often. A Fire District would likely be able to consider a credit report as part of the hiring process to fill a treasurer or finance director position. However, if a District wants to rely on an exception, the District should first consult with legal counsel.

The passage of SB 1045 means it

As a result of this new legislation, Fire Districts should not request (either from the applicant or from a consumer reporting agency) information related to an applicant's credit history.

history" is defined as "any written or other communication of any information by a consumer reporting agency that bears on a consumer's creditworthiness, credit standing or credit capacity."

As a result of this new legislation, Fire Districts should not request (either from the applicant or from a consumer reporting agency) information related to an applicant's credit history. To force compliance with these new rules, the Legislature also amended applicable state

is once again time to take stock of your personnel policies and hiring practices. If you do not have a specific personnel policy concerning background checks, you need one. You can still use consumer credit agencies as part of your background investigation; you just need to be careful about what information you request. We encourage you to contact your legal counsel so that you can avoid the severe sanctions that go along with violations of these new requirements. ♦



Oregon Incident Reporting: On the Cutting Edge



On January 1, 2010, the Office of State Fire Marshal (OSFM) launched Oregon Fire Bridge™, a real-time, secure, online database which houses fire incident data for Oregon's fire agencies. Replacing a static database that had become obsolete after 13 years of use, Fire Bridge™ positions our state at the cutting edge of incident reporting. The system is user-friendly and has numerous features that advance the accuracy, consistency, and completeness of Oregon fire data.

The OSFM intends Fire Bridge™ to be an administrative tool for fire agencies, not just a reporting method. The system not only has automated forms to record and report incident information, but also provides record-keeping and tracking of staff, equipment, inspections, pre-planning, activities, training, and compensation. In addition, the system allows users to generate

reports to help individual fire departments and districts evaluate response time, fire causes, and other operational areas.

Fire agencies have their own secure online accounts in Fire Bridge™, which they access via usernames and passwords provided to select staff members. Hundreds of fire service personnel throughout the state have participated in Fire Bridge training workshops conducted by the OSFM. In addition, many departments and districts conduct in-house training sessions using the OSFM's Fire Bridge™ training website.

As of June 30, 2010, 162 fire agencies are actively using Fire Bridge™, and an additional 51 agencies' data is imported

into Fire Bridge from another program. More than 60,000 incidents, including nearly 2,500 fires, have been reported in Fire Bridge™.

The fire service, OSFM, and outside agencies all have critical needs for incident data. By making this user-friendly, highly accessible reporting tool available to Oregon fire agencies, the OSFM furthers its goal of having 100% of Oregon fire departments and districts reporting their incidents to the state.

The OSFM's Data Unit offers one-on-one Fire Bridge™ training. For more information or to schedule training, contact the OSFM's Data Unit staff at (503) 373-1540, extensions 234 or 244. ♦

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Firefighters Conference Brings Hundreds to Hermiston

By Jennifer Colton, Reporter,
The Hermiston Herald

Rocky cliffs, crumpled cars, burning buildings and out of control vehicles met firefighters from across the state this week as the Oregon Volunteer Firefighters Association annual conference descended on Hermiston.

More than 100 volunteer firefighters traveled to Hermiston last week for the conference and training. Classes ranged from industrial rescue to wildland practice, flammable liquids to fire science, skid avoidance to fire investigation. At Bert's Auto Salvage, firefighters tore apart cars in a vehicle extrication class, and at Pioneer Seed and on the Hermiston Butte, class participants took part in "high angle rescue," repelling off heights.

"Every morning they have a breakfast and a business meeting, that goes until 9:30, and then the classes start at 10 or so and they go until 5 p.m.," Hermiston Fire & Rescue assistant chief Scott Stanton said. "It can be pretty intense."

OVFA president Scott Mullen said the conference is held all over the state and the hosting department helps dictate what classes are offered.

"Hermiston stepped up and said they would like to host it this year," he said. "We sit down with the hosting department and see what classes they would like to hold, what classes have been successful and what classes are important to take at the time. This is the only conference for volunteer firefighters. It gives them an excellent opportunity for kinds of different trainings, and we conduct association business every day, like passing of bylaws and constitutional changes."

For the 2010 conference, new programs included skid avoidance - simulations and apparatus allowed participants to learn to control a 20,000 pound Ford F-650 crew cab truck in various conditions - and the fire science class, which gave participants college credit to study the chemistry and physics of fire.



Photo by Jennifer Colton

Firefighters prepare a "victim" to go over the edge of the Hermiston Butte during a high-angle training class Friday afternoon.

"One of the other classes that's kind of unique this year is the National Fire Volunteer Council, which is our national representative for volunteers, is providing a class free of charge on being heart healthy and providing firefighters with greater health and wellness knowledge. They are doing six state association conferences, and ours was chosen, so that's pretty cool," Mullen said.

About 110 firefighters registered to take classes during the conference, and 18 of those opted for a class Mullen described as action-packed: high-angle rescue. From nine departments across the state, the class participants learned the use of rope, rescue equipment and mechanical advantage systems in rescuing victims only accessible from above or below steep inclines. Jim Bolton, of Reno, Nev., instructed the class.

"It's been going well. The weather's cooperating, which is great," Bolton said Friday afternoon from the top of the Butte. "Very few of these people have ever

met before, and we're putting them in a dangerous situation. They learn to work together and become a team in just a couple of days. They learn to trust each other and to trust the equipment. It's a lot of fun for everybody."

When not in the classroom or in the field, conference participants also experienced a memorial service, vendor show, barbecue, golf tournament and a banquet.

"Hermiston and the surrounding fire districts should be credited for this. Without them, we can't pull this off," Mullen said. "They do a lot of the leg work for us, and keep it going. They've just been absolutely wonderful to work with."

Next year's OVFA conference will be in Lincoln City.

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