

News & Risk Management Review

WINTER 2024



S|D|A|O

SPECIAL DISTRICTS
ASSOCIATION OF OREGON

Contents

SDAO

- 4 SDAO Annual Conference
- 6 SDAO Internship Grant Program
- 8 Important Membership Dues Update
- 9 Academy Certificate Recipients
- 10 Public Meetings Law Update
- 11 Switching to a .gov Domain
- 12 Recreational Immunity Ends for Improved Trails
- 14 Legislative Update
- 16 Special Districts Consulting Services Update
- 17 SDAO Board Member Spotlight
- 18 Sponsor A Public Fellow

SDIS

- 20 Risk Management Process Series: Follow Up
- 22 Board of Trustees Spotlight
- 23 Bike Lanes
- 24 Cyber Coverage and Longevity Credit Program
- 25 Benefits of Virtual Mental Health Care
- 26 Flexibility: Today's Workplace Necessity
- BC Member Calendar





SDAO Board of Directors

President

Todd Heidgerken, Clackamas River Water

Vice President

Ben Stange, Polk County Fire District #1

Secretary

Emily Robertson, Multnomah County Drainage District #1

Treasurer

Kathy Kleczek, Union Health District

Past-President

Michele Bradley, Port of Tillamook Bay

Board Members

Nick Bakke, Rogue Valley Sewer Services

Adam Denlinger, Seal Rock Water District

Jennifer Holland, Sisters Park & Recreation District

Paula Miranda, Port of Newport

Meg Spencer, Siuslaw Public Library District

Scott Stanton, Umatilla County Fire District #1

Brent Stevenson, Santiam Water Control District

Next Board of Directors Meeting

February 7th | 1pm | Seaside, OR

Executive Director

Frank Stratton

Services

Awards, Education and Training, Internship Grant, Legislative, Research and Technical Assistance, Scholarship and Grant Fund, and SDAO Advisory Services, LLC

Contact

Main Office

PO Box 12613 | Salem OR 97309-0613

Toll-Free: 800-285-5461

Phone: 503-371-8667

Email: sdao@sdao.com | Web: www.sdao.com

Claims Office

PO Box 23879 | Tigard OR 97281-3879

Toll-Free: 800-305-1736

Phone: 503-670-7066



2024 SDAO ANNUAL CONFERENCE

REGISTRATION OPEN!

By Frank Stratton, Executive Director



Registration is now open for the 2024 SDAO Annual Conference!

The conference will take place on the northern coast in beautiful Seaside. With 20 educational sessions and multiple opportunities for interacting with colleagues through business meetings, caucus meetings, networking receptions and more, you will want to be sure to join us.

MORE INFORMATION & HOW TO REGISTER

Registration is now open and available online through our conference registration website. Please visit <https://cvent.me/XRYXZr> to register and for more information including session descriptions, speaker information, and more.

REGISTRATION RATES FOR SDAO MEMBERS AND SDIS AGENTS

**Nonmember Rate: Add \$100*

Registration	Price
Pre-Conference Session (Full Day)	\$85
Pre-Conference Session (Half Day)	\$50
One Day Only Experience (Friday <i>OR</i> Saturday)	\$140
Full Onsite Experience (Includes Thursday evening to Sunday morning)	\$230



REGISTER NOW!
<https://cvent.me/XRYXZr>

HOTEL INFORMATION

We have been notified that many of our room blocks are full. Luckily, there are several hotel options in Seaside outside of these blocks. Another suggestion would be to check mid-to-late January as many cancellations happen at this time.

Best Western Plus Ocean View Resort | 414 N Prom

Rates range from \$110-270/night + tax

Book by Phone: 800-234-8439 and press "0".

Book Online: <https://tinyurl.com/4j2rxjpy>.

Rivertide Suites | 102 N Holladay

Rates range from \$139-229/night + tax

Book by Phone: 877-871-8433

Inn at Seaside | 441 2nd Ave

WED - THURS rates range: \$84-118/night + tax

FRI - SAT rates range: \$140-180/night + tax

Book by Phone: 503-738-9581

Holiday Inn Express & Suites | 34 N Holladay Dr

WED - THURS rate: \$140/night + tax

FRI - SAT rates: \$170/night + tax

Book by Phone: 503-717-8000

Mention Group: Special Districts Association of Oregon

CANCELLATION

Registrations must be canceled by February 1, 2024 for a full refund. No shows will be charged the full registration amount. To cancel your registration, you may do so using the link in your confirmation email or by contacting SDAO Member Services at memberservices@sdao.com or **800-285-5461**.

THANK YOU TO OUR PLATINUM SPONSORS



REGISTER NOW!
<https://cvent.me/XRYXZr>



SDAO INTERNSHIP

Grant Program

Application Deadline:
5pm on Friday, April 12, 2024

Applications are now being accepted for the 2024 SDAO Internship Grant Program! Essential and critical to Oregon's communities, special districts deliver much-needed services while also supporting their local workforce. In addition, many districts offer summer internships to college-level students in their area who are seeking to learn more about local government careers. SDAO recognizes and supports these efforts by providing matching grants through the SDAO Internship Grant Program.

Through this program, interns must be hired by the district as temporary employees to be in compliance with wage and hour laws relative to compensating student interns. A freshman through junior college-level student will need to be hired to qualify for funding of this grant.

The maximum grant per district is \$3,000; the funding must be matched by the district by 50%. For example, you may be eligible to receive up to \$3,000 on your request for a project that will cost your district \$6,000 or more. You may be eligible to receive up to a maximum of \$2,100 on your request for a project that will cost your district



"Thankfully, because of her tireless work, we were able to identify a very important ordinance that needs to be written and one of our policies that needs to be rescinded. She organized the manuals in such a way that we can see the history of each regulation and policy."

Ana Linden
Corbett Water District



“Throughout my internship, I learned more than I could ever have imagined. I realized immediately how vital building trust with coworkers and communication is in the workforce. My exceptional managers and coworkers set a prime example for me on problem-solving in different situations. I am very grateful for my time here at West Extension Irrigation District and hope I made a difference.”

Emma Mueller

Intern-West Extension Irrigation District

\$4,200. SDAO may not fund all grant requests. This grant is not intended to fund routine maintenance needs or normal staffing requirements.

The SDAO Awards Committee will review each application to determine which projects are eligible to receive funding. Funds will be disbursed by July 1, 2024.

To be considered, your completed Internship Grant Program application must be received by



“Marion County Fire District No. 1 wishes to express our sincere appreciation to the Special District’s Association of Oregon for their continued support of the fire service and in particular our fire district. These grants are widely needed and greatly appreciated.”

Kyle McMann

Marion County Fire District No. 1

SDAO by 5pm on Friday, April 12, 2024. Submit your completed application by mail to SDAO, PO Box 12613, Salem, Oregon 97309; by e-mail to sdao@sdao.com; or by fax to 503-371-4781. Attach a separate sheet if necessary. Learn more and download the Internship Grant Program application at www.sdao.com/internship-grant-program.

IMPORTANT SDAO MEMBERSHIP DUES UPDATE



When our association was formed in 1979, our purpose was to advocate at the state legislature on behalf of special districts in Oregon. Since that time, we have grown exponentially, offering a wide variety of programs and services to members. This expansion also included the formation of the Special Districts Insurance Services (SDIS) Trust, your self-insured risk pool for special districts in the state. While SDAO administers SDIS, they are two separate entities. Though separate, our programs and services are very much connected.

DUES HISTORY

At the inception of the association, membership dues were calculated based on budget. Our founders found this to be the most equitable solution – and is a model that most associations similar to ours use today. As we became more involved with the administration of the insurance pool, we chose to combine SDAO membership dues with SDIS insurance contributions. While this was administratively easier to do, SDAO dues should have remained separate. In 2014, after a legal opinion, we again separated dues from insurance contributions.

With this separation, we tried a new model of calculating dues using a percentage of insurance contributions. While this worked for several years, it is now not an equitable solution.

DUES CALCULATION CHANGES

With the change of removing workers' compensation coverage from the SDIS program, we felt this would be a good time to re-evaluate the dues calculation and structure. Beginning with the 2025 calendar year, SDAO will return to a budget-based dues formula.

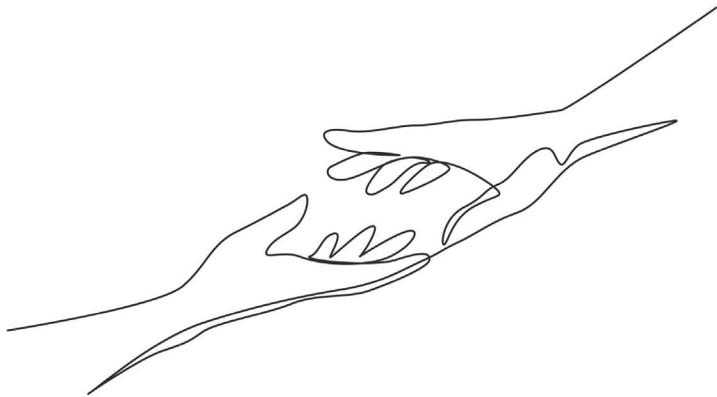
In January, we will be sending out notices to all members with the new dues calculation including what your exact dues amount will be. Many members will see an increase from previous years – some more substantial than others. Other districts may see no impact or even a substantial decrease. We understand that this can make a significant impact on your budgeting, so we are hopeful that communicating this to you before budget discussions begin will help with the process.



MEMBERSHIP IN SDAO

Your membership in SDAO supports advocacy efforts at the state and federal level, as well as many association programs and services. These include education and training, research and technical assistance, Scholarship and Grant Fund, Internship Grant Program, access to SDAO Advisory Services and SDAO Consulting Services, and discounts for grant writing assistance and website hosting. Membership in SDAO is required for insurance through SDIS.

Thank you for your membership in SDAO and SDIS. Please watch for the notice that will be mailed and emailed to your district's key contact in January.



Congratulations

TO OUR RECENT ACADEMY
CERTIFICATE RECIPIENTS!

Board Leadership Academy Certificate Recipients



Matthew Dolphin
*Chehalem Park and
Recreation District*



Heath Foott
*Sisters Park and
Recreation District*

Sherry French

Clackamas River Water



Congratulations to the following
districts for being named in the
**Oregon Business Magazine's Top
100 Best Nonprofits to Work For!**

#31 (Large Organizations) Emerald
PUD

#27 (Medium Organizations)
Columbia River PUD



PUBLIC MEETINGS LAW UPDATE

BY: SUSAN MYERS, OREGON GOVERNMENT ETHICS COMMISSION

House Bill **2805 (2023)** gave the Oregon Government Ethics Commission (OGEC) the authority to enforce the Public Meetings Law (**ORS 192.610 to 192.690**) and to provide trainings on Public Meetings Law.

Enforcement - As previously explained, there are new mandatory prerequisites that must be satisfied before one can file a Public Meetings Law complaint (including executive session complaints) with OGEC. One must first file a written grievance with the public body within 30 days of the alleged violation. Then one must give the public body up to 21 days to respond to the written grievance. Only after these prerequisites are satisfied can one file the complaint with OGEC.

House Bill 2805 also added a new requirement. A public body, upon receipt of a written grievance, must send OGEC a copy of the written grievance, along with their response. These documents should be sent to OGEC via email to this address: **pbgr@ogec.oregon.gov**

More information about OGEC's Public Meetings Law enforcement process can be found on OGEC's website: **<https://www.oregon.gov/ogec/Public-Meetings-Law/Pages/default.aspx>**

Training - House Bill 2805 added a new mandatory training requirement for every member of a governing body of a public body with total expenditures of \$1 million or more per fiscal year. These governing body members must receive Public Meetings Law training at least once during their term of office.

Beginning in January 2024, OGEC's trainers will begin providing Public Meetings Law trainings and will be coordinating with agencies, other groups, and associations to ensure the availability of Public Meetings Law trainings throughout the state. If you would like to receive updates on OGEC's Public Meetings Law Trainings, you can sign up for OGEC's Public Meetings Law Trainings email list on OGEC's website: **<https://www.oregon.gov/ogec/Public-Meetings-Law/Pages/Training-Review.aspx>**

OGEC will also be reviewing and approving the Public Meetings Law trainings offered by other agencies, groups, and organizations, including the Special Districts Association of Oregon (SDAO). OGEC will begin reviewing and approving the training curriculum in January 2024. If you would like more information about this process, please contact Stephanie Heffner, OGEC's Curriculum & Training Coordinator: **stephanie.heffner@ogec.oregon.gov**





Switching your district's website to a .gov domain for both your website and email sounds like a daunting task. However, there are many benefits associated with transferring over. Since it is a domain that is only available to US-based government organizations, using it signals trust and credibility and it strengthens cybersecurity.

"Using .gov and increasing trust that government communications are authentic will improve our collective cybersecurity," said Eric Goldstein, Executive Assistant Director for CISA's Cybersecurity Division. "People see a .gov website or email address and know they are interacting with an official, U.S.-based government organization. Using .gov also provides security benefits, like two-factor authentication on the .gov registrar and notifications of DNS changes to administrators, over other TLDs [top-level domains]. We'll endeavor to make the TLD more secure for the American public and harder for malicious actors to impersonate."

For more information on switching to the .gov domain, please download these handy guides that our friends at Streamline have put together.

[Special District .gov Guide \(Full Version\) \(https://tinyurl.com/2p9dppx8\)](https://tinyurl.com/2p9dppx8)

[Special District .gov Guide \(Shorter Version\) \(https://tinyurl.com/565bwwd3\)](https://tinyurl.com/565bwwd3)

If your district is currently using Streamline, they have a Streamline-specific guide and a .gov application template on their Knowledge Base that you can follow to apply for a .gov domain. You can also reach out to support@getstreamline.com directly; they are always happy to help where they can.

A person in a brown jacket is walking away from the camera on a dirt trail. The trail leads down to a sandy beach. In the background, there are large, dark, rocky cliffs and some greenery. The overall scene is outdoors and scenic.

**RECREATIONAL
IMMUNITY
ENDS FOR
IMPROVED
TRAILS**

On July 6, the Oregon Court of Appeals issued an opinion in the case of Fields v. City of Newport effectively ending recreational immunity for improved trails. Public and private landowners of improved trails are no longer protected from lawsuits.

In this case, the Oregon Court of Appeals decided that there is a factual dispute between Plaintiff Fields and the City as to whether her use of the trail was recreational, or whether her primary purpose was instead for “accessing the beach”. In other words, the Court of Appeals held that the trial court needed to hold a jury trial to determine whether the plaintiff’s principal purpose on the trail was accessing the beach, or to recreate while using the trail with a friend and their dogs while they “socialized.”

Either way, recreational immunity no longer stops a case at the beginning (an “immunity” from suit), because any plaintiff can claim their “principal purpose” was not to recreate.

This case was taken to the Oregon Supreme Court who, on October 5, declined to review the Court of Appeals’ decision. This action, called “review denied” functions as a de facto endorsement by the Oregon Supreme Court of the Oregon Court of Appeals’ decision. The protection from lawsuits that landowners relied on in deciding to open their land to the public is now likely gone for all trails. In fact, it may be gone for any property that someone can claim they were “just passing through”.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR **SPECIAL DISTRICTS**

1. Improved trails that are used to access a recreational area should be inspected on a regular basis and closed if any trip and fall hazards can’t be immediately mitigated. This especially includes trails, walkways and stairs used to access bodies of water, such as the ocean, lakes, rivers, streams and reservoirs.
2. Consider closing unimproved trails that can’t be maintained on a regular basis, because the subjective intent of the user can now nullify recreational immunity, which means if someone is injured on an unimproved trail, the district may find itself facing a costly jury trial to determine the injured person’s intent in using the trail.
3. Speak with your attorney about how Fields v. Newport could negatively affect your other recreational offerings to the public. For instance, someone who trips in a park can now say their primary purpose in using the park was not recreation, but rather they were simply passing through the park to access some other area in your jurisdiction.
4. Audit property you decide to leave open because it is not conducive to a claim from someone “just passing through”, to ensure your facility is protected as much as possible from liability claims. Our risk management team can assist you with this assessment.
5. Consider requiring people to sign a form affirming they are using the property only for recreational purposes if your organization can afford to post someone at that location (at a skate park, for example).
6. Contact your legislator and express your desire to keep property free and open to everyone in Oregon for recreational activities.

In 2024, League of Oregon Cities and the Association of Oregon Counties will attempt to introduce a bill to restore recreational immunity. SDAO is planning to support this bill; however, we also need the support of our members. You are highly encouraged to contact your local legislator to express your desire to restore recreational immunity and minimize the impact of unnecessary lawsuits against Oregon’s local governments. To find your legislators, you can enter your address into the State of Oregon’s Legislator Lookup Tool.

For assistance in assessing your property and mitigating this new heightened risk, please reach out to SDAO Risk Management at riskmanagement@sdao.com.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



20
23

By: Hasina Wittenberg

Government Relations Strategies Inc.

NOVEMBER 2023 ELECTION RESULTS

There were 56 local measures sent to voters for consideration during the November 2023 election. 40% of the measures were local levies and almost all (95%) were approved. 100% of county measures passed, 40% of city measures passed and 83% of special district measures passed. There were also nine bond measures that passed (66% overall success rate). A summary of the five categories of measures and their results can be found on our website at www.sdao.com/legislative-update-january-2024.

2024 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Prior to convening for a maximum of 35-day 2024 legislative session on February 5th the legislature will meet for “interim committee days” January 10-12, 2024. Some legislative concepts will be made public during interim days with the majority of legislation made public around the 29th of January. A calendar of 2024 session deadlines can be found linked on our website at www.sdao.com/legislative-update-january-2024.

Governor Kotek continues to reiterate her commitment to addressing housing and homelessness as priorities for the 2024 legislative session. It is also expected that several other topics will receive consideration including:

- Ballot Measure 110 Repeal/Fix
- Ransomware and Internet Security
- Involuntary Commitment
- Professional Employer Organizations
- Taxes and Electric Vehicles
- Local Journalism
- Community College Funding
- Vehicle Taxes

More information on these topics including links to respective articles can be found on our website at www.sdao.com/legislative-update-january-2024.





SPECIAL DISTRICTS CONSULTING SERVICES UPDATE

"LET US LOVE WINTER, FOR IT IS THE SPRING OF GENIUS." --PIETRO ARETINO

The consulting services team has been busy this year assisting our members with board trainings, organizational assessments, recruitments, and procurement support services. We are looking forward to the new year and new opportunities to assist you and your organization.

We are excited to announce we will be offering a non-CEO recruitment service beginning in the new year. This service is similar to our management recruitment service, however instead of assisting the board of directors with hiring their one employee, we will assist the CEO with hiring their management positions. Please reach out if this is something you are interested in talking to us more about.

As we head into a new year, start thinking about getting your board practices assessment (BPA) and organizational assessment scheduled. These two services are typically very popular, and the calendar fills up quickly.

The board practices assessment is conducted in a 90-minute on-site facilitated meeting with the full board and management/staff personnel who normally participate in the board's meetings. The BPA is a self-assessment process in which participants will evaluate the board's effectiveness in key performance areas to identify strengths and weaknesses in the board's governance practices. Within a week following the meeting, the board will receive a written summary of their self-assessment along with a document called Consultant's Impressions and Recommendations.

The organizational assessment is an evaluation that will provide a baseline assessment of the current conditions and current services of the organization. SDAO will conduct an organizational analysis of the district based on specific elements, stakeholder input, organization overview, management component, financial controls, and more. The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the agency's operations and make recommendations on future improvements.

The Consulting Services team is always looking for new ways that we can assist our members. If there is a service you are needing and you are not sure if we offer it, please call us.

Members in the general liability program are eligible for up to eight hours of free consulting services each year provided by a team of experienced consultants. After the eight hours of complimentary service is exhausted, members will have the option of continuing consulting services at a reduced hourly rate. Members that are not in the general liability program can access the program at the reduced hourly rate, however, are not eligible for the free 8 hours of consulting services.

Please visit <https://www.sdao.com/consulting-services-program> to learn more about the services we provide, our consultants and how we may be able to assist your district.

Happy holidays, we look forward to hearing from you soon.

~Shanta Carter

For more information about the Consulting Services Program and the services we offer, please contact us at sdaoconsultingservices@sdao.com or 800-305-1736.

SDAO BOARD MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



WHAT ROLE DO YOU SERVE AT YOUR SPECIAL DISTRICT AND HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WITH THEM?

I have been the Library Director of the Siuslaw Public Library District for just over a decade, now. Our library district is headquartered in Florence, with a second location in Mapleton.

WHY DID YOU SEEK TO JOIN THE SDAO BOARD OF DIRECTORS?

I believe special districts are a great form of government, and I see more and more libraries transitioning to this governance/funding model throughout Oregon. When I learned there was an opening on the board, I wanted to apply both because I have learned so much about administering a special district from SDAO, and also because I am a total nerd for public administration!

HOW HAS SDAO/SDIS HELPED YOU OR YOUR DISTRICT?

Before coming to Oregon, I had always worked in city library systems. So I really relied on SDAO/SDIS training, staff members, and consultants to learn about the special district portion of my job as library director. I think I made two-dozen calls to SDAO that first year, and I also had George Dunkel out to lead a board training. Knowing there were people who could answer my questions—and wanted to!!—made a huge difference.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR LIFE OUTSIDE OF YOUR DAY JOB(S).

My husband, Will Yurman, left a position at Penn State to move to the University of Oregon in 2022. Since then, we've bought a house, hosted an exchange student from Germany, and adopted a dog and a cat. In other words, it has been a busy time! Sometimes I do get out to enjoy the coastal range, the beach, or the dunes. Sometimes I sleep in and try to recover from all the adventures of the last two years!

SPONSOR A PUBLIC FELLOW 2024



Portland State University's Center for Public Service Fellowships Program is recruiting exceptionally qualified, trained, and diverse fellowship candidates from prestigious institutions throughout the U.S. to serve as project managers for Oregon's public sector in 2024. Our fellows provide skill capacity near-term to ensure critical projects are completed, despite staffing restraints. Candidates are prepared to support sponsors in areas such as research and analysis, community engagement, program evaluation, and so much more. Sponsor applications are open now!

THE HATFIELD RESIDENT FELLOWS

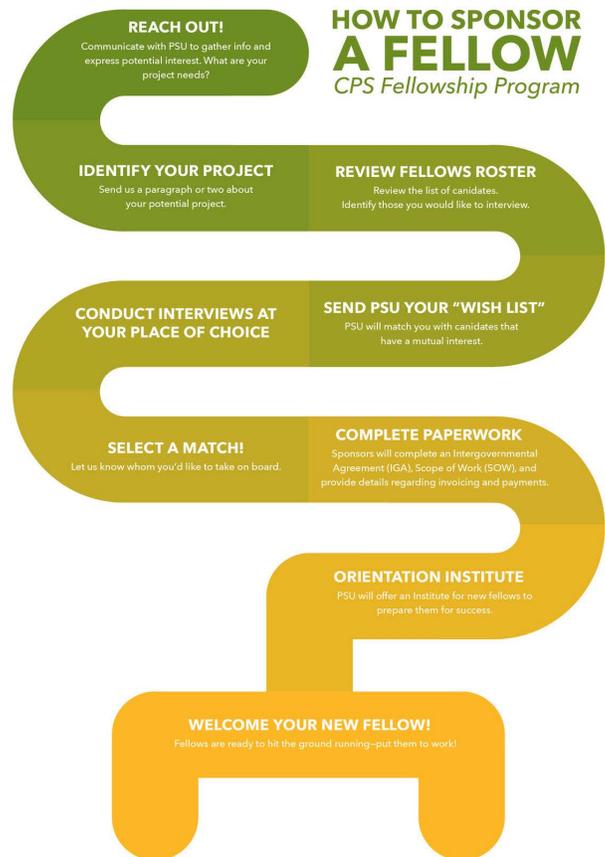
32-week (32-hours/week) assignments, specifically designed for recent graduates who have completed a Master or Ph.D. program within the last year, or who will receive their degrees before their Fellowship begins. Fellows are hired as Portland State University staff and contracted to work with public agencies through intergovernmental agreements. Start dates range between June and September.

OREGON SUMMER FELLOWSHIP

10-week, full-time Fellowship (400 hours total) designed for current graduate students who are on summer break from their regular enrollment. Oregon Summer Fellows retain their status as students at their home institutions during their Fellowships. Start dates range between May and early July.

Learn more at:

<https://www.pdx.edu/center-for-public-service/become-sponsor>



HATFIELD RESIDENT FELLOWS

are newly-minted graduate and PhD students from some of the most outstanding universities in the country, who work for 1,024 hours (typically over an 8-month period). Sponsors will pay \$45,200 to sponsor a Hatfield Resident Fellow.

OREGON SUMMER FELLOWS

are current graduate students from these schools, who are paid by PSU to work for 10 weeks, full time during their summer breaks. Sponsors pay \$11,030 to sponsor an Oregon Summer Fellow.



For more information, visit:
<https://www.pdx.edu/center-for-public-service/become-sponsor>

*Providing reasonable, stable rates, and
broad coverage to Oregon's public entities*

SDIS Board of Trustees

- Chair:** Andrea Klaas, Port of The Dalles
- Vice Chair:** Darren Bucich, McKenzie Fire & Rescue
- Secretary:** Dave Lindelien, Lane Transit District
- Treasurer:** Stacy Maxwell, Jackson County Fire District 3
- Trustees:** Pete Boone, Tualatin Valley Water District
Nicole Dalke, Springfield Utility Board
Mark Hokkanen, Tualatin Hills Park and Recreation District
- Emeritus:** Ted Kunze, Molalla RFPD #73

Services

- Background Checks
- Claims Administration
- Drug-Free Workplace
- Management Consulting Services
- On-site Loss Control Consultations
- Pre-Loss Legal Services
- Public Safety EAP
- Safety and Security Grant Program
- SDIS Insurance Programs

Next SDIS Board of Trustees Meeting

February 7 | Seaside | 3pm



RISK MANAGEMENT

This brings us to the final installment of our risk management newsletter series on the risk management process. In the last three articles, we addressed risk assessments, risk controls and implementing solutions. You can find those articles in our previous newsletters located on the SDAO Resource Library accessible from our website. In this article, we will focus on the equally important topic of following up.

This topic brings me back to my former career in manufacturing and a memory I will not soon forget. In short, we had a fire in one of the tools on the factory floor after preventative maintenance was performed. We went through our investigation and followed the risk management process. It was determined that during maintenance a bolt was left in the tool that caused an electrical short and the resulting fire. We decided to mitigate the risk of additional fires by implementing a plan. One portion of the plan was that all tools and parts must be put into a plastic bin while performing maintenance. This would ensure that no tools or parts were left in the tool after maintaining the equipment.

Not even a year after that initial fire, we had another fire in the same tool. This fire was caused by unintended consequences of the plan we put in place. This time, the plastic bin we required them to put tools and parts in was left in the tool and caused the fire.

Shockingly, interviews after the fire revealed that workers were aware that bins had been left in the tool on several occurrences and only discovered during preventative maintenance. Unfortunately, they never reported these occurrences. Of course, this led to the second fire.

Now 20 years later and a little bit wiser, I can see several red flags in this event, but for the case of this article we will stay on topic. We did not have a plan to follow up. If we had implemented a follow up process and talked with staff operating the tool and performing the maintenance, we would have identified soon after the initial fire that our plan was not good enough to mitigate the risk.

My hope is that by sharing this experience with you, you will learn from the costly lessons that I learned the hard way. You see, when we evacuated the factory due to the fire, the company lost over a million dollars a minute in lost productivity. The risk management process should be looked at as a continual process, and we should always be following up when we make changes to the workplace and work processes. So, let's talk about the considerations of the follow-up process.



T PROCESS SERIES:

Follow Up

Taking into consideration the previous steps of the risk management process, we should have identified the solutions to be implemented and the intended outcomes of those solutions. Once those solutions get implemented, we want to have a formal process in place to follow up on those changes to the work environment and processes. This follow up should include:

- Assign an individual or team to conduct the follow up,
- Identify the time frame(s) for the follow up to occur, and
- Set the expectation of affected staff to report back any issues with the implemented changes as they are identified.

Through the follow-up process, we are trying to identify any unintended consequences of the plan that was implemented and decide if our plan meets the intended outcomes. If any deficiencies are found, we should be working back through the risk management process to fine tune the plan so that the intended outcomes are reached. So, you might be asking what the actual follow up looks like... I'm glad you asked. It could look very different depending on the complexity of the plan put in place, but below are some common practices:

- Interviewing (talking with) affected employees
- Auditing processes and procedures
- Observing the work process and workflow
- Measuring results
- Addressing near misses and unintended consequences by working back through the risk management process

We hope you have enjoyed our news article series on the risk management process and hope you have been able to glean some helpful tactics and practices to implement in your organization. As always, your risk management team is here as a resource for you and your district. Please reach out to us at riskmanagement@sdao.com if we can be of service to you in helping mitigate risk and prevent losses.

SDIS BOARD OF TRUSTEES SPOTLIGHT



WHAT ROLE DO YOU SERVE AT YOUR SPECIAL DISTRICT AND HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WITH THEM?

I am currently the Chief Operating Officer at Tualatin Valley Water District, leading a team of operators, engineers, and other water professionals who work to deliver drinking water to around 225,000 people in Washington County. I have served the District since 2008 as an Engineer and then Operations Manager before shifting to the COO role in 2022.

WHY DID YOU SEEK TO JOIN THE SDIS BOARD OF TRUSTEES?

I became interested in serving on the SDIS Board of Trustees to help out the member districts and represent the water utility perspective. The Trust provides a great value to its members and I hope to give back.

HOW HAS SDAO/SDIS HELPED YOU OR YOUR DISTRICT?

SDAO has helped TVWD in a variety of ways, including representation and information-sharing in the legislative process, insurance and risk management, and providing training to our staff and elected officials.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR LIFE OUTSIDE OF YOUR DAY JOB(S).

I live in Forest Grove with my wife Selena and our two spoiled pets, Milly the Boston Terrier and Toe the giant polydactyl cat. I spend a lot of my time outside of work volunteering as a firefighter and EMT for the Forest Grove, Cornelius, and Gaston Fire Departments. I grew up in a family with lots of history in the fire service and other forms of public service, so I have always been drawn to serve as a first responder. I especially enjoy helping to train and mentor younger people who are just starting their journey in the fire service.



BIKE LANES

**By: Jens Jensen,
PC Claims Manager**

As we head into wintertime, weather and reduced daylight make visibility a constant struggle. Inclement weather also means slower traffic, and we're always needing to get somewhere in a hurry, it seems. Oregonian cyclists seem to be a pretty hardy group and don't like to let Mother Nature get in the way of their ride. Many cyclists commute and recreate on bikes all year long, regardless of weather. Which is all the more reason to be extra vigilant during these reduced visibility months.

This is a scenario we've seen in the claims department on a number of occasions. A district driver is headed back to the office after being out working all day, travelling down a road getting ready to make a right turn on to the street where the office is. The employee puts on the signal, makes the right turn on a green light and...boom; a cyclist slams into the side of the car and over the hood. An ambulance comes and carries the cyclist away, and the district employee says he was making a right turn on a green. The problem, however, is there is an established bike lane on this road.

Districts are often surprised that we have to resolve these kinds of matters. The district employee will point out that the bike lane wasn't painted in the intersection. This doesn't matter. Bike lanes established on both sides of an intersection are also in effect through the intersection. See ORS 801.155 for more information. This basically means a cyclist has the right of way here, and a vehicle must yield to the bike in the intersection.

How do you avoid this situation? When making a right turn, get in the habit of looking over your shoulder and in your right side mirror to check for an approaching cyclist. Also, make mental notes of cyclists if you pass them on the road. It's easy to lose track of a cyclist in lower visibility, and the cyclist, especially if they're on an E-bike, can catch up to you in a hurry since they often aren't slowed by traffic. This is even more important on roads with a dedicated bike lane.

Stay safe out there.

CYBER COVERAGE AND LONGEVITY CREDIT PROGRAM UPDATE



CYBER COVERAGE

The Underwriting Department wishes to extend our appreciation on another successful renewal. Our department could not make this possible without all of you! We would like to take the opportunity to provide some additional information from the renewal process.

We are now offering cyber coverage to all SDIS members. If your district did not qualify for the higher cyber coverage limits at the renewal, please remember once the additional requirements have been met, you can complete an updated application mid-term. Underwriting is happy to review the application and update the coverage to higher limits if you qualify after the renewal. If you have any questions about this, please contact your district's insurance agent.

MEMBER LONGEVITY CREDIT AND RATE LOCK GUARANTEE PROGRAM UPDATE

During times when the SDIS Trust sees a surplus in investment earnings, the Longevity Credit and Rate Lock Guarantee program is used to give back to members in the form of longevity credits and rate locks. Since its inception 14 years ago, the Trust has returned \$13.5 million dollars to eligible members.

As we shared with you in your district's renewal update packet, the last two fiscal years saw investment returns dip below targeted levels. As a result, the Trust has decided to put the Longevity Credit and Rate Lock Guarantee Program on hold until investment earnings return to levels we have seen in the past.

Please know that with the nature of any investment strategy, there are positive and negative years. Historically, our portfolio has seen far more positive years, and we fully anticipate being able to offer the program again in the future.

In addition, this is in no way a reflection of the financial health of the SDIS Trust. Our total retained earnings are within the range our actuaries determined is healthy for normal operations and to absorb a potentially catastrophic year in terms of insured losses. This pause is merely to preserve our investment earnings for the good of all Trust members. Once investment returns start to outpace our targeted levels, we will resume giving back that surplus to the membership in the form of longevity credits and rate locks.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact the SDAO Underwriting Department at **underwriting@sdao.com or 800-285-5461.**

THE BENEFITS OF VIRTUAL MENTAL HEALTH CARE



The National Institute of Mental Health estimates that more than one-in-five Americans live with mental illness. Unfortunately, an estimated 122 million Americans live in areas where there are shortages of mental health professionals. In more rural areas, the nearest mental health professional could be several hours away. People who lack access to mental health services may postpone or neglect mental health care. But ignoring mental health issues can have a detrimental impact on you, your family and your co-workers. It may also make mental health issues worse.

Virtual mental health care is helping to provide critical access to mental health care services around the country. This is especially important as the increasing popularity of remote work has enabled more employees to work from rural parts of the country.

WHAT IS VIRTUAL MENTAL HEALTH CARE?

Virtual mental health care refers to a range of services that can be offered online via phone, tablet or computer. It often comes in the form of remote appointments or online communications. Although it may feel strange initially to open up to a mental health professional on your computer, forms of virtual health care have been around since the 1990s. Today, virtual mental health care may include the following options:

- Virtual therapy sessions
- Online coaching sessions
- Self-help apps
- Virtual substance misuse programs
- Benefits of Virtual Mental Health Care

There are numerous benefits to virtual mental healthcare, especially if you live in an area where it's difficult or impossible to find a qualified local mental health professional. For this reason, companies are increasingly offering virtual mental health services as part of employee benefits packages.

HERE ARE SOME OF THE BENEFITS OF VIRTUAL MENTAL HEALTH CARE:

- Improves access to mental health professionals—Virtual mental health care is convenient and accessible, enabling more people to receive quality care where they live.
- Adds scheduling flexibility—Telehealth appointments can often be made outside of typical work hours. They may also be combined with in-person sessions if you live in the same area as your mental health professional.
- Increases comfort—Many people avoid seeking mental health care because they're afraid of being recognized in a psychiatrist's office or because of other logistical concerns, such as lacking proper transportation. Telepsychology enables you to receive quality care with anonymity from the comfort of your own home.
- Enhances addiction treatment—Substance abuse and addiction issues are particularly prevalent in rural and low-income areas, which often lack proper mental health care resources. The expansion of virtual mental health services allows more people to get the support they need.

FLEXIBILITY: TODAY'S WORKPLACE NECESSITY

BY: HR ANSWERS

Shifting work dynamics and the desire for a better life balance has made this an on-going topic of discussion at all levels within our workplaces. Organizations that offer flexibility can help attract and retain top talent, increase productivity, and adapt to evolving business needs.

In the broadest of terms flexibility refers to a working arrangement where employees have input to their schedule to accommodate the varying needs and lifestyles of employees AND we need to meet business goals and needs too. This concept has gained popularity in fact, according to the Equality and Human Rights Commission, 63% of full-time employees are now working in a flexible role.

Before implementing flexible working hours in your organization, it is crucial that you carefully evaluate the pros and cons associated with this approach. This will allow you to make an informed decision and determine if flex hours align with your organizational culture, employee needs, and operational requirements.

HERE ARE SOME **KEY BENEFITS:**

- Life balance. Flex hours enable employees to better manage their personal obligations, resulting in reduced stress and improved work-life balance.
- Employee satisfaction and engagement. Offering your employees flex hours shows them that the organization values their needs, leading to higher job satisfaction, engagement, and morale.
- Increased productivity. With a flexible schedule, employees are able to work during their most productive hours, leading to enhanced efficiency and increased productivity. This can also help to increase focus and eliminate potential time wasters.
- Increased accountability. This form of scheduling can boost employee accountability as individuals are empowered to take ownership of their work and manage their time effectively.
- Reduced absenteeism. Flex hours enable employees to handle personal matters without taking full days off, minimizing disruptions and reducing absenteeism. To the same effect, this approach can also help you reduce employee tardiness, especially if your employees are often late due to personal commitments.
- Talent attraction and retention. Many job seekers these days value perks and benefits just as much as salaries. As a result, offering flex hours can help you attract and retain top talent in a competitive job market.



- Diversity and inclusion. Flex hours accommodate employees with varying needs, contributing to a more diverse and inclusive workforce.
- Employee health and wellbeing. Flex hours support employees' physical and mental health by allowing time for exercise, self-care, and medical appointments.
- Enhanced loyalty and reduced turnover. Flex hours foster employee loyalty and commitment to the organization, increasing retention and reducing turnover costs.

These are also some potential drawbacks of implementing flex hours that you also need to be aware of:

- Difficulty in scheduling meetings. Coordinating meetings can become more challenging when employees have different schedules.
- Inequity and perceived favoritism. If you decide to offer flexible work hours, it's important to do so consistently. Otherwise, it can create feelings of unfairness or claims of favoritism among employees. This, in turn, can lead to morale issues and strained relationships.
- Reduced collaboration and communication. When employees have different schedules and they are not present in the office at the same time, it can be challenging to coordinate meetings, share ideas, and have spontaneous discussions. It can also impact your corporate culture, especially if your employees work remotely.
- Customer service challenges. Flex hours can result in delayed response times for customer facing roles, potentially impacting customer satisfaction.
- Time tracking challenges. Monitoring employee working hours becomes more complex with flex hours, making it harder to ensure accurate timekeeping and preventing potential abuse.
- Burnout risk. Flexible work arrangements can blur the boundaries between work and personal life, potentially leading to overworking and burnout.
- Scheduling issues. Flex hours can make it harder to schedule tasks and, as a result, require additional planning and coordination.

If you've decided that this approach might work well in your business, the next step is creating and implementing a flex schedule policy. We have created some sample language for your consideration. To download, visit: https://hranswers.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/SAMPLE_FLEX-HOURS-SCHEDULE-POLICY.docx

MEMBER CALENDAR

<i>January 2</i>	New Year Holiday (Observed) SDAO Closed
<i>January 4</i>	SDAO First Thursday Webinar 12pm
<i>January 15</i>	Martin Luther King, Jr. Day SDAO Closed
<i>February 1</i>	SDAO First Thursday Webinar 12pm
<i>February 7</i>	SDAO Board of Directors Meeting 12pm Seaside
<i>February 7</i>	SDIS Board of Trustees Meeting 3pm Seaside
<i>February 8</i>	SDAO HR Alliance Meeting 1pm Seaside
<i>February 8</i>	SDAO Pre-Conference Seaside
<i>February 8</i>	SDAO Finance Alliance Meeting 3pm Seaside
<i>February 9-11</i>	SDAO Annual Conference
<i>February 19</i>	Presidents' Day SDAO Closed
<i>March 7</i>	SDAO First Thursday Webinar 12pm