

# News & Risk Management Review

SPRING 2025



SDAO

SPECIAL DISTRICTS  
ASSOCIATION OF OREGON

# Contents

## SDAO

- 4 SDAO Annual Conference Wrap Up
- 5 Save the Date - Annual Golf Tournament
- 6 SDAO Internship Grant Program
- 7 NSDC Reflects on 2024 and Reinvigorates as NSDA for 2025
- 9 Legislative Update
- 12 2025 SDAO Awards Recipients
- 14 Board Leadership Academy Certificate Recipient
- 15 SDAO Committee + Volunteer Interest Form
- 16 Free Member Webinars: Promote Your District and Tell Your Story
- 17 Special Districts Consulting Services Program

## SDIS

- 19 Get Wildfire-Ready: Free Defensible Space Assessments
- 20 SDAO Risk Management Regional Training Series
- 21 SDAO Human Resources Regional Training
- 22 2025 Best Practices Program
- 24 HR's Role in Conflict Resolution
- 27 Preparing for Potential Flooding: Essential Steps To Protect Your Property
- BC Member Calendar





## SDAO Board of Directors

### President

Ben Stange, Polk County Fire District #1

### Vice President

Emily Robertson, Urban Flood Safety and Water Quality District

### Secretary

Kathy Kleczek, Union Health District

### Treasurer

Adam Denlinger, Seal Rock Water District

### Past-President

Todd Heidgerken, Clackamas River Water

### Board Members

Nick Bakke

Michele Bradley

Jennifer Holland

Paula Miranda

Meg Spencer

Scott Stanton

Brent Stevenson

## Next Board of Directors Meetings

**April 3 - 9am** in Gleneden Beach (Work Session with SDIS Board of Trustees)

**April 3 - 1pm** in Gleneden Beach

**June 12 - 10am** in Salem

## 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

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# 2025 SDAO ANNUAL CONFERENCE

# WRAP UP!



Thank you to all who joined us for the 2025 SDAO Annual Conference! Though the weather posed to be a challenge for some, we had over 600 people join us in Bend. This included representatives from special districts, insurance agencies, vendors, and more.

We were lucky to have the Oregon Government Ethics Commission out for our pre-conference day offering free public meetings law training to our members. Additionally, we had engaging sessions on cybersecurity exercises, becoming a general manager, and interacting with the media. The following day, we kicked off the conference with cybersecurity keynote speaker Eric O'Neill who kept us entertained while focusing on the importance of being vigilant and aware when it comes to cyber-attacks.

The Exhibitor Trade Show featured 34 vendors. We greatly appreciate their support of our event! If you didn't have a chance to visit with them at the conference, we encourage you to learn more about their products and services. Their contact information is still available on our conference app.

During the Annual Business Meeting on Saturday, we received updates from our board president, trust chair, caucus chairs, and the SDAO Chief Financial Officer. Additionally, the membership voted on updated bylaws and the seats up for election on the SDAO Board of Directors. The following individuals were selected for the 2025-2027 term:

## **AT-LARGE**

Kathy Kleczek, Union Health District  
Emily Robertson, Urban Flood Safety and Water Quality District

## **PARK & RECREATION**

Jennifer Holland, Sisters Park & Recreation District

## **PORT**

Paula Miranda, Port of Newport

## **WATER**

Adam Denlinger, Seal Rock Water District

Saturday evening, we celebrated the achievements of three special districts and five individuals at the annual awards banquet. Each story was truly inspiring, showcasing the incredible impact our members make within their communities.

Following the banquet, we gathered teams together and played an exciting game of Survey Says. It was hilarious, interactive, and a fun time!

The conference concluded on Sunday with breakfast and door prize giveaways donated by our wonderful members.

We appreciate your unwavering commitment to your community. ***We hope to see you at our next conference February 5-8 in Seaside!***



SDAO Special Districts Association of Oregon



# ANNUAL GOLF



SAVE THE DATE

SAVE THE DATE

# TOURNAMENT

FRIDAY, 09.12.25



CHEHALEM GLENN GOLF COURSE | NEWBERG, OREGON  
REGISTRATION OPENS JULY 1ST! WATCH YOUR EMAIL FOR MORE INFORMATION.

REGISTRATION OPENS JULY 1ST!

# SDAO INTERNSHIP Grant Program

**Application Deadline:**  
5pm on Friday, April 18, 2025

Applications are now being accepted for the 2025 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 \$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, 2025.

To be considered, your completed Internship Grant Program application must be received by SDAO by **5pm on Friday, April 18, 2025**. Submit your completed application by mail to **SDAO, PO Box 12613, Salem, Oregon 97309**; by e-mail to **[sdao@sdao.com](mailto: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](http://www.sdao.com/internship-grant-program)**

# NSDC REFLECTS ON 2024 AND REINVIGORATES AS NSDA FOR 2025

As 2024 came to a close, the National Special District Coalition (NSDC) celebrated a year of remarkable progress and growth. From launching the National Special District Association (NSDA) to achieving significant federal advocacy milestones, 2024 has been a transformative year. Together, we've made great strides in amplifying the voice of special districts, and there's much to look forward to in 2025.

## ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT



### 2024 was a pivotal year for NSDC's growth:

- NSDA Launch: We proudly launched the National Special District Association dedicated to representing the interests of special districts across the country.
- Refined Mission & Vision: "Simplify to Amplify," our mission focuses on advocacy, education, and resources.
- Branding & Website Refresh: We unveiled a new logo and website to better engage with members and stakeholders. Thank you Streamline!
- Solidified Our Team: We strengthened our efforts by hiring a National Director of Public Affairs and continued to work with Paragon and The Ferguson Group to enhance advocacy and outreach.
- Four Corners Newsletter: We prepared our first NSDA newsletter to keep members informed about key initiatives and events.

## FEDERAL ADVOCACY – KEY LEGISLATIVE WINS WITH PARAGON

### NSDC made significant progress in advancing policies that support special districts at the federal level:

- Special Districts Recognition Act: We successfully advanced this campaign, gathering over 25,000 supporters and raising awareness of the importance of special districts.
- Key Legislative Advocacy: NSDC supported several critical initiatives:
  - ◊ Fix Our Forests Act (H.R. 8790)
  - ◊ OSHA Emergency Response Rules
  - ◊ Financial Data Transparency Act (FDTA)
  - ◊ Water Systems PFAS Liability Protection Act
  - ◊ Disaster Management Costs Modernization Act (S. 3071/H.R. 7671)

## COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING – AMPLIFYING OUR MESSAGE

- Social Media Expansion: Our social media engagement grew by over 2,371%, showing that our messaging resonates with a broad audience.

- Website Traffic Surge: Website traffic increased by 1,500%, confirming the effectiveness of our outreach efforts.
- DMTD Campaign: The Districts Make the Difference (DMTD) campaign reached 6.6m impressions, up from 2.5 million, with more than 200,000 “likes”, highlighting the importance of communicating our value.
- Student Video Contest: The contest reached students in 20 states promoting youth engagement in local governance.

## **GRANTS AND FUNDING - WINS WITH THE FERGUSON GROUP**

- Over the last quarter of 2024, TFG saw an over 200% increase in activity from districts interested in the NSDC Grant Program and the services available to help find federal resources for priorities. Services provided to districts included personal consultations where TFG grant experts provided curated advice and counsel to districts on available funding.
- To help districts prepare for upcoming grant opportunities, NSDC hosted the final webinar in the 2024 series, “Follow the Money: Where grant funding went, where it’s going, and how to bring it home” in October. Learn more and access NSDC Grant Program resources at Grant Services - National Special Districts Coalition.

## **MEMBERSHIP GROWTH**

### **NSDA’s efforts in expanding membership were highly successful:**

- Membership Growth: We now represent over 8,000 members, and membership continues to grow steadily, including increasing our Trial Memberships by 20%.
- Texas Roadshow Success: The “Get ‘R Done” Roadshow in Texas brought new districts into NSDA, marking a key milestone in our outreach.
- Partnerships: We forged valuable partnerships with organizations like ICMA and NACO, strengthening our advocacy efforts.

## **LOOKING AHEAD TO 2025**

### **NSDA’s goals for 2025 focus on advancing the interests of special districts:**

- Special District Grant Accessibility Act (SDGAA): We will continue advocating for federal recognition of special districts to unlock new funding opportunities.
- Infrastructure & Cybersecurity: We will push for policies that strengthen infrastructure and enhance cybersecurity resilience.
- Disaster Resilience: We’ll advocate for policies to improve disaster preparedness and infrastructure resilience.
- Federal Funding Opportunities: NSDA will ensure special districts have greater access to federal funds and continue advocating for reauthorization of critical programs like the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

As we conclude this outstanding year, we express our deepest thanks to every member, partner, and supporter. Your dedication has been integral to our success. With your continued engagement, we look forward to achieving even more in 2025, advancing the interests of special districts and securing a prosperous future for the communities we serve.

Membership in NSDA comes with your district’s SDAO membership. To receive updates directly from NSDA, please visit <https://www.nationalspecialdistricts.org/sign-up-for-nsda-updates> to join the list.



# LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

BY: MARK LANDAUER, MJL CONSULTING

TE  
CONSULTING

The 83rd Legislative Assembly is comprised of super majorities in both chambers. Speaker Julie Fahey who is serving as speaker for her first full session along with Majority Leader Ben Bowman have a 36-24 edge over the Republicans who are being led by Minority Leader Christine Drazan. President Rob Wagner serving in his second term as President along with first-time Majority Leader Kayse Jama have and 18-12 majority over their Republican colleagues who are led by Republican Leader Daniel Bonham. As a result of their super-majorities, Democrats can pass new taxes which require a 3/5th majority vote without any Republican votes.

There are 19 new legislators: 11 representatives and eight senators including three former legislators and two family members of disqualified legislators. The House is made up of 30 men and 30 women. Oregon's Legislature has the greatest Vietnamese representation in the nation and BIPOC members represent 1/5th of the total legislative body with its first Japanese American ever appointed to the House. Thirteen percent of the membership are attorneys, twelve percent are veterans and eight percent work in the health care field.

Prior to the session beginning, Governor Tina Kotek proposed a \$39.3 billion general fund and lottery fund budget for the 2025-2027 biennium, an increase from the \$33.5 billion general fund and lottery funds budget lawmakers approved in 2023. Her total budget, including federal funding that the state doesn't have much control over, is \$137.7 billion. The state spends nearly 90% of its general and lottery fund budget in three areas: education, human services, and public safety.

Highlights of her budget include \$11.4 billion to public schools as part of a budget focused on maintaining existing programs, an increase from \$10.2 billion during this biennium. For the Oregon Department of Transportation, \$7.3 billion total funds, representing a 15.3% increase from the previous biennium. This includes new revenue of \$1.75 billion, which largely covers the Oregon Department of Transportation's funding need. For comparison, the 2017 transportation package had an infusion of \$5.3 billion of new revenue over a seven-year period, \$2 billion on homelessness and housing, and \$130 million toward funding the state's wildfire readiness and mitigation efforts. The Legislature will also be evaluating funding options and changes in wildfire policy to establish a more reliable and stable funding program.

As we enter the second month of the 160-day session, we have seen a record setting pace of bill introductions with approximately 2,765 bills introduced thus far. The deadline for bill introductions is February 25th, however, after that deadline members will still have up to five priority bills that they will be allowed to introduce. Furthermore, leadership will still be allowed to introduce additional measures as they see fit.

The first important deadline that will begin to winnow the number of bills is March 21st when bills must be posted for a work session in the first chamber to remain alive, and then on April 9th, if those posted bills have not proceeded through the first policy committee, they die. There are exceptions, for example, the deadlines do not apply to the Committees on Rules, Joint Ways & Means, Revenue and Finance, and Joint Transportation.

One of the major issues facing the assembly is consideration of a transportation funding package. Inflation has sent road costs soaring in recent years, gas taxes are also declining due to higher fuel efficiency and the increasing number of hybrid and electrical vehicles. In addition, it has been recently uncovered that several instances of mismanagement and poor estimating at the department has put some doubt in lawmakers trust with the department.

The Oregon Department of Transportation says it won't be able to afford to fix state-owned paving projects except for the federal interstate highway without new revenue. And without a radical funding fix, ODOT promises "longer road closures, more trash and graffiti, worse winter driving conditions, more potholes, and slower DMV customer service". Funding in the

department has become so dire that the department needed an infusion of general funds just to plow mountain passes this year and have said without intervention it will have to lay off nearly 1,000 employees. And two major projects that were approved in the 2017 transportation package could be delayed (Rose Garden bottleneck and Abernathy bridge on I-205).

To further complicate things, under the state's current funding formula, cities and counties are entitled to roughly half of the state highway fund. That means if lawmakers want to plug the state's budget hole, they need to raise nearly \$3.6 billion to ensure the cities and counties get their share.

The current state funding gap is \$1.8 billion a year. To fund the two remaining projects passed in 2017 – they will need a couple billion more. The current state tax is 40 cents per gallon of gas. The gas is not indexed to inflation nor are fees (DMV, title, registration, license, etc.). As a result, the state's buying power has declined dramatically compared to skyrocketing costs. To put this into perspective, it would require an increase to \$1.36 per gallon to get ODOT the \$1.8 billion needed.

Some of the ideas to bridge this funding gap include charging people for the miles they drive rather than a per gallon charge, creating a new retail delivery charge, implementing road tolls, and indexing, to name a few.

What the legislature ultimately does remains to be seen. The stakes are high, and transportation packages have failed before. But the need to ensure the continuance of basic maintenance and operations of our transportation system is something that impacts all of us.

On March 3, the Senate Judiciary Committee unanimously passed SB 179 out of committee. This bill would make the temporary changes to the recreational immunity statute enacted in 2024 permanent. This is a priority bill for SDAO and our members.

Recreational immunity provides immunity to landowners from claims of personal injury or property damage when the landowner has made the land available to the public for recreational purposes without a fee, and the claim arises from a person's use of the land for the principal purpose of recreation. These temporary changes were necessitated after the Oregon Supreme Court remanded a case entitled *Fields v. City of Newport*, in which a plaintiff sued the City of Newport because at the time of her injury, the trail was an "improved trail", and she was "walking" at the time of the injury rather than recreating as she tried to access the beach. SB 179, if passed, will provide some predictability that many of our members will be able to continue to enjoy.



# 2025 SDAO AWARD RECIPIENTS

Each year, the SDAO Awards Program recognizes member districts for their remarkable accomplishments, enabling them to enhance their service to the public. Additionally, the program acknowledges individuals who have significantly contributed to their district's success. The following award winners were selected by the SDAO Awards Committee and honored at the 2025 SDAO Annual Conference on Saturday, February 8th. You can watch videos featuring each award winner on our website at [www.sdao.com/sdao-awards-program](http://www.sdao.com/sdao-awards-program).

## **OUTSTANDING SPECIAL DISTRICT PROGRAM AWARD: 5 OR FEWER EMPLOYEES NEHALEM BAY HEALTH DISTRICT**

Nehalem Bay Health District was selected for this award for its visionary \$17 million expansion project, which aims to provide quality health care, skilled nursing, and housing opportunities for the community. This project addresses the urgent need for updated facilities and additional services, including dental and specialty medical care, in a region with limited access. The innovative design includes solar power and EV charging stations, reflecting the community's look and feel. The project has garnered significant local support, including a \$10.25 million general obligation bond, and aims to benefit the 5,000 residents of the district, many of whom are elderly or below the poverty line.

## **OUTSTANDING SPECIAL DISTRICT PROGRAM AWARD: 6-25 EMPLOYEES PLEASANT HILL GOSHEN RFPD**

Over a ten-year journey, the district successfully merged two smaller districts, leading to better services, improved response times, and the construction of a new fire station. This effort addressed critical issues such as lack of career staff, low volunteer count, and outdated facilities. The district's "one team" motto fostered a unified approach, resulting in additional career staffing, reduced response times by six minutes or more, and the protection of previously unprotected homes. The project has significantly enhanced the district's capabilities and set a strong example for other agencies facing similar challenges.



**OUTSTANDING SPECIAL DISTRICT PROGRAM AWARD:  
26 OR MORE EMPLOYEES**

**UMATILLA COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT #1**

Since 2014, Umatilla County Fire District #1 has prioritized addressing physical, mental, and emotional challenges faced by its employees, implementing a four-platoon schedule to reduce work hours by 15-25%, and contracting with Community Counseling Solutions for in-house counseling services. Additionally, the district has introduced various educational programs on resiliency, work-life balance, and financial management, and has updated fire stations to be more ergonomically sound. These efforts have led to healthier, happier employees, reduced claims, and a more effective workforce, ultimately benefiting the community they serve.



**OUTSTANDING SPECIAL DISTRICT SERVICE AWARD: BOARD MEMBER  
DEBRA MOBERLY, NEHALEM BAY HEALTH DISTRICT**

Debra Moberly has been a pivotal volunteer for the Nehalem Bay Health District, significantly contributing to its growth and success. Under her leadership, the district's annual budget expanded from approximately \$300,000 to over \$15 million, enabling major construction and renovation projects. Debbie's efforts also secured a \$3 million appropriation from the Health Resources and Services Administration and successfully passed a \$10.25 million general obligation bond measure. Beyond her financial acumen, she has been deeply involved in community service, chairing the Lower Nehalem Community Trust and volunteering for various local organizations.

**OUTSTANDING SPECIAL DISTRICT SERVICE AWARD: MANAGER  
WADE HATHORN, SUNRISE WATER AUTHORITY**

Wade Hathorn has been the General Manager of Sunrise Water Authority since 2010, leading the organization through significant financial challenges and growth. He implemented a unique financing strategy that saved millions in interest payments and oversaw the construction of a new \$20 million facility. Wade's leadership ensured uninterrupted operations during the COVID-19 pandemic and earned recognition for the new building project as one of the top projects in the Portland metropolitan area. Beyond his role at Sunrise, Wade is actively involved in community service, including serving on the Board of Directors for Clackamas Community College and participating in various civic activities.



**OUTSTANDING SPECIAL DISTRICT SERVICE AWARD: EMPLOYEE  
WILL STEINWEG, MIST-BIRKENFELD RFPD**

Will Steinweg developed and implemented a fire science program for two high schools in rural northwest Oregon to address dwindling volunteer numbers. This program educates students about emergency services, encouraging them to volunteer or pursue careers as firefighters or EMTs while earning high school and college credits. Despite initial challenges, the program has been successfully integrated into the school curricula, with students achieving certifications and some joining local fire agencies. Will's dedication extends beyond the program,



as he also coaches high school sports, volunteers at an animal rescue, and serves on various boards and associations.

**OUTSTANDING SPECIAL DISTRICT SERVICE AWARD: VOLUNTEER CARLA GRANO, SOUTHVIEW IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT**

Carla Grano volunteered to manage the Southview Improvement District water system two years ago and has significantly improved its quality and operations. She oversees testing, maintenance, and accounting activities, dedicating many volunteer hours each week. Carla also led the development of a water master plan and works closely with the board on budget and reserve planning. Her engineering degree and personable nature make her highly effective and well-loved in the community.



*Robert Estill (pictured) accepted on Carla's behalf.*

**LEGACY OF SERVICE AWARD  
JOSH THOMPSON, WASCO COUNTY SWCD**

Josh was a dedicated conservationist and community leader who worked for Wasco County SWCD for 24 years, starting as a Conservation Planner and later becoming Assistant Manager and Facilities Manager. He led significant initiatives, including well remediation projects and multi-landowner water conservation efforts, always aiming to support local agricultural producers. Outside of work, Josh volunteered extensively with local fire districts and served on multiple boards, inspiring others with his willingness to help. Tragically, he passed away in a vehicle accident in 2024, leaving behind a legacy of service and a heartbroken community. His funeral was attended by approximately 750 people, reflecting the profound impact he had on those around him. Josh's dedication, leadership, and community spirit will be remembered and cherished by all who knew him.



*Josh's children accepted his award on his behalf.*

*Congratulations*

TO OUR RECENT BOARD LEADERSHIP  
ACADEMY CERTIFICATE RECIPIENT!



**COLBY RILEY**  
ROCKWOOD WATER PUD



SDAO  
**COMMITTEE  
+ VOLUNTEER  
INTEREST**  
FORM

We need your help! Our strength and effectiveness as an organization is directly related to the involvement of our members. The talent and energy that our members bring to SDAO are the critical components of our success as an association. Please review the volunteer opportunities listed below and indicate those of which you are willing to serve. If you have any questions, please contact SDAO at **800-285-5461 or [sdao@sdao.com](mailto:sdao@sdao.com)**.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title/Position: \_\_\_\_\_

District: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (w) \_\_\_\_\_ (h) \_\_\_\_\_ (c) \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Awards Committee**      Reviews applications and submits rankings for the SDAO Awards Program and SDAO Internship Grant Program. This is conducted by email.

**Conference and Education Committee**      Meets two to three times prior to the SDAO Annual Conference to provide recommendations for conference programming.

Submit your completed form to:



P.O. Box 12613, Salem, OR 97309-0613

Fax: 503-371-4781

Email: [sdao@sdao.com](mailto:sdao@sdao.com)

**Deadline: May 23, 2025**  
*Thank you for your willingness to serve!*

# SECURING YOUR GREATNESS IN THE EYES OF THE PUBLIC: A TWO-PART WEBINAR SERIES

Your district plays a vital role in the community, yet many residents may not even realize the essential services you provide. This two-part webinar series will equip your district with the strategies needed to craft a compelling public narrative and ensure your services are recognized.

## **PART 1 | CRAFTING YOUR DISTRICT'S STORY (THE FOUNDATION + WHY)**

*Thursday, May 15 at 11am*

- **The Power of Storytelling for Local Government: Learn how to shape a narrative that highlights the critical services your district provides.**
- Making Your District's Services More Visible: Understand the best ways to ensure your community can easily find and access your resources.
- Connecting with Your Community: Discover key strategies for identifying and engaging your target audience.

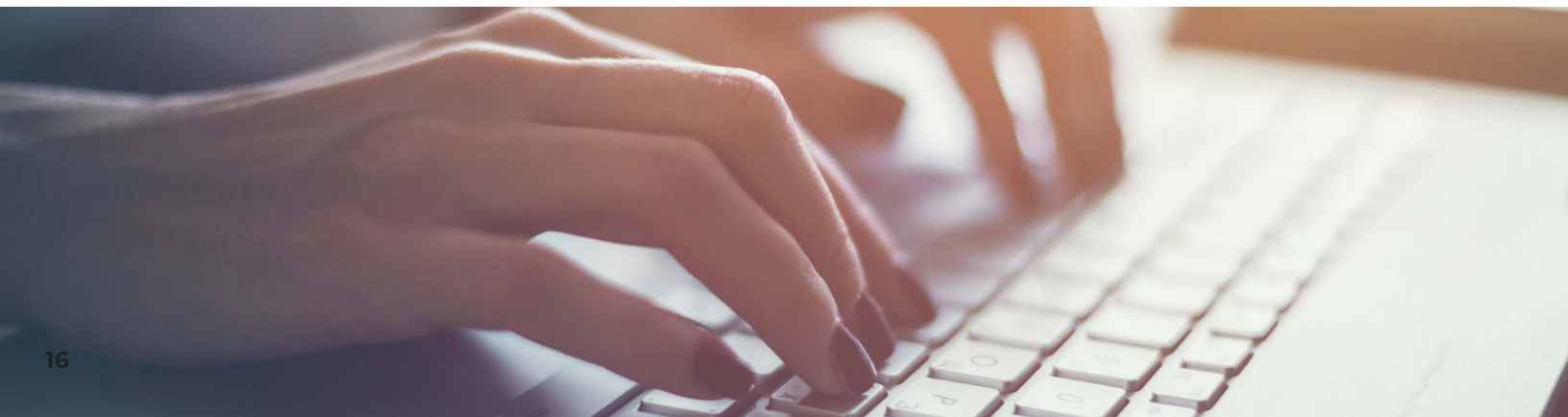
## **PART 2 | PROMOTING YOUR DISTRICT'S STORY**

*Thursday, May 22 at 11am*

- Best Practices for Public Outreach: Learn how to effectively share your district's story and increase public awareness.
- Building Trust and Engagement: Use proven techniques to ensure your message resonates with your community.
- Expanding Your District's Reach: Develop a promotional strategy to maximize visibility and long-term impact.

This is your chance to secure your greatness by making your district's contributions more visible and valued.

Register today to take your district's public presence to the next level: <https://bit.ly/3DPMNH3>







# SPECIAL DISTRICTS CONSULTING SERVICES PROGRAM

**BY: SHANTA CARTER, CONSULTING SERVICES MANAGER**

Ahh, we survived the long, cold months of winter. The days are getting longer, and with that comes the perfect opportunity to refocus on the priorities we've set aside. Now is the time to strengthen your organization through board trainings, board practices assessments, or perhaps an organizational assessment. Maybe you're in the process of hiring a new CEO or manager and need guidance to find the right fit. No matter the challenge, SDAO Consulting Services is here to support you!

Our Consulting Services Program is designed to help special districts like yours improve operations, reduce risk, and enhance long-term sustainability. We offer a range of services tailored to meet your organization's needs, including:

- **Board and Staff Training** – Elevate your team's effectiveness with customized training sessions.
- **Organizational Assessments** – Gain insights into your district's strengths and areas for improvement.
- **Board Practices Assessments** – Ensure your board operates efficiently and follows best practices.
- **Management Recruitment** – Get expert assistance in hiring your next CEO, manager, or key leadership role.
- **Strategic and Succession Planning** – Prepare for the future with thoughtful and actionable plans.
- **Conflict Resolution and Mediation** – Address internal challenges with expert facilitation.
- **Policy and Best Practices Development** – Strengthen your policies to align with industry standards.

If your district is enrolled in the SDIS general liability program, you receive up to eight free hours of consulting services each year! Additional hours are available at a discounted rate to help you continue working toward your organizational goals.

For districts not in the general liability program, you can still access our expert consulting services at a reduced rate. No matter your situation, we're here to make your day-to-day operations easier, more efficient, and more effective.

Don't wait to invest in the future of your organization. Reach out today to explore how SDAO Consulting Services can help your district thrive!

Email us at [sdaoconsultingservices@sdao.com](mailto:sdaoconsultingservices@sdao.com) or call us at **800-305-1736 ext. 251**

We look forward to working with you and making this a season of growth, success, and progress!

Please visit <https://www.sdao.com/consulting-services-program> to learn more about the services we provide.

*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:** Peter Boone, Tualatin Valley Water District  
Nicole Dalke, Springfield Utility Board  
Mark Hokkanen, Tualatin Hills Park and Recreation District
- Emeritus:** Ted Kunze, Molalla RFPD #73

## **Next SDIS Board of Trustees Meetings**

**April 2 - 1pm** in Gleneden Beach

**April 3 - 9am** in Gleneden Beach (Work Session with SDAO Board of Directors)

**June 4 - 10am** in Tigard

# GET WILDFIRE-READY: FREE DEFENSIBLE SPACE ASSESSMENTS



The devastating wildfire season last year is a stark reminder that spring and summer bring increased fire risks. Now is the perfect time to take proactive steps to protect your district's property.

The Department of Oregon State Fire Marshal offers a free defensible space assessments for homeowners and special districts. During the assessment, a fire service professional will visit your property at a time that works for you and provide personalized recommendations to help reduce wildfire risk. Simple actions like clearing dry vegetation, trimming trees, and maintaining a safe perimeter can make a big difference in protecting your property.

Visit [oregondefensiblespace.org](https://oregondefensiblespace.org) to learn more and schedule your free assessment. Some areas are experiencing higher volumes of requests. The OSFM is prioritizing these requests and working to get these handled quickly.

Special districts can assist the State Fire Marshal and their communities by sharing this additional information. For a limited time, the department is offering a one-time incentive payment to homeowners in high wildfire-prone areas who take action to create defensible space. People in select areas of the state qualify for a \$250 payment after receiving an assessment.

Let's work together to protect our homes and communities! For more information or assistance with the program contact SDAO's Risk Management team at [riskmanagement@sdao.com](mailto:riskmanagement@sdao.com).



# SDAO RISK MANAGEMENT REGIONAL TRAINING SERIES

The Risk Management Department is proud to announce we will be conducting a round of regional trainings at an area near you. The trainings will be approximately three hours and will cover the following topics:

## EFFECTIVE SAFETY COMMITTEES

Now that you have a safety committee, the real work begins. We will start by briefly reviewing the essential requirements for a safety committee, followed by a discussion on effective strategies. Then, we will explore the top 10 ideas and best practices to keep your committee members engaged during meetings and to drive safety and health improvements in your district.

## PROPERTY CLAIMS UPDATES

What are the most frequent property claims? Or the most expensive? How can you mitigate the losses or even prevent them? We will discuss typical property claims, what to look for at your locations, and steps to take if a loss occurs.

## CYBERSECURITY BASICS: PROTECTING YOUR ORGANIZATION WITHOUT BEING AN IT EXPERT

Cyber threats are increasing, and special districts are frequent targets for cybercriminals. This session will help non-technical professionals recognize common cyber risks, understand their impact, and take practical steps to strengthen cybersecurity. Through real-world examples and interactive activities, participants will learn about common methods cyber criminals use to target special districts and simple steps anyone can take to boost their district's cyber resilience. By the end, attendees will have a clear roadmap to assess their organization's cybersecurity readiness and make immediate improvements.

## DATES AND LOCATIONS

- July 29 - Bend
- July 30 - The Dalles
- Sept 18 - Eugene
- Oct 21 - Medford
- Oct 22 - Coos Bay
- Dec 9 - Seaside
- Dec 10 - Tigard

## TIME

9am-12pm (Lunch provided)

## REGISTRATION

- **\$25** for SDAO members and SDIS agents
- **\$75** for non-members



**REGISTER**

# SDAO HUMAN RESOURCES REGIONAL TRAINING

## **JOB DESCRIPTIONS: BECAUSE 'FIGURING IT OUT AS YOU GO' IS NOT A STRATEGY**

Job descriptions are not just a list of duties – they are the heart and soul of your district's personnel management system! Think of them as the foundation of your employee empire. But don't worry! We're here to help you turn your job descriptions from "meh" to magnificent.

Join Monica Schultz from SDAO for a fun (hopefully) and informative session where we'll unravel the mysteries of writing job descriptions that don't just end with "all other duties as assigned".

## **CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE: CONFLICT EDITION**

Join Laurie Grenya from HR Answers for a lively and interactive session. Step into the driver's seat of conflict resolution in this engaging, high-energy session where you control the outcome! Through real-time decision-making, participants will navigate workplace challenges, peer disputes, and customer confrontations—choosing from multiple response options at key turning points. Vote. React. Adapt. Your choices shape the story, leading to either successful de-escalation or unexpected twists that keep everyone on their toes and learning these important skills.

## **THE TRUTH IS OUT THERE: A HUMOROUS GUIDE TO WORKPLACE INVESTIGATIONS**

Join Spencer in a lighthearted, but critically serious discussion about fact-finding inquiries in the workplace. From the basics of identifying the need, determining the best person to investigate, defining the scope and crafting the inquiry. Come prepared with stories and the willingness to have some interactive fun.

## **GROW YOUR OWN: DEVELOPING AND MANAGING EMPLOYEE TALENT FROM WITHIN**

Join MaryKay from SDAO in exploring talent management and development, a strategic process that helps employees improve their skills and advance in their career while also helping your organization meet goals and move forward.

Member districts are eligible for one free registration **using code HRREG25**. Free registrations are limited and available on a first come, first serve basis.

## **DATES AND LOCATIONS**

**April 29** – Pendleton

**May 1** – Redmond

**May 13** – Klamath Falls

**May 14** – Roseburg

**May 21** – Newport

**May 29** – Salem

**9AM-3PM**

**COST:**

**\$85 for SDAO Members and SDIS Agents**

**\$185 for Non-Members**

**REGISTRATION:**

**<https://cvent.me/2Zvl42>**





**Deadline: November 7, 2025**

# 2025 BEST PRACTICES Program

*SDAO members in the property/liability program can receive up to a 10% discount on 2026 general liability, auto liability and property insurance contributions. There are five opportunities to earn 2% towards the total discount. These opportunities include the following:*

## **1. AFFILIATE ORGANIZATION MEMBERSHIP | CREDIT: 2%**

You will receive a 2% credit for being a member of any of the following affiliated organizations:

- Cemetery Association of Oregon
- Oregon APCO-NENA
- Oregon Association of Chiefs of Police
- Oregon Association of Clean Water Agencies
- Oregon Association of Conservation Districts
- Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems
- Oregon Association of Water Utilities
- Oregon Economic Development District Association
- Oregon Fire Chiefs Association
- Oregon Fire District Directors Association
- Oregon Library Association
- Oregon Mosquito and Vector Control Association
- Oregon People's Utility Districts Association
- Oregon PRIMA
- Oregon Public Ports Association
- Oregon Recreation and Park Association
- Oregon Rural Health Association
- Oregon Transit Association
- Oregon Water Resources Congress

## 2. SDAO/SDIS TRAINING | CREDIT: 2%

At least one (1) representative of the district must complete a SDAO/SDIS training of the following listed options:

- Any SDAO Regional Training - Board, HR/Legal, or Risk Management
- SDAO Annual Conference
- Metro Breakfast
- Board Practices Assessment Training

## 3. CHECKLIST | CREDIT: 2%

To receive credit in this category, you must complete the self-evaluation checklist that is available within the Best Practices Survey online.

## 4. POLICY REQUIREMENT | CREDIT: 2%

### **FOR DISTRICTS WITH EMPLOYEES:**

In order to receive the 2% credit, districts must have adopted or have a current policy (updated within the last two years) in regard to Paid Leave Oregon. A sample policy will be provided in the SDAO Resource Library ( [www.sdaoresourcelibrary.com](http://www.sdaoresourcelibrary.com)) called Sample – Paid Leave Oregon Policy.

### **FOR DISTRICTS WITHOUT EMPLOYEES:**

In order to receive the 2% credit, districts must have adopted or have a current policy (updated within the last two years) in regard to ethics. A sample policy will be provided in the SDAO Resource Library ([www.sdaoresourcelibrary.com](http://www.sdaoresourcelibrary.com)) called Sample – Ethics Policy.

## 5. ONLINE TRAINING | CREDIT: 2%

### **FOR DISTRICTS WITH EMPLOYEES:**

In order to receive the 2% credit, ALL managers/supervisors of the district must complete an online employment practices/supervisory training offered on Vector Solutions (formerly SafePersonnel). These trainings will be located in the course library and can be found by searching for Employment Practices/Supervisory in the search box. Any trainings in this category can be taken.

### **FOR DISTRICTS WITHOUT EMPLOYEES:**

In order to receive the 2% credit, ALL members of the district's board must complete the Government Ethics training offered on Vector Solutions (formerly SafePersonnel). This training will be located in the course library under the SDIS custom course category.





# CONFLICT RESOLUTION

## HR'S ROLE IN

In every workplace, differences in opinions, values, and work styles are inevitable. While diversity fosters innovation, it can also give rise to conflicts. Human resources (HR) plays a pivotal role in guiding organizations through effective conflict resolution, ensuring that tensions don't escalate into disruptions that harm productivity, employee morale, or the organization's culture. Let's explore essential strategies for conflict resolution from an HR perspective.

### UNDERSTANDING WORKPLACE CONFLICT

Workplace conflict can arise from various sources, including:

- **Interpersonal differences:** Variations in communication styles, personalities, and work ethics.
- **Role ambiguity:** Unclear responsibilities and overlapping duties can lead to misunderstandings and competition.
- **Resource scarcity:** Limited resources, whether it's time, budget, or equipment, can spark tension.
- **Performance issues:** Disagreements about job performance, feedback, and accountability can escalate into conflicts.
- **Cultural differences:** Different backgrounds, beliefs, and values can sometimes result in misunderstandings and friction.

Addressing these issues effectively is crucial for maintaining a positive, productive work environment.

### HR'S ROLE IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION

HR professionals are essential in managing workplace conflicts. Their role extends beyond just mediating disputes; they are also responsible for fostering an environment where conflicts can be addressed openly and constructively. Key responsibilities include:

#### 1. PROACTIVE PREVENTION: SETTING THE STAGE FOR A POSITIVE WORKPLACE CULTURE

- **Clear policies and guidelines:** Establish clear behavioral expectations and conflict resolution procedures.
- **Training and development:** Offer conflict management and communication skills training for employees at all levels.



- **Inclusive culture:** Embrace diversity and ensure that all employees feel respected and valued.
- **Employee engagement:** Regularly check in with employees to gauge their satisfaction and address concerns before they escalate.

## 2. MEDIATION: ADDRESSING CONFLICT EARLY AND EFFECTIVELY

- **Active listening:** Allow all parties to express their viewpoints without interruption.
- **Clarifying the issue:** Identify the root cause of the conflict, not just the symptoms.
- **Encouraging mutual respect:** Ensure that both parties acknowledge each other's perspectives and work towards understanding.
- **Facilitating solutions:** Help employees come to an agreement on practical solutions, such as adjusted workloads, clearer expectations, or changes in behavior.

## 3. TRAINING MANAGERS TO HANDLE CONFLICT: EMPOWERING LEADERSHIP

- **Conflict resolution skills:** Teach managers to navigate conflicts before they escalate by encouraging open dialogue and addressing issues quickly.
- **Emotional intelligence:** Help leaders understand the emotions behind conflicts, which can aid in managing tensions and promoting empathy.
- **Coaching and feedback:** Encourage managers to regularly provide constructive feedback and coaching, preventing misunderstandings that might lead to conflict.

## 4. CREATING A STRUCTURED CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCESS: A TRANSPARENT APPROACH

- **Clear procedures:** Define a clear, documented conflict resolution procedure that is easily accessible to all employees.
- **Confidentiality:** Ensure employees feel safe to raise concerns without fear of retaliation.
- **Escalation protocols:** Provide a framework for escalating conflicts that cannot be resolved at the initial stages, ensuring that issues are addressed at the appropriate level.
- **Follow-up:** HR should ensure that resolutions are monitored and that any recurring conflicts are addressed.

## 5. PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR AFFECTED EMPLOYEES: EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING


- **Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs):** Offer professional support for employees dealing with conflict-related stress.
- **Confidential consultations:** Provide a private space for employees to express their concerns and receive guidance.
- **Follow-up:** Check in with employees post-resolution to ensure that the conflict has been fully addressed and that they are feeling supported.

When handled appropriately, conflict can be an opportunity for growth and improvement. By addressing conflict early and constructively, HR can help improve communication, as conflicts often highlight gaps in communication and resolving them can encourage more open and honest discussions. Additionally, it can boost morale; when employees feel heard and understood, their trust in leadership and the company increases. Enhanced productivity is another benefit, as resolved conflicts lead to fewer distractions and a more focused, engaged workforce. Finally, fostering collaboration is a key outcome, as team members who resolve differences often develop stronger working relationships and a better understanding of one another's strengths.

Conflict resolution is not about avoiding conflict altogether, but rather about addressing it in a way that is respectful, fair, and productive. HR professionals play a vital role in guiding organizations through conflict by preventing issues from escalating, mediating disputes, training leadership, and providing support for employees. With the right approach, conflicts can be resolved in a way that strengthens teams, fosters positive work relationships, and enhances the overall work environment. By embracing conflict as an opportunity for growth, HR can help create a more resilient and cohesive workplace.

For help with conflict management in your district, explore the SDAO Vendor Solutions Network on our website at [www.sdao.com/vendor-solutions-network-directory](http://www.sdao.com/vendor-solutions-network-directory).





# PREPARING FOR POTENTIAL FLOODING: ESSENTIAL STEPS TO PROTECT YOUR PROPERTY

As we approach the warmer months, Oregon is expected to experience increased temperatures and precipitation. This combination could lead to an early snowpack melt-off, raising the risk of flooding across the state. With the snowpack levels slightly above average this year, it is crucial to take proactive measures to mitigate potential flood damage.

## UNDERSTANDING THE RISK

The snowpack that has accumulated over the winter must eventually melt, and when combined with warmer temperatures and additional rainfall, the likelihood of flooding increases. Flooding can cause significant damage to properties, infrastructure, and the environment. Therefore, it is essential to be prepared and take preventive actions.

## KEY PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- **Clear Storm Drain Covers:** Ensure that all storm drain covers are free of debris. This allows water to flow through the drainage system efficiently, reducing the risk of water accumulation and flooding on your property.
- **Test Sump Pumps and Other Devices:** Regularly test sump pumps and other water removal devices to ensure they are functioning correctly. These devices play a critical role in keeping water out of crawlspaces and basements.
- **Move Mobile Equipment:** Relocate mobile equipment and other valuable items off the ground to higher, safer locations. This can help prevent damage and loss in the event of flooding.
- **Monitor Weather Forecasts:** Stay informed about weather conditions and forecasts. Being aware of potential heavy rainfall and rapid snowmelt can help you take timely actions to protect your property.
- **Develop an Emergency Plan:** Create and practice an emergency response plan with your team. Ensure that everyone knows their roles and responsibilities in the event of a flood.

## HOPE FOR THE BEST, PREPARE FOR THE WORST

While we hope that temperatures do not rise too quickly and that we avoid early spring flooding, it is always better to be prepared. By taking these preventive measures, you can help safeguard your property and community from the potential impacts of flooding.

Stay vigilant, stay prepared, and let's work together to ensure the safety and resilience of our districts.

**GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS**

Hasina Wittenberg: 503-906-7228  
Mark Landauer: 503-906-7238

**MEMBER SERVICES**

Toll-Free: 800-285-5461  
Email: [memberservices@sdao.com](mailto:memberservices@sdao.com)  
Fax: 503-371-4781

**UNDERWRITING**

Toll-Free: 800-285-5461  
Email: [underwriting@sdao.com](mailto:underwriting@sdao.com)  
Fax: 503-371-4781

**RISK MANAGEMENT**

Toll-Free: 800-285-5461  
Email: [riskmanagement@sdao.com](mailto:riskmanagement@sdao.com)  
Fax: 503-371-4781

**REPORT AN SDIS P/C CLAIM**

Toll-Free: 800-305-1736  
Email: [claims@sdao.com](mailto:claims@sdao.com)  
Fax: 503-620-9817

## MEMBER CALENDAR

- April 2* SDIS Board of Trustees
- April 3* SDAO Board of Directors/SDIS Board of Trustees Work Session | Gleneden Beach
- April 3* SDAO Board of Directors Meeting | Gleneden Beach
- April 3* Webinar: Federal Grant Funding Outlook for 2025
- April 3* First Thursday Webinar
- May 1* First Thursday Webinar
- May 6* Webinar: Water Funding
- May 6* HR Regional Training – Pendleton
- May 8* HR Regional Training – Redmond
- May 13* HR Regional Training – Klamath Falls
- May 14* HR Regional Training – Roseburg
- May 15* Webinar: Promoting Your Special District (Part One)
- May 21* HR Regional Training – Newport
- May 22* Webinar: Promoting Your Special District (Part Two)
- May 26* Memorial Day – SDAO Offices Closed
- May 29* HR Regional Training – Salem
- June 4* SDIS Board of Trustees Meeting – Tigard
- June 5* First Thursday Webinar
- June 12* SDAO Board of Directors Meeting – Salem
- June 24* Webinar: Disaster Response Recovery Resilience