



News & Risk Management Review

SUMMER 2026

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Next Board of Directors Meeting

September 10th | 10am | SDAO Office - Salem, OR

Executive Director

Frank Stratton

Services

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

Contact

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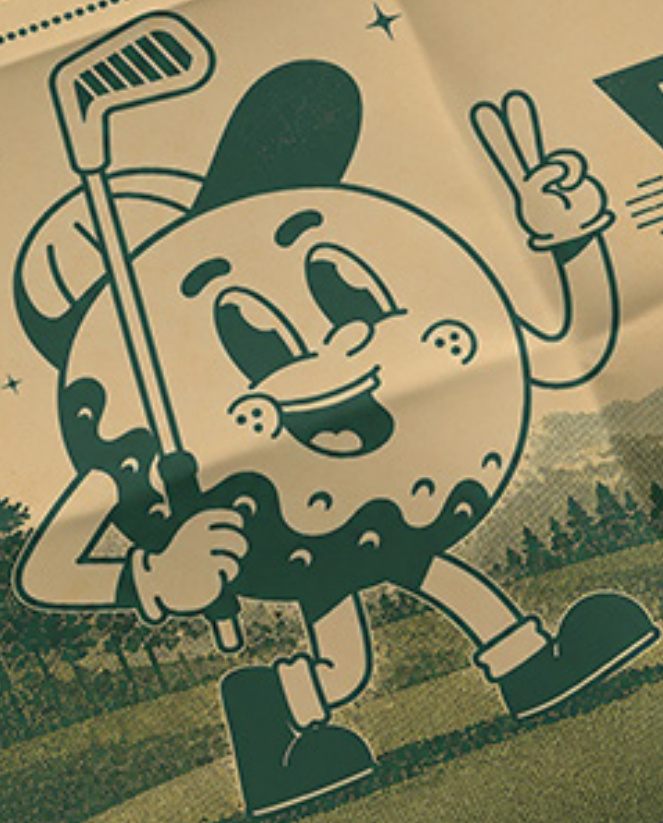
SDAO MEMBER

SCHOLARSHIP

GOLF TOURNAMENT

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 11TH, 2026

REGISTER
NOW



TEE UP FOR A GREAT DAY AT CHEHALEM GLENN!

Get ready to spend an afternoon on the beautiful Chehalem Glenn Golf Course in Newberg this September. Whether you're an experienced golfer or just out to have some fun, this event is designed for everyone to enjoy a relaxed day outdoors.

WHAT TO EXPECT:

EASYGOING, FUN ATMOSPHERE

This tournament is about enjoying the game, getting outside, and having a good time with colleagues and friends.

CONNECT WITH PEERS

Take advantage of the opportunity to visit with fellow special district professionals, SDAO staff, and sponsors in a casual setting that makes networking easy.

SUPPORT MEMBER EDUCATION

Tournament proceeds benefit the SDAO Scholarship and Grant Fund to support training and education for members.

THINKING ABOUT A SCHOLARSHIP?

SDAO offers scholarships throughout the year to support professional development. Funds can be used for a wide range of educational opportunities related to special district work.

Visit the [**SDAO Scholarship and Grant Fund**](#) page to:

- Learn about the program
- Access the application
- View supporting partners

If you've been considering a training opportunity, this is a great way to help make it happen. We hope to see you out on the course on September 11th!

Learn more and register at [**https://cvent.me/KryNDz**](https://cvent.me/KryNDz)



SCAN TO REGISTER!

ANNUAL BUDGET AND CONTACT INFORMATION UPDATE

Each year, we request updated budget and contact information from our members. This ensures accurate records and helps us calculate your membership dues.

In June, we emailed the budget forms to district key contacts with an email address on file. Physical copies were mailed to those without an email address.

In July, we will send out the contact information update forms. Please use these to keep us updated on board members and employees at your district.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Submitting your budget information is required to maintain your SDAO membership and insurance coverage through Special Districts Insurance Services.

HOW TO COMPLETE THE FORMS

- Use your district's 2026-27 LB-1 form as a reference.
- If your district does not file an LB-1, refer to your budget documents.
- If no formal budget exists, provide a list of applicable expenditures.
- Include supporting documentation (LB-1, budget, or expenditure list).
- Note: Property tax forms like the LB-50 are not accepted.
- Review the district roster we sent and notify us of any changes.

HOW TO SUBMIT

Send your completed form and supporting documents via:

MAIL

PO Box 12613
Salem, OR 97309

EMAIL

memberservices@sdao.com

FAX

503-371-4781

QUESTIONS?

We're here to help! Contact us at memberservices@sdao.com.

LEGISLATIVE ISSUES SUBMISSION



The SDAO Legislative Committee is beginning the process of identifying legislative issues for the upcoming Legislative Session. The committee will evaluate each issue as it begins developing its priorities.

It is the policy of the Legislative Committee that legislative proposals submitted by members will be considered based on the following criteria:

- The effect of the legislation on the majority of special districts in Oregon.
- Whether the proposed legislation impacts a large number of districts in a geographic region or large population area.
- The fiscal impact of the proposed legislation on special districts.
- How the proposed legislation impacts types of special districts.
- Be of statewide importance.

Based on the above criteria, the Legislative Committee shall determine if the proposed legislation will be sponsored or co-sponsored. All bills recommended for sponsorship by the committee will be submitted to the SDAO Board of Directors for review.

If you would like to request a legislative change, please complete and **return the online form** no later than **July 30, 2026**.

MINIMUM WAGE INCREASE: EFFECTIVE JULY 1ST



Oregon's minimum wage will increase on July 1, 2026, as part of the state's annual adjustment tied to inflation. **Beginning July 1, the new minimum wage rates will be:**

- **\$16.80** per hour in the Portland metro area
- **\$15.55** per hour in standard counties
- **\$14.55** per hour in nonurban counties

Employers should ensure payroll systems are updated to reflect the new rates and be aware that employees must be paid at least the minimum wage based on where the work is performed. As in past years, employers are also required to post updated minimum wage notices in the workplace.

S | D | A | O

SPECIAL DISTRICTS
ASSOCIATION OF OREGON

— **SAVE THE DATE** —

— **2027** —

SDAO ANNUAL
Conference



Sunriver Resort®

EST. 1968

WE WILL BE AT THE
SUNRIVER RESORT

— FROM —

FEBRUARY 4-7, 2027



SAVE THE DATE!

Save the date for the 2027 SDAO Annual Conference!
We will be holding this event at the Sunriver Resort
from February 4-7.



MORE DETAILS COMING SOON!

More details including an agenda and registration
information will be available on December 1st.



PLEASE WATCH OUR WEBSITE AT
www.sdao.com/annual-conference

2027

SDAO

Awards Program

SDAO | SPECIAL DISTRICTS
ASSOCIATION OF OREGON

Help us celebrate the ingenuity, creativity, and diversity of our members by nominating an individual or special district for the SDAO Awards Program! This program recognizes the outstanding accomplishments of member districts as well as district board members, managers, employees, and volunteers.

OUTSTANDING SPECIAL DISTRICT PROGRAM (DISTRICT)

This award category recognizes innovative projects and programs, outstanding safety, public information, public involvement in a district decision making process, and outstanding achievement. Three subcategories have been established for this award:

- Districts with 5 or fewer employees
- Districts with 6 to 25 employees
- Districts with 26 or more employees

OUTSTANDING SPECIAL DISTRICT SERVICE (INDIVIDUAL)

This award category recognizes individuals who have contributed substantially to the improvement and successful operation of their special district. Four subcategories have been established for this award:

- Board Member
- Manager (Nomination must be submitted by the district's board of directors.)
- Employee (Nomination must be submitted by the district's manager.)
- Volunteer

SDAO Board of Directors and SDIS Board of Trustees members are ineligible to be nominated for this award. Winners will be recognized at the 2027 SDAO Annual Conference in Sunriver.

The deadline to submit a nomination is October 2nd.

To learn more visit www.sdao.com/sdao-awards-program.

CONSULTING SERVICES UPDATE

BY: SHANTA CARTER, CONSULTING SERVICES MANAGER

Summer is in full swing, and so is the work of special districts across Oregon. As projects move forward and priorities shift, the SDAO Consulting Services team continues to partner with districts to provide practical support, guidance, and solutions that help keep things moving. From navigating leadership transitions to evaluating operations and strengthening governance, we're here to support you through every stage of the work.

SUMMER SPOTLIGHT: ORGANIZATIONAL ASSESSMENTS

As districts grow and evolve, many are finding value in taking a step back to evaluate operations, structure, and long-term sustainability.

Organizational Assessments provide an independent, comprehensive look at how your district is functioning today and where there may be opportunities for improvement. Through interviews, document review, and operational analysis, our consultants help identify strengths, clarify roles, and provide practical, actionable recommendations.

We're seeing increased interest in this service as districts navigate staffing changes, operational challenges, and planning for the future. Whether you're looking to fine-tune operations or take a broader look at organizational alignment, an assessment can provide valuable insight and direction.

ALSO TRENDING: PUBLIC MEETINGS LAW TRAINING

Public Meetings Law Training continues to be one of our most requested services, with flexible options to meet your district's needs.

In-person trainings remain available and provide an excellent opportunity for board members and staff to engage in discussion, ask questions, and work through real-world scenarios specific to their district. These sessions often lead to deeper understanding and stronger board practices.

For those looking for convenience and flexibility, the online training through Vector Solutions allows individuals to complete the training on their own time while still meeting requirements and building a solid foundation in Public Meetings Law.

Together, these options ensure districts have accessible, practical tools to support compliance, transparency, and effective governance.

A STRONG FOUNDATION: EMPLOYEE HANDBOOKS

Employee Handbooks continue to be one of the most important—but often overlooked—tools for district operations.

A well-developed handbook provides clarity and consistency for both staff and leadership. It helps ensure that expectations are clearly communicated, policies are applied consistently, and districts remain aligned with current employment laws and best practices. Without a current handbook, districts may face unnecessary risk, confusion in day-to-day operations, or inconsistencies in how policies are applied. Keeping your handbook updated is a proactive step that supports both organizational health and risk reduction.

Our consultants can assist with developing new handbooks, updating existing policies, and ensuring alignment between board direction and daily operations.

START HERE: GETTING CONNECTED TO THE RIGHT SUPPORT

While Consulting Services provides support across a wide range of governance, operational, and strategic needs, the best first step for most requests is to reach out to [**help@sdao.com**](mailto:help@sdao.com). Starting here ensures your question is quickly reviewed and directed to the right resource, whether that's Consulting Services, Legal, HR Answers, or another SDAO program. This coordinated approach helps avoid duplication, ensures consistent guidance, and connects you with the right expertise from the beginning, saving time and helping you get the most effective support possible.

ON THE ROAD: TRAINING AND CONFERENCES

With the OFCA Conference behind us and Regional Training Summits already underway, it's been a busy and productive season connecting with members across the state.

We look forward to continuing this work through additional Regional Training Summits and providing Public Meetings Law training at the upcoming ORPA Conference in September. These events are a great opportunity to share practical tools, answer questions, and connect directly with districts.

WE'RE HERE TO HELP

Have a project in mind or a challenge you're working through? Many of our consulting services are included in your district's free eight hours each year.

Please visit [**https://www.sdao.com/consulting-services-program**](https://www.sdao.com/consulting-services-program) to learn more about the services we provide.



WHY GOING WITH THE

LOWEST BIDDER

ISN'T ALWAYS THE BEST OPTION

FOR MUNICIPALITIES



BY: NPPGov

In the realm of public procurement, municipalities are often faced with the daunting task of balancing budget constraints with the need for high-quality goods and services. Traditionally, this has been addressed by opting for the lowest bidder during solicitations. While it might seem like a fiscally responsible choice initially, this approach can sometimes lead municipalities down a costly path in the long run.

THE PITFALLS OF CHOOSING THE LOWEST BIDDER

1. **Quality Concerns:** The most significant risk of selecting the lowest bidder is the potential compromise in quality. Vendors offering the lowest price may cut corners in materials, craftsmanship, or technology, resulting in products or services that do not stand the test of time. Poor quality can lead to higher costs over time through repairs, maintenance, or, ultimately, replacement.
2. **Hidden Costs:** Often, the lowest bid might not account for all necessary components or services. These may emerge later as "unexpected" costs, negating any initial savings. For instance, a low bid might not include delivery, installation, or support services, which could result in municipalities having to spend more post-purchase.
3. **Supplier Reliability:** Lower bids can sometimes come from vendors who lack a robust track record. It's not uncommon for less reliable suppliers to submit aggressive bids to win contracts, only to struggle with compliance or delivery. This can cause project delays and require significant time and effort to manage the vendor relationship.
4. **Short-term Fixes Over Long-term Solutions:** Lowest bids might solve an immediate problem but fail to align with the municipality's long-term goals. This can result in a cycle of constant procurement, disrupting operations and increasing costs over time.

COOPERATIVE CONTRACTS: A STRATEGIC ALTERNATIVE

Enter cooperative purchasing contracts, a strategic alternative that can help municipalities navigate these challenges effectively. Organizations like NPPGov offer cooperative purchasing solutions designed to provide municipalities with access to quality goods and services via well-researched, competitively solicited contracts.



BENEFITS OF COOPERATIVE CONTRACTS TO MITIGATE LOWEST BIDDER CONCERNS

1. **Quality Assurance:** Cooperative contracts are typically awarded based on a blend of quality and price. This ensures that municipalities are not just locking in a fair price but also prioritizing suppliers who have demonstrated reliability and quality in their offerings.
2. **Cost Efficiencies:** By leveraging the buying power of multiple entities, cooperative purchasing agencies can negotiate better terms and deeper discounts which individual municipalities may not secure on their own. Additionally, such contracts often include thorough scopes that encompass ancillary costs such as installation or advanced support services.
3. **Simplified Procurement Process:** Cooperative contracts offer pre-negotiated agreements that streamline the procurement process, reducing administrative burdens and operational costs. Municipalities can thus reinvest saved time and effort into other projects or services.
4. **Expert Vetting:** Cooperative purchasing organizations conduct thorough vetting of their suppliers, ensuring that municipalities have access to reputable and experienced vendors. This reduces the risk of project delays and provides municipalities assurance in supplier capability and reliability.
5. **Flexibility and Innovation:** Cooperative contracts keep pace with market trends and innovations, ensuring municipalities have access to cutting-edge solutions that might otherwise be unattainable when constrained by budget or urgency.

By understanding the hidden complexities and potential pitfalls of the lowest-bidder approach, municipalities can make more informed decisions. Opting for cooperative contracts can unlock a multitude of benefits—ensuring quality, price value, and a hassle-free procurement experience.

At the end of the day, focusing on the overall value rather than just the immediate cost can lead municipalities toward sustainable and effective outcomes. Cooperative purchasing not only aligns with fiscal responsibility but positions municipalities to procure with confidence and foresight.

NPPGov is part of the SDAO Vendor Solutions Network. To learn more, visit sdao.com/nppgov.



The SDAO Regional Training Summit delivers governance, HR, legal, and risk management education in a focused, two-day format. Board members, managers, and staff will gain practical skills they can apply immediately, while also connecting with special district peers from across the state. This event offers both high-value learning and meaningful networking opportunities.

DAY ONE (BOARD GOVERNANCE FOCUS)

Responsibilities and Requirements of Special District Board Members

Get a concise overview of the essential duties of special district board members, emphasizing the legal and ethical standards required for effective governance. Participants will gain clarity on their decision-making authority, statutory responsibilities, and accountability to the public.

KEY TOPICS

- Ethics and conflicts of interest
- Ordinances and resolutions (adoption & use)
- Board powers and liability protections
- Public meetings & public records requirements
- Roles and responsibilities of board members
- Budgeting and financial oversight
- Core principles of public contracting

*scan to
register!*



REGISTRATION INFORMATION

» **One-Day Only: \$75**

» **Two-Days : \$145**

Cost includes continental breakfast, lunch, and coffee.

Use code **SDAORTS26** for **\$75 off** your registration. Limited amount of codes available. First come, first served. Limit one code per district.

Register online at

<https://cvent.me/NaDa2v>

DAY TWO (HUMAN RESOURCES, LEGAL, & RISK MANAGEMENT FOCUS)

HR, Legal, and Risk Management Topics for Managers and Staff

Day two of our summit will focus on human resources, legal, and risk management topics important to special districts. These include:

- **Sex Abuse in Special Districts**

Recognize grooming behaviors, understand predator tactics, know your reporting obligations, and implement boundary setting practices that keep youth safer in your programs.

- **Handbooks: A Living Tool (Not a One and Done)**

Your employee handbook – what must be in (and out) it, how to align policy with practice, and how to maintain it without becoming a yearly fire drill.

- **The Inspection Process**

Learn how walkthroughs identify hazards, reduce exposure, and strengthen safety – plus how partnering with Risk Management Consultants improves loss prevention efforts.

- **Driving District Vehicles**

Reduce incident rates, claims, and brand damage while improving productivity – learn how to implement a district-wide defensive driving program that works.

- **Employment ADA: Workplace Accommodations**

We'll break down what to do from first hint to closure: triage, interactive process, documentation, roles, and real world examples for consistent, lawful responses.

- **Employee Leaves: Optional & Required (Oregon's "Leave Swamp")**

Map mandatory vs. discretionary leaves, set clear rules where the law sets only the floor, and simplify tracking and communications.

DATES & LOCATIONS (SAME PROGRAM AT EACH SITE)

August 18–19

Redmond

Eagle Crest

October 13–14

Newport

Hallmark Inn

9:00 AM – 4:00 PM EACH DAY

AVAILABLE CREDITS



QUESTIONS?

SDAO Member Services

800 285 5461 • memberservices@sdao.com



LOCAL ELECTION OVERVIEW









By: Hasina Wittenberg, Legislative Director



Oregon’s May 2026 primary election featured more than 100 local government measures statewide, with voter turnout reaching approximately 41% — significantly higher than a typical May election and well above historical May turnout averages.

Special districts accounted for the largest share of local government measures on the ballot this cycle, with 47 measures submitted statewide. Approximately 74% of those measures passed. Cities placed 35 measures before voters and saw a similar overall passage rate of roughly 73%. Counties referred 9 measures with a 56% passage rate, while school districts placed 10 measures on the ballot, splitting evenly with a 50% approval rate.


The following table summarizes the number of local government measures referred to voters during the May 2026 election cycle and their overall passage rates by government type:

 CATEGORY	 MEASURES	 PASSAGE RATE
 Special Districts	47	74%
 Cities	35	73%
 Counties	9	56%
 School Districts	10	50%
 Statewide Transportation Measure (120)	1	Failed

The more meaningful divide emerged when examining the types of measures succeeding with voters. Revenue and operations measures tied to direct service delivery — particularly fire protection, emergency response, transportation operations, and infrastructure maintenance — generally performed well at the district level. By contrast, broader statewide and general governmental tax proposals faced substantially greater resistance.

The clearest example was the statewide rejection of Measure 120, the transportation funding referral that would have increased gas taxes, title and registration fees, and transit payroll taxes. The results suggest Oregon voters continue distinguishing between localized operational funding tied to visible community services and broader statewide revenue increases occurring amid ongoing affordability concerns.

A full summary of local election results can be found here - www.sdao.com/legislative-update-may-2026



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

SDIS Board of Trustees

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- Treasurer:** Stacy Maxwell, Jackson County Fire District 3
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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
- Risk Management
- Pre-Loss Legal
- Public Safety EAP
- Safety and Security Grant Program
- SDIS Insurance Programs

Next SDIS Board of Trustees Meeting

September 9th | 10am | SDAO Office - Tigard, OR

Supervisor Essentials — *for* — Oregon Special Districts

Register Now!

Supervisors in Oregon's special districts operate in real time with minimized staff, public-facing work, limited administrative capacity, and high expectations for consistency and fairness. The margin for error is small, and the impact of inconsistent decisions can be significant.

That's why HR Answers has refreshed their Supervision Series exclusively for members of SDAO.

This live, instructor-led webinar series is streamlined, practical, and built specifically for the realities of public sector supervision. No busywork. No unnecessary theory. Just defensible decision-making, role clarity, and tools supervisors can use immediately.

SERIES OVERVIEW

6 sessions | 18 total training hours

9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Live virtual format

Foundation Block (Sessions 1–3)

Tuesday, August 25, 2026

Tuesday, September 1, 2026

Tuesday, September 8, 2026

Advanced Practice Block (Sessions 4–6)

Tuesday, October 6, 2026

Tuesday, October 13, 2026

Tuesday, October 20, 2026

SESSION TOPICS

FOUNDATION BLOCK

- **Supervisor Essentials:** Roles, guardrails, and a defensible decision framework
- **Communication That Works:** EQ, clarity, feedback, and follow-through
- **Supervisor Legal Playbook:** Key legal touchpoints, escalation moments, and documentation

ADVANCED PRACTICE BLOCK

- **Hiring Right and Starting Strong:** Selection structure, fairness, and first-30-days expectations
- **Conflict Without the Chaos:** Early intervention, tough meetings, and restoring working relationships
- **Performance That Improves:** Coaching, accountability, engagement, and team cohesion

By the end of the program, supervisors are better equipped to:

- » Address issues early and consistently
- » Communicate expectations clearly and document appropriately
- » Recognize legal touchpoints and avoid common risk triggers
- » Hire more effectively and improve retention
- » Manage conflict and performance in ways that protect culture and compliance

If your district is ready to strengthen supervisory consistency, reduce risk, and equip leaders with practical tools that work in real-time environments, we invite you to register.

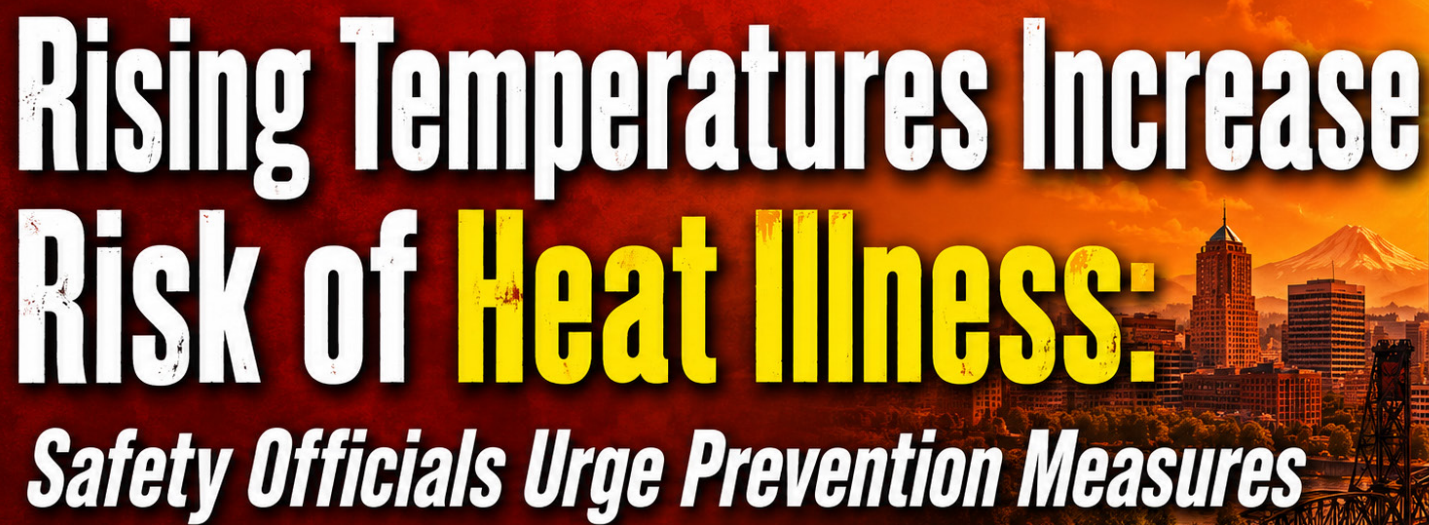
COST

Through the SDAO partnership with HR Answers, members can attend for just \$400 - over 50% off the regular rate!

Visit the HR Answers website for more information and to register -

<https://hranswers.trainercentralsite.com/course/sdao-supervisor-essentials-2026/>





Rising Temperatures Increase Risk of **Heat Illness:** *Safety Officials Urge Prevention Measures*

By: Greg Jackson, Sr. Risk Management Consultant

As temperatures begin to climb across Oregon, now is the time to remind workers, and outdoor crews that heat-related illnesses can escalate quickly and prevention is critical.

Heat exhaustion and heat stroke remain serious concerns during warmer months, particularly for employees working outdoors, at indoor pools, maintenance teams, and supervising summer programs. Early preparation and awareness can significantly reduce the risk of injury or fatal outcomes.

HYDRATION REMAINS THE FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE

One of the most important prevention strategies is maintaining proper hydration. Individuals working or spending extended time outdoors or in environments with a high heat index should drink water regularly throughout the day even if they do not feel thirsty. Caffeinated beverages should be limited, as they can contribute to dehydration.

Frequent water consumption, especially during physical activity or prolonged sun exposure is highly recommended.

PROPER CLOTHING AND SUN PROTECTION MATTER

Clothing choices can significantly impact body temperature. Lightweight, loose-fitting garments made of breathable fabrics such as cotton help promote airflow and cooling. Light-colored clothing is also recommended, as darker fabrics absorb heat.

In addition, sunscreen, wide-brimmed hats, and protective eyewear can reduce exposure to harmful UV radiation and prevent sunburn, which can further stress the body.

SCHEDULED BREAKS AND SHADE ARE CRITICAL

Regular rest breaks in shaded or air-conditioned environments are essential for preventing overheating. Workers and supervisors are encouraged to monitor environmental conditions and adjust workloads accordingly.

Allowing the body time to cool down is a key component in reducing heat stress during high-temperature conditions.

RECOGNIZING EARLY WARNING SIGNS SAVES LIVES

Understanding the difference between heat exhaustion and heat stroke can be lifesaving.

- Heat exhaustion symptoms may include heavy sweating, dizziness, nausea, weakness, and headaches.
- Heat stroke, a medical emergency, may present with confusion, rapid pulse, hot or dry skin, and loss of consciousness.

Immediate medical attention should be sought if symptoms escalate or do not improve.

WATCH OUT FOR OTHERS

A critical but often overlooked prevention strategy is monitoring coworkers, or vulnerable individuals. Those at higher risk including older adults and individuals with certain medical conditions may require additional support during extreme heat.

Early intervention is imperative to prevent serious outcomes.

OREGON OSHA REQUIREMENTS REINFORCE PREVENTION

Oregon OSHA requires employers to implement heat illness prevention measures, including training, access to water, and protective strategies for employees exposed to high temperatures or that meet the exposure limits based on the heat index.

Organizations are encouraged to review applicable requirements and ensure employees understand their role in preventing heat illness.

PREVENTION IS THE BEST PROTECTION

With summer conditions approaching, it is important that preparation, awareness, and proactive action are essential. Staying hydrated, taking breaks, and recognizing early symptoms can make the difference between a safe workday and a medical emergency.

For additional guidance, organizations are encouraged to reach out to the Risk Management Department for resources and support at [***RiskManagement@sdao.com***](mailto:RiskManagement@sdao.com)





**SUMMER READINESS:
STAYING PROACTIVE
DURING SUMMER
CLAIMS SEASON**

**BY: JENS JENSEN,
DIRECTOR OF PC CLAIMS**

As we move into the summer months, the Claims Department enters one of its most active and dynamic periods of the year. Warmer weather brings increased activity across our communities, and with that, a predictable rise in claim frequency. From severe weather events to increased travel and outdoor activities, summer presents both opportunities and challenges for the Trust.

SUMMER TRENDS TO WATCH

Each summer, we typically see a noticeable uptick in certain types of claims:

- **Weather and Fire Related Losses** – Wind and wildfire risk can lead to property damage claims that require quick, coordinated response efforts. This summer is already shaping up to be dry and hot based on weather forecasting. We did not get the snowpack we normally get so drought is going to be a factor.
- **Auto Claims** – More vehicles on the road, summer travel, and construction zones contribute to higher accident frequency.
- **Liability Claims** – Public events, recreational activities, and increased foot traffic often lead to more slip-and-fall or general liability exposures.

Understanding these patterns helps us stay prepared and responsive when our members need us most.

PREPAREDNESS IS KEY

Summer success in risk exposure avoidance is a great help. Here are three suggestions related to some of the more frequent exposures we see in the summer.

- **Weather and Fire Related Losses** – Review the defensible space around properties. Trim up vegetation that touches buildings.
- **Auto Claims** – The use of bikes, and especially e-bikes, has grown in popularity and use in Oregon. E-bikes can travel at speeds over 20 miles an hour and are difficult to see. Talking about awareness of bikes and taking extra precautions can reduce exposure.
- **Liability Claims** – Oregon is a destination for outdoor activities. Now is a good time to look through premises and parking lots to clean up hazards. While we enjoy protections related to recreation, bad facts can challenge case law.

While summer brings increased activity, it also brings an opportunity to flex risk management skills and provide safe service to patrons and residents.

2026

HR TRENDS FOR OREGON SPECIAL DISTRICTS:

Staying Compliant While Doing More with Less



By: Monica Schultz, HR Manager

As we move through 2026, human resources work in Oregon special districts continues to evolve. Not because of one single law or headline, but due to the combined weight of increased compliance requirements, workforce expectations, and limited administrative capacity. For districts of all sizes, the challenge is familiar: keeping pace with change while continuing to deliver essential public services.

The following HR trends are shaping district operations this year and are worth keeping on your radar.

HR POLICIES ARE MOVING TOWARD CONTINUOUS UPDATES, NOT PERIODIC OVERHAULS

Across Oregon, employment law changes are arriving more frequently and often overlap across pay, leave, and workplace protections. As a result, districts are increasingly moving away from “every few years” handbook revisions toward ongoing policy maintenance. Discussions among HR professionals in district settings have emphasized that handbooks more than two years old may no longer reflect current requirements, increasing compliance risk. SDAO offers a complimentary Oregon Government Employee Handbook template (reach out to hr@sdao.com for the current version). Standardized templates like this and structured update support are proving especially valuable for small and mid sized districts that do not have dedicated HR staff.

LEAVE ADMINISTRATION REMAINS ONE OF THE MOST COMPLEX HR FUNCTIONS

Leave management continues to be one of the most time intensive areas of HR administration for districts. Oregon employers must navigate multiple overlapping leave statutes, each with distinct eligibility thresholds, notice requirements, and tracking rules. To support districts, Oregon specific leave reference tools are increasingly relied upon to provide clarity on when leaves apply, how they interact, and what administrative choices remain at the district level. Streamlined resources designed specifically for Oregon special districts help reduce confusion and promote consistency across departments.

If your district has liability coverage through SDIS, you have access to HR Answers for guidance on many HR-related topics including leave administration. In addition, there are never too many trainings to be taken regarding this topic. Be sure to keep your eyes out for trainings provide by entities such as BOLI to continue your education and confidence in the administration of leaves within your district.

PAY TRANSPARENCY AND PAYROLL COMMUNICATION ARE BECOMING MORE VISIBLE

Recent Oregon employment law changes place greater emphasis on clear and detailed payroll information, including pay orientation and pay statement disclosures effective in 2026. As these requirements take effect, many districts are seeing an increase in employee questions about pay codes and deductions. Proactive communication, such as updating handbook language and offering plain language explanations of pay statements, can help reduce misunderstandings while reinforcing transparency and trust. You can access information on this topic and receive an itemized pay statement notice template at <https://www.oregon.gov/boli/workers/pages/paycheck-deductions.aspx>.

SHARED HR SERVICES ARE BECOMING THE NORM, NOT THE EXCEPTION

Given limited staffing and growing complexity, many special districts are leaning into shared HR expertise and peer networks. Districts with liability coverage through SDIS receive a defined number of annual HR consultation hours (4 hours at no additional cost then a discounted cost per hour after that) designed to support employee relations, policy interpretation, job description updates, and compliance questions. In addition, our networking group, the HR Alliance, continues to provide valuable opportunities for districts to exchange practical experience and solutions, particularly helpful when navigating unfamiliar or high risk issues.

CAUTIOUS CURIOSITY AROUND HR TECHNOLOGY AND AI

National HR trend reports consistently point to growing interest in AI and automation, but public entities face additional considerations around transparency, equity, and defensibility. For special districts, the trend in 2026 is measured adoption, using technology to support drafting, organizing, or analysis, while ensuring final decisions related to hiring, discipline, and pay remain human led and well documented. Balancing innovation with public trust remains essential.

LOOKING AHEAD

Rather than attempting to address every trend at once, districts may find success by identifying one or two focused HR goals for the year, such as updating a high risk policy area, refreshing leave guidance, or improving payroll communication. Leveraging shared resources, peer expertise, and targeted consulting support can help districts stay compliant while keeping workloads manageable.

For assistance with your HR questions, please reach out to us at hr@sdao.com or 800-285-5461.

SDIS RISK MANAGEMENT SERVICES



We know you are doing the best you can at your special district to provide services while mitigating risks to operations, employees, and patrons.

As the SDAO Risk Management Department, our mission to you is to identify your needs and provide you the tools and resources to assist in implementing strategies for preventing and mitigating losses.

OUR SERVICES



Property Walkthroughs

We can inspect your buildings for liability concerns



District Specific In-Person Training

We have a variety of topics related to liability, property, and workers' compensation (per our service agreement with SAIF) to fit your needs – all lasting about one hour



Regional Trainings

These trainings are offered regionally throughout the year on subjects that affect all members



Bio-Med Testing Services

Receive five free background checks and five free drug tests each year



Annual Safety & Security Grants

Receive financial assistance for safety and security improvements



Ergonomic Evaluations

We can conduct both office and industrial ergonomic evaluations (per our service agreement with SAIF)



Safety Plan Reviews

Our team can assist you with reviewing safety plans for accuracy (per our service agreement with SAIF)



Drone Photos

Our certified drone pilots can conduct flights for inspections of roofs and photos of the district



Online Resources

Multiple quick reference guides and sample checklists for download at sdaoresourcelibrary.com

SDAO

SPECIAL DISTRICTS
ASSOCIATION OF OREGON

The SDAO Risk Management Team is here to support you! If you need assistance with anything risk related, please contact us at riskmanagement@sdao.com.

More information about the resources listed above can be found on the SDAO website at www.sdao.com.

REGENCE AND LEGACY REACH AGREEMENT

Regence and Legacy Health have reached an agreement, and Legacy is back in network for Regence members. Any care received during the period when Legacy was out of network will be reprocessed as in-network, ensuring members receive the appropriate level of coverage.

If you have questions about coverage, contact **benefits@sdao.com** for assistance. Regence also sent a letter to members with additional details.

Thank you for your patience as this issue was being resolved.



CONTACT SDAO
Administrators for SDIS
Toll-Free: 800-285-5461

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

MEMBER SERVICES
Toll-Free: 800-285-5461
Email: memberservices@sdao.com
Fax: 503-371-4781

UNDERWRITING
Toll-Free: 800-285-5461
Email: underwriting@sdao.com
Fax: 503-371-4781

RISK MANAGEMENT
Toll-Free: 800-285-5461
Email: riskmanagement@sdao.com
Fax: 503-371-4781

REPORT AN SDIS P/C CLAIM
Toll-Free: 800-305-1736
Email: claims@sdao.com
Fax: 503-620-9817

MEMBER CALENDAR

July 3	<i>Independence Day Observed - SDAO Offices Closed</i>
July 9	<i>Oregon Department of Revenue Local Budget Law Training - Madras</i>
July 16	<i>NSDA Webinar: SAM.gov, Federal Forms & Your First Application</i>
July 23	<i>GovDeals Webinar: Modern Online Auctions for Special Districts</i>
July 30	<i>Oregon Department of Revenue Local Budget Law Training - Medford</i>
July 30	<i>NSDA Webinar: Mid-Summer Federal Advocacy Update</i>
August 13	<i>NSDA Webinar: Maximize Your Mapping Potential with Gridbase</i>
August 13	<i>Boiler Training - Hillsboro</i>
August 18	<i>SDAO Regional Training Summit- Eagle Crest</i>
August 19	<i>SDAO Regional Training Summit- Eagle Crest</i>
September 3	<i>NSDA Webinar: Improve Your Transparency</i>
September 7	<i>Labor Day - SDAO Offices Closed</i>
September 9	<i>SDIS Board of Trustees Meeting - SDAO Office - Tigard</i>
September 10	<i>SDAO Board of Directors Meeting - SDAO Office - Salem</i>
September 11	<i>SDAO Member Scholarship Golf Tournament - Newberg</i>

Download this newsletter online at <https://sdaoresourcelibrary.com/newsletters>

