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# BOARD FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS AND RESERVE OFFICERS

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December 2000

## Meet the New Executive Secretary

Brigette Smith came to us from Mason County Fire District #2 where she has been a volunteer firefighter/EMT since 1992. She received numerous awards for her EMT skills and community involvement. In 1996, she was awarded the Washington State Fire Marshall's Public Educator of the Year Award-Novice.

Some of you may not recognize the name Brigette Smith, and may recognize her by Brigette Drab. In September, Brigette married Tim Smith, a volunteer firefighter/EMT with Mason #2 and a 911 dispatcher with Puget Sound Naval Shipyard.

One of Brigette's main goals before retirement is to visit all 600 departments we serve. She'll be looking forward to meeting all of you.

In order to serve you better, we are asking that you all take a few moments to fill out the enclosed form requesting board and internet information. We'd appreciate it if you would return it at the same time you submit your remittance forms.

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## Local Board Meetings

*You and the Law*

There are four main rules to remember as a local board of trustees:

1. The board of trustees for a city department is comprised of the mayor, city clerk, one city councilmember, the fire chief, and one fire department member elected by the members. A board governed municipality's board should consist of the board chair, one member of the board, the secretary to the board, the chief, and one elected member from the firefighter ranks (RCW 41.24.060).
2. The secretary shall keep a public record of all proceedings (RCW 41.24.070).
3. The board's duties are to:
  - Enroll all new members under the relief provision immediately upon acceptance into the department.
  - Enroll members under the pension provisions if it has extended this to other firefighters.
  - Provide for disbursements of relief.
  - Determine eligibility for retirement pensions.
  - Determine validity and direct payment for claims.
  - Send the state board vouchers for each person entitled to payment, stating the amount of such payment and for what granted. **Make sure it is signed by the mayor or chair and the secretary (RCW 41.24.080).**
4. The board of trustees shall meet on a regular monthly meeting day unless there is no business to review. No vouchers should be approved unless it is done during the regular meeting or the chair calls a special meeting. **The law is clear that "blank check" signing the vouchers is not legal (RCW 41.24.090).**

# 2001 Fees - Due January 1, Delinquent March 1

## Reserve Officers and EMSD's:

\$65.00 for relief  
\$145.00 for pension (\$30 member/\$115 municipality)

## Fire Departments:

\$10.00 for relief  
\$60.00 for pension (\$30 member/\$30 municipality)

## Where are They Now?

In June, Becky Dixon, who served as Benefit Specialist from April 1992, fulfilled a long-time dream when she resigned from the agency to start her own business. Her friendly, caring voice and dedication to her job and to those she served will be missed.

July 31, 2000, was Joe Faubion's last day as Executive Secretary of the State Board. Joe has served the board since July 1, 1976, with compassion, efficiency, and dedication. He earned the love and respect of the volunteer fire service. Joe celebrated his retirement with a trip to Argentina with his wife, Carol, to visit his youngest daughter, a student there.

He may now be seen touring the state on his new Gold Wing. His retirement plans include doing "whatever I want to do". However, he doesn't plan to remain idle. Joe wants to thank all those who sent cards and letters to him during his last month in office.

## New Addition

Julie Lynn Ikenberry was hired in September to replace Becky Dixon. Julie is an Olympia native and recently graduated from Centralia High. She has also completed several classes at Centralia College.

Previously, Julie was employed as a Certified Nursing Assistant at an adult family home. Working with the elderly was a great experience that she really enjoyed.

In her spare time, Julie enjoys reading, putting together scrapbooks, playing cards, and spending time with family and friends. She loves taking road trips, especially to the beach.

## Remittance Forms

Since that time of the year is quickly rolling around again, remember to complete the forms and send them in as soon as you can after the first of the year.

Just a couple of tips to help. First, always remember to make it clear whether the member has paid their own portion of the pension payment or if the department is paying it for them.

Secondly, remember that you must add people to the disability from the moment that they are accepted into the department. Do not wait for the next year. The department accepts liability for the firefighter each day that they are not covered.

## Moving into the Modern Age

In an effort to make information more easily accessible to all, the Board for Volunteer Firefighters and Reserve Officers will soon have its own website. We have tried to be as helpful as possible. At the site, anyone can read the policies and procedures manual or look at the law that governs the agency.

In an effort to make it easier on district secretaries and city clerks, Remittance Forms and Invoice Vouchers can be downloaded from the site to their computers, information can be added, the forms printed and then mailed to us. Eventually we hope to handle electronic fund transfers, but we're not quite there yet.

We have also tried to help the firefighters. Accident postcards can soon be submitted electronically right from the website. Firefighters will no longer have to wait until the next business day to go down to the station and dig out the forms. They can submit them right from their own homes. A confirmation email will notify them that the postcard has been received.

We owe a special thanks to Benton FPD #1 for sharing their form template with us. Ultimately, it was Debbie Spry from Clark FPD #3 who provided the time and effort that went into developing the forms that are on our website.

We look forward to the growing use of these resources as well as further development of new ones. As you can see from the surveys, one of our next projects is to research the video conferencing capabilities of each department. We don't intend to have that replace the personal touch, but it would help reach some of the departments in the winter season when travel is not feasible or possible.

## Free Presentations!!

As mentioned earlier, we now serve almost 600 fire, EMS, and police departments around the state. With all of those departments and all the exciting things going on, it is easy to see how some departments don't get all the information.

We would love to come and present information regarding the board at commissioner's meetings, chief's meetings, or association meetings. This is something that is done at no cost to your department, no matter how far off the beaten track you are. We'd also like to come to secretary's meetings and provide some training on how to complete the paperwork trails.

Please call us, because we'd love to come and meet all of the wonderful people that we work with all the time.

## MAJOR DATES AND EVENTS IN THE HISTORY OF THE BOARD

- 1935 Relief plan started. Administered by the State Auditor.
- 1945 Pension plan started. Administered by the State Auditor.
- 1955 Board for Volunteer Firemen established to administer Volunteer Firemen's Relief & Pension Act.
- 1956 Limited offer: new members were able to buy back years of fees.
- 9/1/79 Less than 25 years of service vests pension.
- 7/1/89 Joint survivor option added.
- 7/1/92 Act name changed to Volunteer Fire Fighters' Relief and Pension Act - Board changed to Board for Volunteer Fire Fighters.
- 7/1/93 Emergency medical service districts allowed to receive disability and pension plan coverage.
- 7/1/95 Reserve law enforcement officers allowed to join pension plan - Board changed to Board for Volunteer Firefighters and Reserve Officers.
- 7/1/96 Disability compensation increased from \$55.00/day to \$85.00/day.
- 7/1/98 \$150,000.00 death benefit enacted for firefighters and reserve officers covered under "death and disability provisions".
- 7/25/99 Reserve law enforcement officers allowed coverage under the relief provisions of the act.
- 7/25/99 Pop-up provision added to joint survivor option.

### Maximum pension increases:

- 9/01/79 from \$100.00 to \$150.00
- 7/01/81 from \$150.00 to \$200.00
- 7/01/92 from \$200.00 to \$225.00
- 7/25/99 from \$225.00 to \$280.00

### Disability fee increases:

- 7/01/63 from \$3.00 to \$5.00
- 7/01/89 from \$5.00 to \$10.00

### Pension fee increases:

- 7/01/73 from \$22.00 to \$30.00
- 7/01/92 from \$30.00 to \$60.00

## Accident Statistics for the Year 2000

The count isn't complete yet, but we've gathered statistics through October to give you an idea of the main kinds of personnel injuries and their locations.

### Top 5 Types of Accidents (out of 219 total accidents):

- 23% - Sprains from falls
- 16% - Back injuries, usually from lifting
- 12% - Contusions and abrasions
- 9% - Heat exhaustion
- 7% - Exposure to communicable disease

### Top 5 Locations of Accidents:

- 36% - At fire scene
- 19% - At aid call scene
- 16% - At drill
- 11% - At the fire station
- 5% - Responding to or from an aid call

### Injuries by Gender:

Number of Males Injured	174	80%
Number of Females Injured	44	20%



**Board for Volunteer Firefighters and Reserve Officers Board and Staff**

Top Row, left to right: Board member Richard Kistler, Board Chair Dean Hills, Board Member Ron Ayers.

Bottom row, left to right: Executive Secretary Brigitte Smith, Office Trainee Julie Ikenberry, Confidential Secretary Pam Bigelow.

## Chiropractic, Massage, and Physical Therapy Claims

### *New rules from L&I*

In previous years, L&I accepted many claims from chiropractors and massage therapists without a lot of supporting documentation. With the recent proliferation of such treatments, L&I is now requesting additional documentation.

According to RCW 41.24.110, we are required to audit all physician claims according to L&I guidelines, which means that we are also requesting this additional documentation. As fire departments, it is very important to understand what will now be required to speed up the process.

### **Massage Therapists:**

WAC 296-23-250 A progress report must be submitted to the attending doctor and the department following **six treatment visits or one month**, whichever comes first. Massage therapy treatment beyond the initial six treatments will be authorized only upon substantiation of improvement in the volunteer's condition in terms of functional modalities, i.e., range of motion; sitting and standing tolerance; reduction in medication; etc. In addition, an outline of the proposed treatment program, the expected restoration goals, and the expected length of treatment will be required.

### **Physical Therapists:**

Office visits in excess of **12 visits or 1 month** require prior authorization. The same report that is required of Massage Therapists will also be required of Physical Therapists.

### **Chiropractors:**

Office visits in excess of **20 visits or 60 days** require prior authorization. The same report that is required of Massage Therapists will also be required of Chiropractors.

The local boards have the authority to authorize treatment, subject to review by the state board, on the basis of these reports. When approving such treatments, please send copies of the reports and minutes detailing approval with the necessary invoice vouchers.

### *Postcard Reminder...*

Remember that all accident post cards **must be submitted within 90 days of an accident**. Any postcards and subsequent claims that are submitted after the 90 day period cannot be paid. Also, a claim for payment must be received within one year of the accident, or the file is considered closed and payments will no longer be made.

## **We are Looking for a Few Good Pictures**

Since we have new staff, we are looking to redecorate the office. We feel that the best way to do this would be to surround ourselves with the pictures of those we help every day. We would really appreciate it if you could send us pictures of your personnel, stations, rigs, fires, police action, or emergency scenes. We'll provide the frames if you provide the pictures and stories.

## **Deceased Pensioners**

The death of a loved one is often tragic, unforeseen, and unplanned for. Many spouses or children do not think about "business" for several days, weeks, or months after someone close passes away. If they do, they often think only of the obvious notifications.

As a department, you are our eyes and our ears. If you hear of the passing of a pensioner, it is very important to contact our office immediately. Until we are notified of a death, pension checks will continue to be sent. In some cases, a spouse continues to cash the checks without realizing that they are not entitled to the money.

Now, not only have they lost their loved one, but they receive notification that they now must pay back that money. It makes a tough time harder. The best way to avoid these misunderstanding is through communication. Please call us as soon as you hear that someone has passed on.

Additionally, call any time one of your members passes away. Often, the survivors are entitled to at least a refund of the pension fees that they have paid. If they have vested a pension, the survivors are usually entitled to a one time lump sum payment. Many times, people do not realize that this money is available to them. It may not always be much, but every little bit can help in times like these. Don't wait for the survivors to approach you! Remember, these volunteers dedicated years of their lives to the department. Take a few minutes to call us and research what money their families may still be entitled to.

**BOARD FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS & RESERVE OFFICERS**

**MEMBERS OF LOCAL BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

MUNICIPALITY: \_\_\_\_\_

REGULAR MEETING DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

REGULAR MEETING TIME: \_\_\_\_\_

**CHAIR:**

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

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

Phone: (     ) \_\_\_\_\_

**SECRETARY:**

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

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

Phone: (     ) \_\_\_\_\_

**CHIEF/SHERIFF:**

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

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

Phone: (     ) \_\_\_\_\_

**MEMBER:**

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

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

Phone: (     ) \_\_\_\_\_

**MEMBER:**

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

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

Phone: (     ) \_\_\_\_\_

## Internet Information

Please answer the following questions:

1. Do you currently have internet capability (If yes, please skip to question #3)?  Yes  No
2. When do you anticipate having internet capability (You may skip the rest of this survey portion)?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What is your department's email address? \_\_\_\_\_
4. If your department has a website, what is its address? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Does your department have video conferencing capabilities?  Yes  No  
If not, do you anticipate having them soon?  Yes  No

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

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