
BOARD FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS AND RESERVE OFFICERS

July 2005

A Word from the Executive Secretary

Brigette K. Smith

2005 is big year for the Board. We will be celebrating our 50th Anniversary. When the Board first began back in 1955, we had only one employee; Herbert Faubian. Herb worked very hard at encouraging firefighters to join the pension system. We're reminded just how busy he was when we stuff envelopes every month to mail out the retirement payroll. Over the years we have grown to our current three employees. However, next month, we are scheduled to grow some more. We will be hiring a fourth employee!

As part of our 50th anniversary celebration, we will be hosting a hospitality suite during the Commissioner's Conference in October. We invite everyone to stop by and meet the staff and the Board Members. It will be a good time to discuss our hopes for the future and our memories of the past.

We look forward to another 50 years serving the volunteer firefighters. It has always been our honor and privilege.

Wildland Firefighters

'Tis the season once again. We thought that we would take this time to clarify volunteer firefighter coverage on wildland fires once again. If your volunteers are fighting a non-mobilized fire within your own district, they will be covered by the BVFF & RO. If they are fighting at a mobilization fire, their coverage will change depending on the situation. A good rule of thumb is to follow the paycheck; whoever is paying the firefighter is their employer and, therefore, responsible for their injury coverage. Do not assume that the BVFF & RO is always providing the coverage. We are not.

There have been many concerns over the years regarding equitable coverage between the BVFF & RO and L&I. In recent years, we have worked hard with the Chief's Association, the Commissioner's Association, the Firefighter's Association, and L&I to ensure similar coverage between the two systems. As it stands now, there is equitable coverage between the two systems. It is not the same, and there are some subtle differences, but it is equitable. In both systems, medical bills will get paid, disability compensation can be awarded, permanent partial disability awards can be given, and line of duty death benefits are available.

Any time a firefighter is injured during a mobilized wildland fire, we will be working with the employing agency and L&I to make sure the proper agency is covering the injury. If you have any questions about your individual department, please call us.

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You Might be a Firefighter if....

You have ever tried to patent a 911 blocker with the phone company.

Out of District Responses

Each month we receive numerous questions about out of district responses. We find that there are often as many different scenarios as there are departments, but we'll try to address some of the common ones. If your district has a scenario that isn't addressed here, please call us and we'll try to give you an answer.

1. **Are our firefighters covered while responding to a mutual aid fire?** If you have a written mutual aid agreement in place, they are acting under the orders and directions of your chief and/or his/her designee, and they are responding to a request for mutual aid, your firefighters are covered.
2. **Are our firefighters covered to out of district calls into no-man's land?** Yes, as long as the firefighters are acting under the Chief's direction and authority, as long as they are responding to an emergency, and as long as there is no other available or reasonable means of coverage in the area.
3. **Are your firefighters covered to responses to Indian Tribal lands?** We will treat tribal land responses the same as no-man's land.
4. **Are our firefighters covered if they are driving down the road and come upon an accident?** This is a much more difficult question to answer and depends on several factors.
 - a. First, firefighters must be in an area covered by the BVFF. In other words, a volunteer can't have any BVFF coverage if they stop to render aid in cities like Seattle or Spokane. This is because the coverage has to come from the area's department and if they don't have coverage, we can't provide it.
 - b. Second, coverage does not begin until they are asked to help at the scene by a person in authority. Firefighters are not allowed to "free lance", so the responding

department has to give permission for the out of area firefighter to provide help. The responding department then has to understand that they are taking on the responsibility for any injuries that the out of district firefighter may incur.

- c. All injury paperwork will be run through the fire department where the injury incurred and not through the firefighter's home department. The exceptions to this are responses covered under #1, #2, and #3. In those instances, the home department will still maintain jurisdiction.

Invoice Vouchers

Please, please, please remember to include a copy of the audited invoice voucher when you forward payments to providers. Providers' billing offices handle many payments every day and it is very frustrating for them when they receive a check and they can't tell who it's for, what date of service it's for, or why the amount of the check doesn't match any of the billed amounts. Sending a copy of the audited invoice vouchers answers all their questions. Without that copy, we run the risk that they will credit another person's account, while our volunteer's account goes to collections. They may also credit the payment to the wrong date of service and keep re-billing for a service we've already paid for. In the meantime, they are convinced we didn't pay, and we're convinced they don't know what they're doing.

We know that all of the paperwork can be tough and overwhelming, especially if you have to process it often. However, if we work together, we can ultimately make the process easier on everyone.

50 Years of Board History

N S T T O I R O N A L D A Y R E S U O I D O
O A H C I M K E A S S T K S B W A E L A F E
S E M I V A I H L N E L L U M S A M O H T C
N R D R E R L K L T D H L T U T E B N T E I
H U M W E M C S E T S H R I R T N R R I F X
O Y R K I T I R L F N I E A H E U T O M P A
J L N C C N S T C E I O K R K N T A U S A R
Y M O K J E J A C I T T X D B K A I H E M N
R E I A B U F O M H I O Z I R F A E D T B L
R R B L H W L H H T E U R P D A A E D T I R
E E U E A K U I T N R L R A A Y H U T E G R
H D A E R V T R E I S E L A E T K C B G E H
S I F L L M E M N I A O B D O R R C I I L H
I T E N G T Z R N E K F N O O R T I E R O I
L H O W N O S R E D N E H A R U A L C B W N
L M J E H E E E K S V T N A O I M A H K T N
I I S E H G U H L E H T E B H E F I E A R N
I R K R E D W I R E G A R R E T T G T B I D
R A R L V I R G I N I A F E R R I S K A U O
E N A K C I R E N E K E I F F E R A I E K T
W D W H H E K N A M T U P X E R I Y R S D O
H A U R O S A N L R A M M L M R N B K O L D

Mitchell Doumit	Dwire Garrett	Rex Putman
Thomas Mullen	Chet Kirk	Robert Masterman
Kenneth McClellan	Edwin Johnson	KC Kaleel
Dean Hills	Mike Fitzpatrick	LaVere Shaffer
Richard Kistler	Ronald Ayres	Ken Boad

See if you can find the names of all the past Board Members in the word search. In addition, the names of the Board's eight staff members are hidden. The answer key will be posted on our website: www.bvff.wa.gov

Are Your Volunteers Covered?

Perhaps not. The BVFF & RO can only insure firefighters and police officers that have been reported as members of your department. If you fail to notify us immediately upon accepting new members, they are not covered for injuries or death.

As of the publish date of this newsletter, we still have ten fire departments that have not paid their annual fees. None of those firefighters are currently insured if they are injured or killed. We cannot stress how important it is that you are diligent in reporting all of your members in a timely fashion.

Board Appointments

Congratulations Ken Boad! Our newest board member was re-appointed for another six year term by Governor Christine Gregoire. We are certainly pleased to have Ken on the Board since he brings not only many years of firefighter service to the board, but he also brings his 27 years of law enforcement experience.

Each time a board position becomes available, some excellent candidates apply. We know it must always be a very difficult decision for the governor, but we appreciate the hard work and thought that goes into the Board appointments.

If you are interested in becoming a Board member, you must be a member of a fire department and you must live in a congressional district that is different from the other two members of the Board. Board members usually serve for a term of six years and must attend at least four scheduled meetings a year as well as occasional work sessions, official functions and speaking engagements, and visits to recent LODD surviving spouses. If you are interested, you may either contact us or link to the Governor's Office through our website at www.bvff.wa.gov.

SB 5135

During this past legislative session, SB 5135 was signed into law by Christine Gregoire. It will take effect on July 24, 2005 and may have a large impact on your department. The legislation changed & clarified three different areas:

1. The relief fee for fire departments will increase from \$10 per person per year to \$30 per person per year.
2. A subrogation clause was added allowing the BVFF & RO to recover costs from responsible third parties.
3. Only firefighters, reserve officers, and EMT's who are not eligible for participation in PERS or LEOFF may participate in the BVFF & RO.

We've answered many questions about the third change over the last couple of months. **This change does not mean that volunteers who participate in LEOFF or PERS for their regular employment can no longer volunteer in your department!** It simply means that a "volunteer" cannot be paid for working as a part-time firefighter (making at least minimum wage) at the fire department and pay into PERS and the BVFF & RO for those hours.

Can You Guess Who This Board Member Is?



In honor of our 50th Anniversary, we thought we'd bring you a picture of one of our board members in action. Fifty years ago, this member was acting as a patient in the back of his local fire department's ambulance.

Board For Volunteer Firefighters and Reserve Officers
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