



OCT - DEC 2022 | 1ST QUARTER

THE QUARTERLY FOCUS

The Florida Association of Special Districts' Official Newsletter

CHECK OUT WHAT'S
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President**

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..and more!

1ST QUARTER RECAP

Written by FASD Staff

During the first quarter we have continued our Membership Renewal drive for 2022 - 2023. The association has moved from paper renewals to online renewals. If your district needs assistance with this process, please contact us!

As an added bonus to renewing, your district will receive a complimentary 30-day trial membership to Employers Association Forum. You will receive more information on this new member benefit in your renewal paid email confirmation.

If you have any questions on membership renewal, please contact FASD Membership Coordinator Katherine Hughes at (850) 224-7775.

Another exciting opportunity we have been working on is beginning January 2023 we are partnering with valued Premier Associate Member Preferred Governmental Insurance Trust to bring you monthly webinars. This is a great way to learn important Risk Management topics as well as earn CEUs.

As a reminder, we have begun using Constant Contact to email members regarding new opportunities and events. Please make sure you check spam folders to ensure you're receiving our important messages.



UPCOMING FASD EVENTS

2023 EVENTS

JAN 12 - 13 - QUARTERLY MEETING,
JACKSONVILLE

JAN 26 - WEBINAR, CLAIMS 101

FEB 23 - WEBINAR, WORKERS COMP
MODIFICATIONS

MAR 6 - 10 - CDM PROGRAM,
TALLAHASSEE

MAR 8 - 9 - LEGISLATIVE FORUM,
TALLAHASSEE

2023 EVENTS

MAR 23 - WEBINAR, ADA COMPLIANCE

APR 20 - WEBINAR, FLEET SAFETY/DOT

MAY 11 - WEBINAR, HEAT ILLNESS

JUN 1 - WEBINAR, HURRICANE
PREPAREDNESS

JUN 12 - 15 - ANNUAL CONFERENCE,
ROSEN PLAZA HOTEL

FLORIDA ASSOCIATION OF SPECIAL DISTRICTS

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Written by Jim Millican

Greetings Members,

Happy New Year! I can't believe it is almost 2023 already! I hope everyone has a fantastic Christmas and is able to spend time with their family and loved ones. I know so many of our special districts help provide Christmas to families and children throughout our state. Thank you for your hard work and continued commitment to your communities.

The 2023 Legislative Session is just around the corner, and our Legislative Committee is actively working several issues for this coming year. If you have something that affects one type of Special District, or all Special Districts, please forward that to our legislative chair, Dave Cambareri.

We are looking forward to seeing everyone at our January meeting in Jacksonville. We have a solid two days planned for you with up to 10 CEUs earned, in addition to a CDO Component. Take a look at the posted agenda and make sure you register before it's too late.

We are in the planning stages of the annual Legislative Forum in Tallahassee. We will have a day of meetings and information and a day at the Capitol Courtyard showing the legislators what we do and why we are so important to the state of Florida, and the public in general. We have a good number of districts offering their equipment and resources for our day. We still need more of you, and we definitely will need assistance with providing hot dogs, buns, and drinks. This is our time to shine and show the legislators why Special Districts are important to the State of Florida.

I hope everyone stays safe, and I am look forward to seeing you in Jacksonville!





ANNUAL CONFERENCE CALL FOR SPEAKERS

February 17, 2023, is the due date for speaking proposals for FASD's Annual Conference scheduled June 12 - 15, 2023, at the Rosen Plaza in Orlando.

The Districts in Paradise theme of the conference focuses on "Overcoming & Embracing Challenges in Paradise."

We plan to include case studies of interesting/unique solutions implemented by organizations. In addition, priority consideration will be given to submissions that include a member and/or associate member covering a current, hot-topic or important issue for special purpose governments.



Questions?
rachel@fasd.com

Topic Areas Will Include:

- Artificial Intelligence in Special Purpose Government
- Cybersecurity Trends
- Environmental Impacts - Sea Level Rise, Water Quality/Availability
- New Payment Options
- Risk Management
- Financial Planning & Analysis
- Resilience and Economic Sustainability
- UAS (Unmanned Aircraft Systems) Proficiencies for Special Districts
- New Roads for Communication and Outreach

[Click Here to Submit Proposals](#)



MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Written by David E. Ramba

There are few things as important as the need to feel connected, to bond with others over common interests, beliefs, and experiences. The pandemic has made this harder than ever before, often separating us from those we love and causing what seems like constant interruptions in our lives. As we are nearing the start of a new year and reflect upon the last quarter, I want to take the opportunity to wish you the very best for 2023, with hopes that you and yours are safe and well and to assure you of your belonging in this special community that we share.



Since our founding 44 years ago (yes, 2023 marks the 44th anniversary of FASD) and particularly in the last few years, we at FASD have endeavored to connect you with each other and with the association, establishing, re-establishing, creating, and reinforcing the relationships you formed when first becoming a member of FASD. We hope to continue to do so in this new year and invite you to join FASD programs and events of interest.

The great news is that so many of you have already done so, and in the process, we are continuing to break membership records. Whether it's through quarterly meetings, Annual Conference, or webinars, you have fostered the embodiment of what our association stands for: to unify and strengthen special purpose government through education, the exchange of ideas, and active involvement in the legislative process.

How do we know this to be true? We have the numbers. In the 2 months of our membership drive, we have already surpassed expectations. We could not have done this without you and this, of course, does not mean our work is done. We will continue to grow and expand our efforts as we move into the new year, advancing our core values. In doing so, we hope to further the connections that tie us together as fellow members.

We hope to see you at our next January Quarterly Meeting in Jacksonville, and definitely in Tallahassee for the Legislative Forum.

The Legislative Forum, scheduled March 8 - 9, will be unlike any Legislative Forum the association has done before. Thursday, March 9, we are taking over the Capitol Courtyard to ensure the Legislature, and public, understands what special districts do. We need you to bring your equipment to Tallahassee and put them on display. More details will follow but if you're able to volunteer your time and equipment, contact Rachel at rachel@fasd.com to be put on the list.



JANUARY QUARTERLY MEETING

Join Us in Jacksonville
January 12 - 13, 2023

Hyatt Regency Riverfront
225 E Coastline Drive
Jacksonville, FL 32202

Full Agenda
Up to 10 CEUs
available and a CDO
Component



Start off 2023
with FASD

**REGISTER
NOW!!**

Agenda at a Glance

- The Legislative Process
- Website Accessibility and PIO Topics
- Effective Safety Inspections and Accident Investigations
- Networking Reception
- Board Meeting
- Working Membership Meeting
- Lunch and Breakfast included in fee



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A \$3,500 Value



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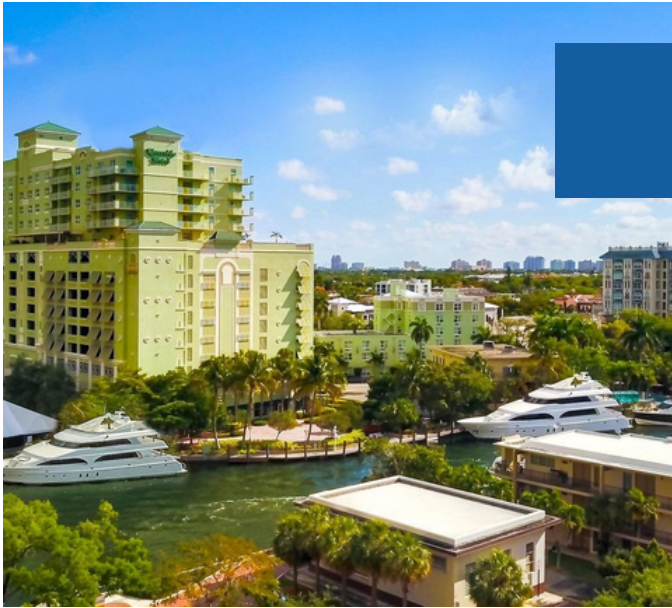
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QUARTERLY MEETINGS



OCTOBER

Unfortunately due to Hurricane Ian we had to cancel the October Quarterly Meeting in Ft. Lauderdale. We will visit this location October 2023.

JANUARY

The January Quarterly Meeting is scheduled for January 12 - 13, 2023, in Jacksonville at Hyatt Regency Riverfront.

We will have a robust agenda to make up for the cancelled October Quarterly Meeting - [Register Here!](#)



LEGISLATIVE FORUM

This March we are planning a tremendous Legislative Forum for you. We will need all the district equipment we can get in Tallahassee. We have scheduled Special District Days in the Capitol Courtyard on Thursday, March 9. Contact Rachel at rachel@fasd.com to reserve your spot today!

Legislative Forum March 8 - 9, 2023



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LEGISLATIVE FORUM 2023



FASD LEGISLATIVE FORUM

March 8 - 9, 2023
Tallahassee, FL

SAVE THE DATE!

We have begun to make preparations for the upcoming Legislative Forum to take place March 8 - 9, 2023, in Tallahassee. One of the highlights will be "Special Districts Day," all day on Thursday, March 9, in the Capitol Courtyard Complex. We have reserved the entire Courtyard to showcase how special districts provide services to just about every citizen in this state. In addition to showcasing your equipment, we are planning on offering free food to entice visitors to stop by and ask questions.

THIS IS WHERE WE NEED YOUR HELP

We are asking every type of special district to volunteer to bring equipment to Tallahassee that you use in your day-to-day operations and to showcase what you do! Every district has something important to showcase, whether it's a vehicle or items of use for educational purposes. We need to remind the public what you do so they better understand special districts.

Contact Rachel at rachel@fasd.com today to reserve your spot.



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AROUND THE DISTRICTS



ATTACK OF THE GREEN PEOPLE

Written by Joe DeCerbo, Spring Lake Improvement District

I first wrote this article for the Winter 2013 edition of the Florida Association of Special Districts magazine. I recently found it in my files, read it, and after 10 years I regretfully must report that nothing much has really changed. I have brought the article up to date for this revision, with the hope that maybe something will change sooner than later.

All organizations are made up of BLUE people and GREEN people, and it is imperative that we ensure that a “Blue leaders influence and impact” is not crippled by Green people. Throughout my careers, in several disciplines, I have taken a particular interest in these two types of people who influence so much of our lives, and the negative impact Green people are causing. There are a number of good Blue people in the professions I describe in this article, and I am grateful to know and work with them. As much as they try to work and exist as Blue people, their professions are being overrun by the Green people.

They are more numerous than ever

They come in different genders, different nationalities, different backgrounds; but they all have the same mission. They come under the nomenclatures of: Accountants; Auditors; Human Resources; Attorneys; Regulators; Compliance Officers; Commissioners; Supervisors; or simply County, State, and Federal bureaucrats, and politicians with a wide variety of titles.

The habitats for Green people are usually in nice offices, far removed from the day-to-day work and activities of those “on the firing line.” They surround themselves with bookcases and notebooks filled with up-to-date policies, procedures, rules, regulations, processes, formats, agreements, contracts, agendas, and timetables. Try contacting them and you will most likely have to leave a voice mail and hope for a return call. E-mails and texts can take days for a response. Green people are notorious for delaying a response, unlike the immediate attention a Blue person takes with any form of communication. Today’s technology has given Green people a tremendous boost in their ability to further their cause, and not have to meet face to face with people. The recent pandemic was the best thing that ever happened for a Green person. They now get to stay at home, work on the computer, and deal with e-mail communication. An occasional Zoom meeting allows them to give the false impression that they really want to be around Blue people, but on the screen, not in person.

I am sure you can name dozens of Green people that you have had to work with over the years and have never been able to put a face with a name. You know their e-mail address and phone number, and that is where it ends. They live in a bubble world of perfection and do not want to venture out to those places where real problems with real people must be solved. Theirs is the world of rules, regulations, policies, and procedures. Another common trait: They are always overwhelmed, don’t have enough time in the day, and how hard it is to handle their jobs.



AROUND THE DISTRICTS

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Let me illustrate with this true example of a Green person from the South Florida Water Management District sending a letter to a Blue manager after a phone conversation that discussed an easement issue. The Blue manager hung up the phone and immediately started to work on the release of the easement, something you would expect from a Blue person; get it done! A letter arrived a few days later (we have all received them) that started out by saying, "as discussed with you on 8/16/22, in accordance with Section 5.5.3.1 of the ERP Handbook, volume 1 (AH1) adopted by reference in section 62.330.010 (4) (a) Florida Administrative Code and Section 5.5.3.5, Paragraph 40E-1.603 (1) (d) F.A.C., etc., etc., etc.

You get the picture? The two-page letter had six paragraphs and 8 people were copied.... really? You just can't make this stuff up, and it happens to us every single day in one form or another. The regulatory agencies are not partners, they are adversaries. And that is because the Green people rule. I have noticed in my County that this Green mentality of the regulatory agencies have filtered into many of the County departments I have to work with and try to get things done.

Who are these people? What is their purpose and do we need them?

Green people have always had an important function in any business, corporation, non-profit, or government entity. Their strict adherence to the written word usually gave balance to leaders who wanted to quickly solve problems and issues, whether the written word said you could or couldn't; leaders just use common sense to get it done. These leaders, known as Blue people, rely on risk taking, problem solving, critical thinking, multi-tasking, and looking at the glass as half full rather than half empty.

Blue people want to make decisions, Green people want to check to make sure they have the written word to back them up, CYA! It has been my observation that up until the mid-90's most successful entities had a balance between the Blue people and the Green people. Today, especially in government, Green people have taken over! If you are a Blue person working in a Green person corporate culture, you are an endangered species. Your job will not be fun or worthwhile, and you can be affected both mentally and physically. I personally cannot imagine being a Blue person and having to work with Green people in a Green culture; I would not last too long. Up until the mid-90's CYA meant Creating Your Accountability; we know what the letters stand for today.

If you are still not sure what the difference is between a Green person and a Blue person, try to picture a few places you may have recently visited. If your tax collector's office has not yet absorbed the driver's license facilities, you are still being exposed to one of the Green capitals of the world. Go to a State Driver's License facility without an appointment and try to renew your license. You first deal with a "security" guard who has the personality of a wet mop; you draw a number; and then you wait, wait, and wait. No updates, no sense of organization; you just wait. When you finally can go to the counter you now meet a person who gives you the impression that they hate their job and can now make life just as miserable for you. They have a sheet of paper loaded with boxes to check, and they begin the process of having you prove who you say you are. If just one of those boxes doesn't get checked (i.e., you forgot a piece of mail that has your name and address) you get out of line, go home, and return to start all over again.

AROUND THE DISTRICTS

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It doesn't matter you have your birth certificate, passport, old driver's license and voting card; you don't have the piece of mail. As you walk away the Green person has won another round because he or she found a box that couldn't be checked. There are other places run by bureaucracy that are not too different from the Drivers facility, and all are connected to government agencies. Been to a social security office lately? The question I pose is, "Where are the leaders of these facilities?" Are they so Green they can't understand that common sense, human relations, a little personality, and being helpful works. When was the last time you had to go to your City or County Engineering offices for something? You must be shocked at the number of forms, checklists, timetables, and rules they give you for something as simple as fixing your driveway. How about Homeowners Associations? They should all paint their signs Green!

Now let's venture to a local mall and approach an Apple Store. As soon as you cross the line between the mall and the store you are invaded by any number of staff people, all wearing Blue shirts by the way, asking if they can help. If you have an appointment, they guide you to the area you need to go to, and it is referred to as The Genius Bar; makes you feel important and relevant, doesn't it? Friendly, smiling, courteous, well-mannered staff make you feel comfortable and welcome. Even if you were going there to complain about something, the setting calms you down and makes you realize these people are going to help you. The best part is that there is no checklist to prove who you are, you don't even have to have a receipt to seek help. It is obvious you are an Apple user, and they simply want to help. By the way, Apple founder Steve Jobs, despite some of his unpopular personal traits, insisted on having Blue employees and a Blue culture. I think we can all agree he succeeded.



To repeat an earlier point, the recent pandemic was music to the ears of Green people who work in these facilities. They had less contact with people, sent them all to the internet for communication on what they refer to as portals, and good luck trying to make a phone call and speak to a human being. Green people just love this isolation from personal contact.

The Law of Attraction

The Law of Attraction is a powerful principle in developing organizations that are Blue or Green. Give me a Blue person who knows how to lead, has personality and charisma, and exhibits the traits discussed above, and I will show you a TEAM that works together; respecting the role of the Green person, but understanding that the trait of the Blue person creates the environment for a healthy and happy workplace. In turn, there is a positive impact on other agencies, colleagues, customers, clients, residents, Board members, and other interest groups.

When I visit other professionals or encounter various agencies, whether they be government, church, non-profit, or business, it does not take long to find out if the culture is Blue or Green. I can't tell you how many places I have been to that are like walking into the Driver's License facility; I try to avoid them and find the Apple experience. What kind of an experience do people have when they come into your facility and meet your people?

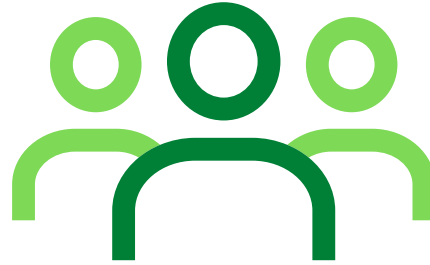
AROUND THE DISTRICTS

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Is it Driver's License or Apple? What if they want to call you? Can they speak to a human, or do they spend five minutes listening to questions and having to hit a number to continue? Leave a voicemail and we will get back to you is becoming the Green norm.

How do you talk to people? Do you listen and try to be helpful and find a solution? Or are you and your staff members likely to start stating policy, procedure, rules, and regulations? I couldn't count the number of times I have had someone tell me, "Well, Joe, according to our current policies." "Well, Joe, according to the permit, etc. etc. etc." I don't know about you, but Green people who want to start every dialogue with their rules and regulations tick me off. I don't expect anyone to break laws on my behalf but try to remember we are all on the same team instead of sending me away and having me find another solution because you are so inflexible as a Green person, and you want to paint every situation with the same brush.

The worst characteristic that a truly deep-rooted Green person has is telling you how to make a Grandfather clock instead of telling you what time it is. Ask a simple question that could be answered by a yes or no and they will go on forever giving you background, analysis, and useless information; and never really answer the question. They love wasting your time, saying the same thing over and over, and complaining that you just "don't understand" our rules and policies. When you get an e-mail from a Green person it will take them three paragraphs to tell you what a Blue person can say in one sentence! Of course, there will be attachments and copies sent to everyone but your grandmother. They are insecure, thin skinned, defensive, and it is always someone else's fault.



Where do Green People live and work?

Blue people and Green people are not just in organizations; they can be in our personal lives as well. I happen to be married to a Green person, and I love it. She enjoys crossing all the t's and dotting all the i's; keeping accurate written records and files; schedules and routines; and following up on every e-mail and phone message she gets, even if it means staying up until midnight to get it done. I am, without a doubt, the exact opposite and fully Blue! The adage of opposites attract is also true when it comes to Blue and Green. The reason my almost 45 years of being married to a Green person has worked is the same reason it can work in organizations; balance, trust, and respect. I don't try to change her color and she doesn't try to change mine; we work in harmony, and one does not try to control the other. I also know that the TEAM I have in my office is the same way and balance, trust, and respect is the norm. I believe that most Green people work in environments where balance, trust, and respect are not practiced regularly, and they do not like the way Blue people run organizations. That dislike causes them to "stick to their Green guns" and use their policies, procedures, and all the other things I have pointed out to try and build a wall between the two. In my consulting days I saw too many examples where the norm seems to be us against them, whether it is between departments, units, building, or agencies. There is nothing worse than to see people working for the same organization and are so divided they won't even have lunch with each other or do team building together. Blue people will put a stop to it; Green people will ignore it.



AROUND THE DISTRICTS

(...continued from previous page)

I have had too many experiences where Green people get pleasure out of constantly making you jump through hoops before a permit gets issued; a report gets approved; a legal matter gets resolved; and expense gets approved; a timetable remains rigid; and meetings cavalierly get cancelled. On too many occasions I have had conversations with my colleagues and other agency leaders and have heard their horror stories about dealing with Green people. An extremely high percentage of the stories that are told all involve other governmental agencies that we should be on the same team with; and they are the very ones that make life miserable for us. Wherever you turn today, Green people have infiltrated the highest levels of an organization and are changing the culture of that organization. I don't concern myself about people who are left, right, moderate, conservative, liberal, Republican or Democrat. What scares the hell out of me is the number of people who can identify by any of the above and are Green!

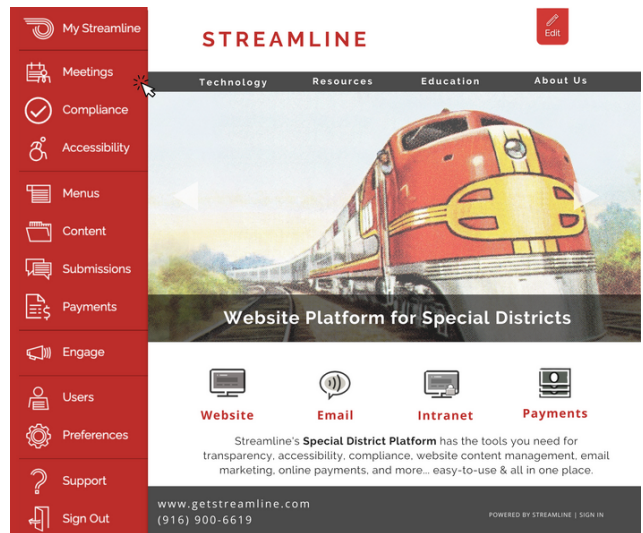
Another common trait of Green people is their desire to create jobs after jobs that expand their bureaucracy but have no impact on getting things done any quicker and with less red tape. When will the insanity end?

I am sure you can list a lot of agencies that are being overrun by Green but let me list a few that I have had personal experience with: Water Management Districts; DEP; USDA; DOT; County departments; and local elected officials. As much as I dislike the habits and practices of these entities, I don't personally dislike the Green people that are there. Unfortunately, too many Green people are joining together like a herd of cattle for the detriment of the organization.

Blue people Rise Up!

It is time for a Blue People revolution to stop this insanity. We must get back to a more common-sense approach to running our institutions and our professional lives. The lack of face to face, interpersonal relationships that can solve problems and foster cooperation must be returned. Now that you have read thru this article perhaps you will be more aware of how the Green people are hurting us. Take note of what is happening and resist it. Fight back, don't let the Green people win this battle.

As a final note, ever wonder why the sky is Blue and the grass is Green? Even the Good Lord wanted us to look up to the Blue people, and down on the Green people!!



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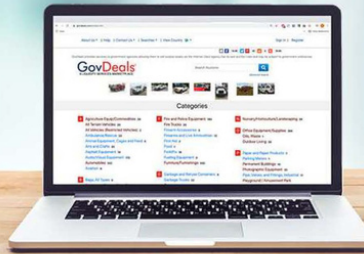




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MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Causes and Controls of Slips, Trips and Falls

Written by Mike Marinan, Director of Member Services - Public Risk Underwriters of Florida, Inc.

Slip and fall injuries are the most frequently reported workplace accidents. Falls are the primary cause of lost time at work, the average employee misses 11 days of work after a workplace fall, 22% of workplace falls result in more than 31 days of missed work.

Slips, trips and falls cost employers more than \$17 billion a year. It is a serious problem and happens across all classifications. Within Preferred, slip, trip and falls consistently rank as the number two claim cause for both frequency and severity.

So what causes workplace trips and falls? Although categorized together they are separate incidents that can be addressed separately.

There are many things that can cause a person to slip and fall and not just the obvious spillage.

The most common causes are:

1. Wet Floors: Wet floors can be caused by a variety of things. Spillages are an obvious reason. Cleaning activities can create wet floor surfaces. If it's raining outside, entrance ways can become wet as rain travels in off

of people's shoes and clothing. Poorly maintained buildings can leak.

2. Slippery Floors: Glossy polished floor tiles can be a slip hazard if they are in an unsuitable place like a bathroom or entrance, where the floor may become wet. Depending on the type of footwear, flooring may be slippery even in dry conditions.

3. Dusty Floors: It's not just liquids that can cause slips. Dusty floor surfaces can also create a slip hazard.

4. Loose Mats and Floor Coverings: Some mats can create a slip hazard if they are old or don't grip well with the surface underneath. Step on it the wrong way and it can slide.

5. Unsuitable Footwear: The slickness of the soles and the type of heels worn need to be evaluated to avoid slips and falls. Shoelaces need to be tied.

Trip hazards can happen in any type of work environment, and it's not just cables you need to look out for.

The most common causes are:

1. Obstacles: Leaving materials, tools, boxes or equipment lying around, especially in or near walkways are a common cause of trips at work. In addition, not storing items on stairs.



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

(...continued from previous page)

2. Loose Flooring: Loose floor coverings can be a slip hazard, they can also be a trip hazard. Rug curled up at the corner, a loose floorboard, frayed carpet.

3. Uneven Flooring: Walking surfaces or sidewalks, potholes and uneven paving can also create trip hazards. Broken cracked slabs and other maintenance issues should be resolved as soon as possible.

4. Trailing Cables: Electricity is everywhere, or at least we need it everywhere. Whatever it is usually needs to be plugged in and that cable can create a problem.

5. Obstructions: Like obstacles, but obstructions are fixed rather than temporary. Low walls or curbs, a step that you didn't know was there or floor mounted socket covers can all be a trip hazard.

6. Poor Housekeeping: The leading cause of slips, trips and falls at work. Removing waste and cleaning up regularly can help lower the risk.

7. Bad Lighting: Obstacles and obstructions are worse if you can't see them. Good lighting can help identify hazards and get them removed.

The causes of and solutions for slips, trips and falls may seem obvious. Although many safety programs do a good job of addressing them,

they continue to be a serious issue. To be certain that they are being adequately addressed and managed, your policies and procedures should include the following:

Regular Maintenance:

- Replace cracked, working or aged floor surfaces
- Ensure walkways are clear
- Use anti-slip cleaning products
- Make sure all areas are well-lit to make it easier to spot hazards
- Have a plan to clean spills or wet surfaces

Rules and Procedures:

- Encourage and make it easy to report spills
- Regularly inspect work areas to ensure they are in good order
- Provide instruction on the necessity for good housekeeping

Proper Equipment:

- Use high-traction mats
- Require the proper non-slip footwear
- Install handrails on stairs





MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

(...continued from previous page)

There is one additional condition that contributes to slip, trip and falls and it may be the toughest to control, individual behavior. It's human nature to let our guard down temporarily and be distracted by random thoughts or doing multiple activities.

Being in a hurry will result in walking too fast or running, which increases the chances of slip, trip or fall. Taking shortcuts, not watching where one is going, using a cell phone, carrying materials which obstruct the vision, wearing sunglasses in low-light areas, not using designated walkways and speed are common factors.

While most slips, trips and falls are avoidable it's ultimately up to each individual to plan, stay alert and pay attention. Embracing a culture of safety within your organization will play a large part in your efforts to avoid these types of incidents which can injure employees and lead to increased claims costs.

Please contact your Preferred Loss Control Consultant to learn more about ways to help you and your organization prevent slips, trips and falls. There are many resources available including onsite and virtual inspections of premises.

Mike Marinan, Director of Member Services - Public Risk Underwriters of Florida, Inc. - Mike has a degree in Industrial Safety Engineering and over 37 years experience in the Safety and Risk Management field. He has been employed by Public Risk Underwriters of Florida, Inc. for 19 years. He holds an RMPE designation, holds a General Lines 220 and 218 licenses, is an active member of Central Florida PRIMA, as well as an active member of ASSP and numerous related Safety and Health organizations. He was a Governor appointee to the Task Force on Workplace Safety

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NATIONAL COALITION

NSDC Marks Success with First Advocacy Fly-In to Capitol Hill

BY COLE ARREOLA-KARR

The National Special Districts Coalition (NSDC) completed its first formal advocacy fly-in to Washington, DC, in September to engage on priority federal issues facing the nation's 35,000+ special districts.

Regular members seated on the NSDC Legislative Committee met with Congressional and Senate offices to share the importance of defining special districts in federal code, promote awareness of essential public services special districts provide to constituents, and begin laying groundwork on efforts to close community gaps in adequate fire suppression infrastructure.

"NSDC's first fly-in is not only significant for our growing Coalition, but it is also a historic success for the nation's special districts as the first organized advocacy event on Capitol Hill to voice priorities and concerns impacting many of the nation's 35,000 special districts," said Neil McCormick, NSDC Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the California Special Districts Association. "Together, our Coalition is raising its voice and taking action on major policy matters impacting how thousands of special purpose governments are able to access critical programs to provide quality services to millions of Americans.

The Coalition looks forward to growing our presence in Washington in the year ahead, and to further building the relationships between our Congressional delegations with special districts providing essential services to mutual constituents."

NSDC met with key legislators representing the Coalition's member states, including House and Senate offices in California, Colorado, Florida, South Carolina, Texas, Utah, and Wyoming. The top priority for special districts advocates was to spotlight the necessity of special districts to be clearly defined as eligible for federal programs aiding local government infrastructure and other community programs. NSDC's Members elevated efforts to request through key congressional representatives an official, non-partisan Congressional Research Service report to provide full context on issues surrounding special districts' uniform access to federal programs geared toward local government.

Members also elevated NSDC's research covering community gaps in water infrastructure for firefighting with recommendations to resolve the policy issues impacting more than 10,000 special districts



Pictured: Chiefs Michael Choate and David Cambareri



LOOKING FOR PROJECT FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES?

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Earlier this year, the National Special Districts Coalition (NSDC) launched a tool to streamline special district members' ability to search for project or program funding opportunities.

In partnership with The Ferguson Group (TFG), NSDC established a "project idea portal" for districts to submit projects for which funding opportunities are sought. Districts are welcome to submit details of the project via the webform, which TFG's grants team will review and work with the district to identify and apply for potential grant and finance opportunities.

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS THE NSDC PROJECT IDEA PORTAL](#)

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The portal was launched alongside the publication of a NSDC special report outlining newly authorized and updated programs included in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). The publication provides brief summaries of IIJA's 45 new federal programs and details 36 programs the law revised/updated.



TO REQUEST MORE RESOURCES, CONTACT COLE ARREOLA-KARR AT
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FASD MEMBER BENEFITS



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MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Transparency Trends and Tips for Special Districts

By Annelise Spargo, Streamline

Many states have been adopting legislation requiring transparency, which can feel like a chore to comply with, but there are a lot of benefits for districts that embrace transparency.

Transparency is foundational to local government activity.

For districts, this means making information - everything from budgets and agendas to a mission statement - easily available for all citizens to access. Government transparency improves public perception of your district, cultivates better community relationships, as well as promotes accountability.

One of the biggest benefits, though, is increased community engagement. When citizens feel that their local government is accessible, approachable, and transparent, they are more likely to participate in District discussions and activities. More transparency is a positive thing! And the good news is, technology has made transparency easier than ever.

Being more transparent in today's world is as simple as ensuring your website, the first place citizens typically look for information, is accurate, complete, and easy to navigate.

Here are five easy ways to increase transparency online:

- **A robust "About Us" website page:** A well-rounded "About Us" page should include a mission statement, a list of staff members and their functions, a list of board members and their term dates, a bio, contact info and photo, a brief history of your district, and bonus points for additional staff/pictures!
- **Detailed "Contact Us" information:** Address (with map!), phone number, email address, hours of operation, and bonus points for a contact us form!
- **Links to budgets, agendas, and meetings schedule are easily accessible on the home page:** Don't bury budgets, agendas, meeting information, and other essential information deep in the website. Ensure all of these items are easily accessible directly from the home page.
- **A "search" function on the website:** Search boxes on a District website make it fast and easy for citizens to pull up government policies, financial information, forms, documents, and live-streaming videos for board meetings, and also saves time for the clerk or employee who would normally need to pull this information.
- **Regular newsletters:** A once per month, or even once-per-quarter Newsletter via email is best.



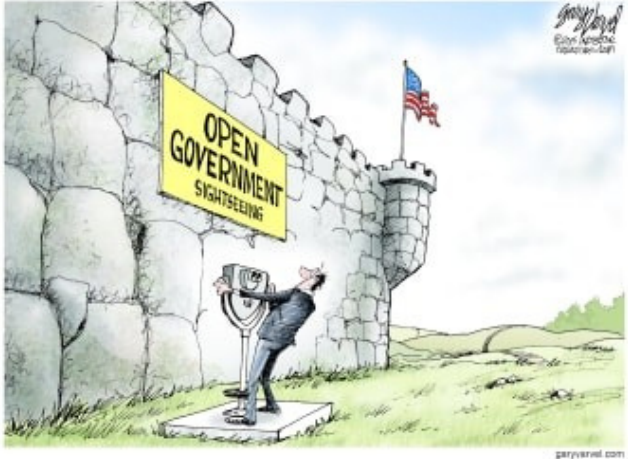
MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

(...continued from previous page)

- Share any project information, general updates, changes to hours during the holiday season, etc. Let the community know what you're up to!

Once this is complete, continue to update your website and communications regularly.

Now is the time to work on your district's transparency - so when it comes time to pass a rate increase or get a special levy approved by voters, you'll be successful because they will already have a connection with you, and trust you.



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FASD MEMBER BENEFITS

Well, What Now?

BY DATABASE FINANCIAL SERVICES, INC.

It just seems like a year or so ago when you started, but now your retirement is looking right at you. Now it's time to make one of the biggest decisions of your career. What retirement option do you choose?

If you're in a defined benefit plan is the full option right or one of the survivor benefit options. If you're in a Investment type plan (401, 457, 403) where is the best place for your funds that works for you and your family. There is only one way to accomplish this, Education! Yes, simple knowledge of how your plan works can make a big difference in how your retirement years are going to be.

In a traditional defined benefit plan (FRS, 175 Or 185 plans) the choice you make in the Personnel Department that day can have far reaching effects for years to come. For instance, the difference between a life only and life plus spouse can mean a change in retirement income from between \$100,000 to over \$300,000 over the course of a typical retirement life span.

If you're in a Investment Plan can you afford to take on risk to achieve your desired income. Or can you use one of the new generations of investment products that will protect your funds from downside market volatility.

The way to find out what is best for you and yours is to fully understand the Plan and the alternatives available. Plus, the earlier you choose which path is right for you, the easier and sometimes cheaper it is to achieve. In a traditional plan is the self-insured option the right one for you. If so, can you start it early and cover your current needs while also putting your retirement option in place at a much lower cost than waiting.

If you're in an Investment type plan, how much income do you need upon retirement? How do you plan to get to that figure? What's your risk tolerance now and how might it change in the future? As you can see, like I always say, retiring isn't all that easy. But you can make it easier with the proper planning and education. Take some time to reach out to a financial professional and get the knowledge you need to make the decision. When choosing the type of education you need, make sure that the individual(s) hosting or giving the information are knowledgeable with Government employee plans. Unfortunately, most are not.

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MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Rules and Regulations in Special Districts

By Inframark IMS

Florida is a unique state that follows Florida Statutes 189 or 190, depending on the district established. Special Districts are more focused on Statute 189, which guides Community Development Districts. In Florida there are over 1,800 districts, and, depending on the type of district, the Statutes that are followed can be slightly different, as are the districts themselves.

Then to further the discussion, Special Districts could be independent or dependent districts, and then the rules and protocols followed by the Special Districts differ slightly. A dependent district is determined by whether a city or a county can mandate its Special District Board members, remove the Board at will, or approve or deny the budget. If any of those stipulations apply true, it becomes a dependent District, and if it does not hold any of those true, then it becomes an Independent District.

While the Statute guides districts in a slightly different manner depending on the designation of the district, the elections, general provisions, finance, oversight and accountability, merger and dissolution, and comprehensive planning are followed regardless of the Special District classification under Statute 189. These established Statutes were put in place to guide the various types of Special Districts as a means of order and organization to be followed. Still, the means of and purpose significantly differ from one another.

Within the State of Florida, the top 10 that must utilize Special Districts are:

- Community Development: 807
- Community Redevelopment: 221
- Housing Authorities: 91
- Drainage and Water Control: 82
- Fire Control and Rescue: 63
- Soil and Water Conservation: 56
- Neighborhood Enhancement: 46
- Hospital (various types): 27
- Health Facilities: 25
- Housing Finance: 24

Each Special District is established due to a need to maintain common infrastructure, attract new businesses, protect lives and property, service major infrastructure such as utility systems, or make Florida an attractive place for people to live and visit. To maintain the District, some Districts get by with less than \$3,000 per year. Still, others could get revenue by taxing commercial businesses or residences to provide money for operations and maintenance. However, revenue sources could be gained through grants, tolls, bond issuer fees, donations, non-ad valorem, ad valorem, investments, etc. These various methods and the differing needs of Districts based on their overall purpose create a need for established rules and regulations to be provided for.

The reality is that District Managers must be well-versed and experienced to guide Districts each year. Since there is no official diploma or certification that can be obtained to become a District Manager, it is up to a reputable company to train and provide support to qualified individuals. At Inframark the goal of each District Manager is to live by the Florida Statutes and to guide each Special District into the future, in addition to making sure their budget or everyday operations and maintenance are within compliance and the Special District can flourish.



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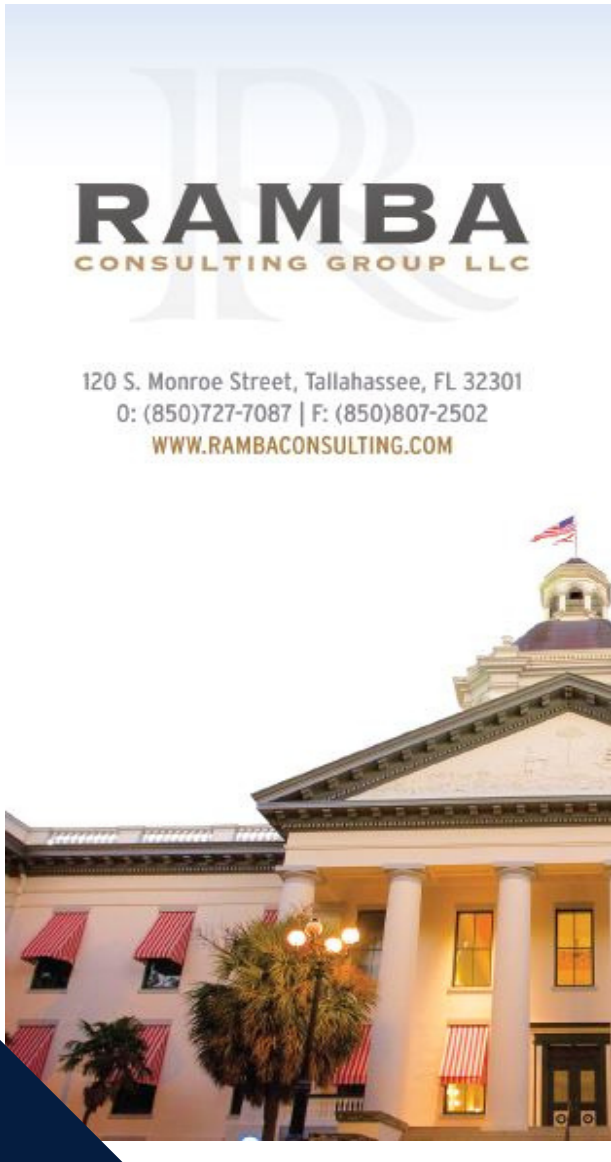
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MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Benefits of an Effective Return to Work Program

Written by Ryan Rupnarain, Egis Insurance & Risk Advisors

When thinking about what makes a district's safety and risk management program successful, efforts to prevent injuries is always the primary goal. Although this is critical, managing those injuries that do occur must also be a significant priority. Every district should consider developing and implementing a return-to-work program. An effective return to work program is essential not only in supporting successful district operations but also helping employees get back to meaningful work. Some of the benefits of an effective return-to-work (RTW) program include:

Improved morale - RTW helps to show that employees' recovery and well-being are valued.

Reduced costs - RTW programs can directly reduce wage loss payments while accelerating employee rehabilitation. This helps to lower experience modifications which can ultimately lead to lower worker's compensation premiums. The reduced likelihood of attorney representation and litigation can also reduce overall costs.

Improved communication - A good RTW program helps to facilitate both early and frequent communication with an injured employee. This shows concern and can make the employee more eager to return to work. Improved communication maintains or establishes workplace relationships.

Minimized operational disruptions - Returning an employee to work, even for light or modified duty, helps to maintain productivity.



Elements of a Successful Program

To have a successful program in place, there are key elements that are involved.

Written policy and procedures - This helps to formally establish guidelines and clearly articulate your district's policies. Be sure to include the roles and responsibilities of the employees, supervisors, human resources, and any other personnel. The program should be distributed to employees once



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finalized and notification should be given regarding the process and its implementation. A good program will highlight the benefits of a return-to-work program to employees including restoring full earnings and maintaining the employee's skills.

Up-to-date job descriptions – Physicians treating injured employees must know exactly what physical requirements are included in the employee's role. A robust job description will also include the various routine tasks performed, postures and positions used throughout the workday, required lifting and carrying capacities, equipment used, along with the environmental conditions the employee will be exposed to. If needed, job descriptions can be presented visually and an option can include an on-site review of the position for additional clarity.

Clearly defined transitional light or modified duty options – RTW programs provide injured workers who are in the recovery process but unable to perform their normal job duties the ability to return to work in a limited, temporary, or light duty capacity until fully recovered. Options to modify the tasks that the employee performs on a regular workday should be explored before considering alternative tasks. Alternative tasks performed by employees in the RTW process will vary based on individual needs but most often included seated work, one-handed work, or work with lifting restrictions.

Examples can include supporting office and administrative staff, performing department inspections, or providing training for other employees. One option is to create a "job bank" which lists duties that add value to both the district and the employee and provide meaningful light duty work so as to not make duties appear as a punishment to the employee. A light duty option would be to modify the number of work hours to accommodate time restrictions imposed by the treating physician or a combination of limited hours and duties.

Frequent and consistent communication between all parties - In addition to the benefits mentioned earlier in this article, proper and timely communication helps to set a cooperative tone between the employee, management, and treating physicians. Successful RTW programs also train and actively involve department managers and supervisors because of their closer proximity to the employee. This provides an opportunity to manage the immediate RTW environment and support open communication. Good communication also helps in reinforcing the worker's value to the employer and alleviates any concerns that the employer does not value employee contributions and is not empathetic about their work injury and recovery.



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Select a primary care clinic/physician – Establish a relationship with your district and a local clinic or physician to understand your return-to-work program. Meet with the clinic or physician to review your program and have a representative or physician visit your operation to understand you are committed to your return-to-work program

Annual program review – Reviewing your RTW program at least annually, assessing what has worked and what hasn't is critical in ensuring continuous improvement and overall program effectiveness. Reviewing the program with all employees at least twice during the year is also a best practice.

Studies show that the chances of returning to full employment after a six-month absence due to injury or illness is 55.4%. It becomes 32.2% after a one-year absence and after two years away from work, it becomes 4.9%. The extended time away from work is often the result of a lack of resources or expertise in getting an RTW program started and implemented effectively.

If you need more articles, sample forms and policies, or any other resources on safety and risk management, please reach out to our team at riskservices@egisadvisors.com.



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Special District Services, Inc., creates and manages special taxing districts throughout the State of Florida. SDS was organized to meet the growing demand for urban services and provide a public financing vehicle to serve community infrastructure and service needs in a timely and cost-effective manner.



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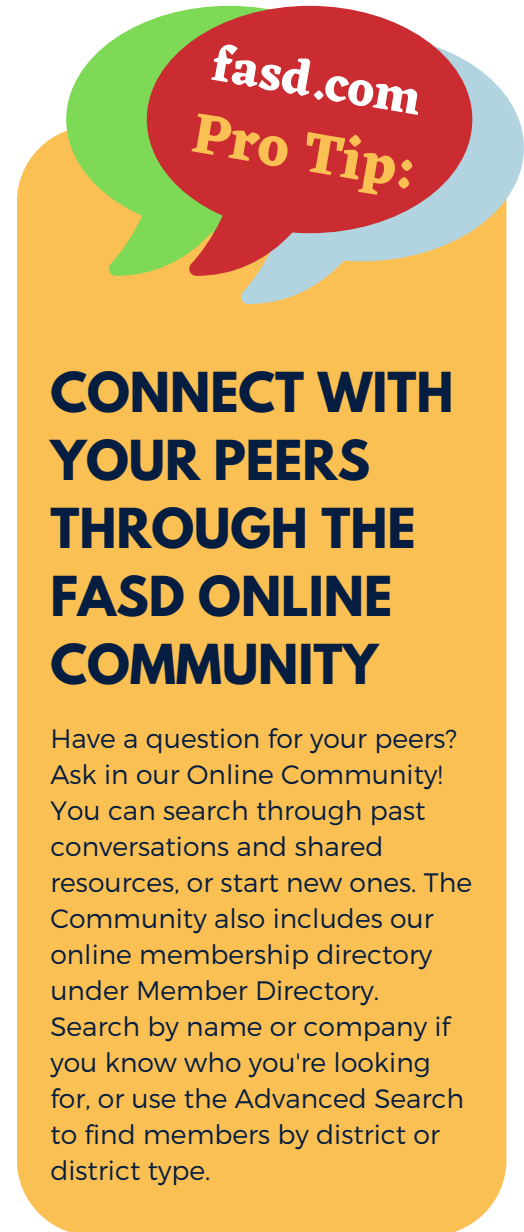
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