



# County Connection

News from the Washington Counties Risk Pool

May/June 2010

## Executive Committee Seeks Nominations

The Executive Committee, acting as a Nominating Committee, will soon begin formulating nominating recommendations for the Executive Committee positions with 2010-13 terms and WCRP officer candidates for 2010-11. They seek your input for these important positions.

Only Directors and Alternates are eligible to serve on the Executive Committee—limited to one committee member per county. And only members of the Executive Committee are eligible for officer consideration. Pool bylaws require that Executive Committee members represent the diversity and interests of member counties, east and west, large and small, and elected and appointed officials.

The current Executive Committee is composed of 11 members.

Those whose terms expire 9/30/10 are **Marilyn Butler**, Skamania (current Secretary/Treasurer); **Steve Bartel**, Spokane; **Andrew Lampe**, Okanogan; and **Jay Winter**, Walla Walla (current President). *Nomination are being sought for these positions.*



Lee Grose  
Lewis  
County  
2011



Rose Elway  
Grays Harbor  
County  
2011



Tammy Devlin  
Thurston  
County  
2011



Keith Goehner  
Chelan  
County  
2011

Elected to serve for the 10/1/09—9/30/12 term are **Steve Clem**, Douglas; **Randy Watts**, Whatcom; and **Mark Abernathy**, Kitsap.



Steve Clem  
Douglas  
County  
2012



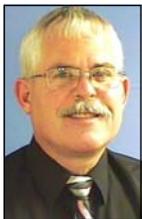
Randy Watts  
Whatcom  
County  
2012



Mark Abernathy  
Kitsap  
County  
2012



Marilyn Butler  
Skamania  
County  
2010



Steve Bartel  
Spokane  
County  
2010



Andrew Lampe  
Okanogan  
County  
2010



Jay Winter  
Walla Walla  
County  
2010

It has been the custom of the Risk Pool to nominate and elect the current Secretary/Treasurer as the incoming President.

Your input is important! Please contact President and Nominating Committee Chair Jay Winter at 509-524-2602 or [JWinter@co.walla-walla.wa.us](mailto:JWinter@co.walla-walla.wa.us) before July 9th with your recommendations for nominations for Executive Committee members and officers. The Nominating Committee will select at least one nominee per open position; nominations will also be accepted from the floor during the 2010 Annual Meeting, July 23rd.

Elected to serve for the 10/1/08—9/30/11 term are **Lee Grose**, Lewis; **Rose Elway**, Grays Harbor; **Tammy Devlin**, Thurston; and **Keith Goehner**, Chelan.



**Jill Lowe, Loss Control Coordinator**

## On the Road!

I recently purchased a very light, 13 foot trailer to take camping. This is quite a statement for me. In my younger backpacking days, I was adamant that I would never be one of “those” people who used a cooler much less something with wheels, a built-in bed and a small commode. But times have changed. My back greatly appreciates the mattress and it’s wonderful to wake up and turn on the heat and stove. The coffee may not be as good as when it’s made on a fire, but it sure is quick.

“Windshield” time is something I enjoy. This is a good thing because my job with the Risk Pool takes me to all 28 member counties several times throughout the year.

The Risk Pool Administrative Work Plan requires me to visit each of the county risk managers to review claim trends, identify risk management program gaps and discuss training and loss control needs. To date, I’ve met with 19 county risk managers. I’ve enjoyed the discussions about how claims might have been prevented and what we might be able to do to anticipate claims and lawsuits in the future.

The pool has offered 20 training classes in nearly as many locations since October 2009. The locations are chosen to allow attendees the least amount of travel time and the highest percentage of attendance. Start and end times have been amended as much as possible to allow for same day travel eliminating the need for overnight

accommodations whenever possible.

Tim Chace, Loss Control Director for Arthur J. Gallagher and I will soon be starting our third year of conducting Phase II Risk Assessment visits. To date, we have completed 19 of these visits. We focus on “high” liability locations such as transfer stations, parks, jails and quarries. Approximately 45 days later, the county receives a detailed report highlighting what they are doing well as well as areas of improvement. This report is not only helpful to the county but also to Underwriting.

My dog Emily and I recently hit the road for the first time in our little trailer. Our journey began in Chelan County for the employment law portion of the Management and Supervisor training. Upon arrival in Wenatchee, I unexpectedly needed a bit of RV work done. Luckily, Cathy Mulhall, County Administrator and Risk Manager was able to point me in the direction of a local business who could quickly accommodate the needed repairs. Following the training, Emily and I then joined a family campout in Hells Gate State Park in Idaho.

Friends and family often note that they find it odd that with a job requiring so much “windshield” time, I still enjoy travel in my downtime. It’s true. I like being on the road, and I especially like it when it involves good people, my dog and a wee bit of adventure.

### **Executive Committee**

#### **President**

**Jay Winter**, Walla Walla County

#### **Secretary/Treasurer**

**Marilyn Butler**, Skamania County

#### **Other Members**

**Tammy Devlin**, Thurston County

**F. Lee Grose**, Lewis County

**Rose Elway**, Grays Harbor County

**Steve Clem**, Douglas County

**Randy Watts**, Whatcom County

**Andrew Lampe**, Okanogan County

**Keith Goehner**, Chelan County

**Mark Abernathy**, Kitsap County

**Steve Bartel**, Spokane County

#### **Risk Pool Staff**

##### Administration

**Vyrle Hill**, Executive Director

**Sue Colbo**, Auditing/Accounting Officer

**Claire Thompson**, Assistant/Editor

##### Claims

**Susan Looker**, Manager

**Candy Drews**, Senior Analyst

**Mike Cook**, Analyst

**Tammy Cahill**, Representative

**Lisa Daly**, Assistant

##### Member Services

**David Goldsmith**

**Jill Lowe**, Loss Control Coordinator

To access *County Connection's* e-version, go to [www.wcrp.info](http://www.wcrp.info)

To receive by email, send your email address to [claire@wcrp.wa.gov](mailto:claire@wcrp.wa.gov) or call (360) 292-4480. Got story/photo ideas? Please submit them to the email address above.

Published by



**WASHINGTON COUNTIES RISK POOL**

Created by Counties for Counties

# Time to Register for the WCRP 2010 Summer Conference and Annual Board of Directors Meeting



**WHEN:** Wednesday—Friday, July 21-23, 2010

**WHERE:** Red Lion Hotel Wenatchee. The Wenatchee area is a vacationer's dream, including wine touring, antiquing, fruit stands, hiking, biking, river rafting, golfing, fishing, and festivals. One can walk, cycle, or skate the Apple Capital Loop Trail, a scenic waterfront 11 mile paved loop trail available from the Riverwalk Crossing Pedestrian Overpass. The Wenatchee Riverfront Park encompasses 31 acres along the banks of the Columbia River, and contains the Wenatchee Riverfront Railway, a mini steam train. Art on the Avenues features an outdoor gallery of sculptures by many nationally acclaimed artists; sixty-two sculptures are included in the self-guided tour. Conference attendees will see first-hand the beauty of Ohme Gardens, one of the most famous alpine gardens in America. There's a lot to see and do!

**CONFERENCE REGISTRATION:** Log on to the WCRP homepage (<http://www.wcrp.info>) and click on the "Events & Training Calendar" link in the upper left column, then on to the "Online Registration Form" in the middle. From the "Events" drop-down, select "2010 Summer Conference and Annual Board of Directors Meeting" and fill in the applicable boxes. Driving directions and other details will be provided after completing your online registration.

**LODGING (if needed):** A block of overnight rooms at the hotel has been set aside for Wednesday and Thursday nights for a special "single" rate (\$69.95 + T&F) and includes a breakfast coupon. To register, you can go to [redlion.com](http://redlion.com) and enter the group access code WASH0270 and it will pull up the discount rates. The block will remain available until June 21st.

**SCHEDULE:** The conference schedule includes:

**Wednesday, July 21st:**

Afternoon: Standing Committee meetings, if needed

**Evening:** 6:00 pm—8:00 pm - Welcoming Reception. Otherwise, nothing formal is planned.

**Thursday, July 22nd:**

8:30 am—11:30 am - Combined Roundtable—County Prosecuting Attorneys, civil staffers, Claims Administrators and Risk Managers, topics TBD.

11:30 am—1:30 pm - Luncheon - Annual Member Recognition

1:30 pm—5:00 pm - Board of Directors Work Session

**Evening:** 6:00 pm—9:00 pm - Enjoy Ohme Gardens and dinner outside. Parking is available; carpooling is recommended.

**Friday, July 23rd:**

8:30 am—? (Noon) - Annual 2010 Board of Directors Meeting



# Helpline NEWS



**Here is the latest Question of the Month from the HelpLine for WCRP Members' HR Express Update:**

**Question:**

*How does one handle a confrontation with supervisor and employee when the employee was sent home and the employee feels he was demoralized, threatened, and dehumanized? There was a nose to nose confrontation and was not handled correctly by the supervisor. The employee wants this resolved in three business days.*

**Response:**

Employers have a duty to promptly investigate complaints of alleged harassment or hostile work environment. Although you did not receive a complaint per se, such a confrontation can be perceived to have been from a hostile work environment or to now be causing one. Each situation is different and as a general matter the employer should first take a full statement from both employees (in writing if possible), and obtain information about the entire instance of the alleged threatening conduct (i.e., when and where it took place and who, if anyone, was present at the time, etc.). The employer should then meet with any identified witnesses and obtain any information that they may have about the situation (also in writing if possible).

You may need to go back to the subject employees for additional information during the investigation, but once concluded, it is generally up to the employer to determine, based on the applicable facts and circumstances and company policy, procedure and past practice, what, if any, is the appropriate disciplinary action to take. If your investigation reveals that one or both employees violated the company's anti-harassment or anti-hostile work environment

policy, code of professional conduct, or other policy, the employer must take appropriate corrective action warranted by the results of the investigation and consistent with company policy and practice. If the employer determines that the supervisor (and/or subordinate employee) engaged in misconduct that is not grounds for dismissal, an appropriate warning against further instances of threatening conduct or harassment (if any) and against any retaliation against the other employee should be issued, if warranted, and should be fully documented (then placed in the appropriate personnel file).

Indeed, even if the conduct does not rise to a level of unlawful harassment or hostile work environment, an employer does not need to tolerate disruptions such as nose to nose confrontations in the workplace, and can (and indeed should) discipline the subject employees if deserved and if consistent with company policy and past practice, and take any other measures as warranted by the results of the investigation to ensure the conduct (if any) does not reoccur and that the workplace is safe for all employees. Note also that though the employee may "want this resolved in three business days," as long as the employer's investigation and responsive action is prompt and thorough, there is not a statutory time limitation on the period in which it must do so, and it is not required to adhere to the employee's demanded time table.

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## Enhanced HelpLine Services for WCRP Members with Online Unlawful Harassment Training for all Supervisors & Employees

WCRP is pleased to announce that effective immediately, HelpLine Services now has available an Online Unlawful Harassment Training module available to all county employees. This new, self-administered feature will be available at **no additional cost**. This course adds significant value which includes the ability for each member county to ask specific employment law questions directly to attorneys, access to a website full of resources and monthly HR *Express* Updates, all designed to help save your county thousands of dollars in compliance and legal fees.

This service is provided by the Pool's first level reinsurer, ACE, as a way to assist member counties in addressing employment law issues. We encourage you to use

this service if you are not already doing so. Brian Hansen will be attending the Summer Conference and plans to discuss this expanded HelpLine service during the Thursday morning Roundtable.

HelpLine users can login right away to get started. If you do not have your access codes, please contact a HelpLine Relationship Manager at toll-free 1-877-568-6655.

The HelpLine for WCRP Members is one more way that WCRP helps you control your risks.

Please click on the following link to review the many different topics addressed through HelpLine.

**For more information, please visit:** [www.hrhelpline.com/wcrp/overview](http://www.hrhelpline.com/wcrp/overview)

### **Liz Mizer provided the following information about SPECIAL EVENT INSURANCE:**

Diversified has merged with Hubb International. The Special Events coverage through Diversified is still the same with Hubb and is written with Colony and Genesis. The website is [www.eventinsure.com](http://www.eventinsure.com) and phone # 925-609-6500.

#### **EventInsure provides liability insurance for:**

- Baby Shower, Baptism, Bar mitzvah, Bat mitzvah, Confirmation, Engagement, Ordination, Wedding, Wedding Shower
- Anniversary, Birthday, Dance or Party, Graduation, Private Reception, Lecture, Meeting, Retirement, Reunion
- Arts and Craft Fair, Automobile Show, Community Festival, Not-for-Profit Fund Raising Event, Theatrical and Musical Performance and Rehearsal, School Boosters Club or School Non-Profit, and Events requiring Street Closure Permits, Other Special Events
- Instructors of Park and Recreation Department Classes or Instructors of After School Enrichment Classes

Insurance is provided through the Special Event Liability Group Insurance Trust, a fully insured Risk Purchasing Group.



# SAFETY NEWS



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## Safety Tip of the Month: Safe Walking

By Tim Chace, Director of Risk Control, Arthur J. Gallagher Risk Management Services, Inc.

Is simply walking dangerous? It can be if precautions are not taken. When walking, you may slip when planting the heel of your lead foot or when pushing off your back foot. You may not fall, but an injury could result. Walking involves transferring body weight from one foot to the other. When a slip occurs, it is because the force we generate during movement exceeds the frictional properties of our shoe/surface interaction. Let us explain.

The causes of slips can be many, including slippery surfaces, sloped surfaces, changing surfaces, objects which may be in our path, a loss of balance, and even medical conditions such as fainting or seizures. A “slip” is *technically defined as a sliding motion resulting from a loss of friction*. All floor surfaces have what is called a static coefficient of friction (SCOF). A low SCOF means a slick surface and an increased risk of slipping. A high SCOF, indicates a “secure” surface. For example, dry carpet has a high SCOF. It is hard to slip on a dry carpeted floor. However, a tile lunch room floor with spilled milk on it has a very low SCOF, and there would be a high risk of someone slipping should they walk on that surface.

Numerous factors affect slips/falls. They include your shoes, the floor surface (and anything on that surface), your environment, what you are doing, and you. What can we do to prevent slips?

- Clean up spilled liquids or report to office management any slick surfaces that need attention. To prevent spilled liquids, always use capped containers; when a cap is unavailable, only fill open containers about three quarters full.
- Practice good housekeeping and keep walkways clear of objects. When you have to walk around something, it requires a change in direction. You push with your feet to move. If you push to the left or right and the surface is too smooth or slick, your foot may slip and you may fall. Look what happens to a basketball player on a sweaty floor when they try to make a sudden move. Change your direction or turn your feet slowly.
- Shorten your stride when walking from a surface with a high SCOF to one with a low SCOF. If you walk on carpet and then try to walk with the same stride length or speed on a smooth tile or marble floor, you may slip. Be cautious when going through doors because the floor surface may change.
- Look closely at your choice of shoes and their condition. If they have high heels, very little of the sole contacts the floor, so the smallest slick spot could cause a fall. If your shoe tread is worn, you now have two smooth surfaces against each other, increasing the risk of loss of friction and slipping.
- Avoid over-reaching or over-leaning. When you do this, your weight is not centered over your feet. Forces are no longer directly downward. When carrying objects while walking, keep them close to your body. To avoid over-leaning or over-reaching, move your feet and body closer to the object to be grasped. This keeps your body weight directly over your feet.

The above tips are provided to help you walk more safely on the job. Have a safe summer!



# TRAINING & EVENTS



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## **July 21-23, 2010**

WCRP Summer Conference and Annual Board of Directors Meeting, Red Lion Hotel in Wenatchee, WA. More details are available on page 3.

## **November 3-5, 2010**

WCRP Fall Conference and Board of Directors Meeting, Davenport Hotel, Spokane.

## **March 23-25, 2011**

WCRP Spring Conference and Board of Directors Meeting, the Lodge at Suncadia, Cle Elum, WA.

You can get more information, access driving directions,  
and register for classes and events at:

[www.wcrp.info](http://www.wcrp.info)

## **CONGRATULATIONS TO COWLITZ COUNTY!!**

Risk Manager Clyde Carpenter recently reported Cowlitz County participated in a benchmarking analysis of their Workers Comp program. The county had the lowest cost per claim in the United States when compared to 619 other government entities of a similar size, worker classification codes and worker hours. Congratulations!!