



The Blaze

A Publication of the Idaho State Fire Commissioners' Association

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Welcome to the 3rd Quarter 2025 edition of *The Blaze!* This publication of the Idaho State Fire Commissioners' Association (ISFCA).

Hello fellow Commissioners,

As the new President of the Association, I am gaining insight about the challenges we face at the Legislature and the need for more communication amongst fire districts. My goal is to better communicate with fire districts throughout the year, gain more participation from all of you, and to make our voice known at the Capitol. We have a great team to lead us in the right direction, however, we are all volunteers of the association and we need your continued input for success.

Goals for 2025/2025

1. Increase Membership
2. Increase our presence at the Capitol
3. Increase educational training online and in person
4. Create an online "sample" document section to our membership portal
5. Increase our interaction with districts by attending their meetings.

The above list is just a handful of items we are working on.

Please attend our monthly connects, it is a free training and networking session online. Plan to attend our 2026 Annual Conference in Coeur d'Alene in March.

We have some vacancies on the board if you would like to volunteer your time to the association.

Respectfully, Larry Jewett, ISFCA President

3rd Quarter Blaze - 2025

2025 ISFCA Board of Directors

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Vacant

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Informing, educating, representing, leading, and serving fire districts of Idaho in the preservation and protection of life and property

10135 Round Valley Rd., Cascade ID 83611

Everyday Heroes



Battalion Chief John Morrison
Killed in the line of duty

John grew up in North Spokane, graduated from Mead High School, and went on to earn a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Gonzaga University.

He began volunteering with Spokane County Fire District 4 in Colbert while still in college and, in 1996, joined Coeur d'Alene Fire, where he spent his entire career.

He met the love of his life, Jill Ermi, when they were in their early 20s, and they were married on September 27, 1997 in Coeur d'Alene. In 2003, their family was completed with the arrival of Joseph Grant. Family was incredibly important to John.

He was full of ideas and helped inspire several entrepreneurial ventures, including Battalion 3 Technologies, which sought to improve the industry standard for fire safety and on-scene accountability.

Long hours at the firehouse helped John hone his cooking and grilling skills, which we all benefited from. He also enjoyed baking and especially loved creating an annual birthday cake for Joe.

John's legacy is one of laughter, love, loyalty, and a deep commitment to service. He touched the lives of everyone who knew him, and he will be deeply missed.

Battalion Chief Frank J. Harwood
Killed in the line of duty

A beloved husband, devoted father, decorated veteran, and proud public servant, Frank's life was marked by leadership, service, and love. He served his community with honor and distinction as a Battalion Chief for Kootenai County Fire and Rescue, where he was admired for his leadership, humility, selfless nature, and dedication to the safety and well-being of all those around him. His passion for the fire service was matched only by his deep pride in serving his country as a member of the Army National Guard, including a tour in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Frank was a respected leader in the fire service across the region and was widely regarded as one of the best tacticians in the area. His expertise, humility, and commitment to training helped shape the careers of hundreds of firefighters. Whether on the fireground or in the classroom, he led with purpose, precision, and a desire to make everyone around him better. He truly embodies what it means to be a mentor.

He was an amazing father to his two daughters and the most incredible, protective, loving, and caring husband a wife could have ever asked for. By far, Frank's greatest joy in life was the time spent with his girls and his wife, cheering them on from the sidelines at sporting events, exploring the outdoors, finding humor in all things, and always accepting them for exactly who they are.



What's for Dinner?

DUMP SALSA by Rebekah Luther

Ingredients

28 oz can whole tomatoes
8 oz can pickled jalapenos
4 oz can roasted chilies
5-7 garlic cloves
Cilantro
Lime juice—2 limes
Salt and pepper to taste
Onions and cumin—if preferred

Blend all ingredients together and season to taste



2 INGREDIENT BISCUITS by Larry Jewett

Ingredients

2 Cups self-rising flour
1 1/2 Cups heavy cream

Instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F. Butter cast iron skillet or baking dish. We also prefer to use bacon grease for better crust and flavor.
2. Sift flour into a medium bowl. Stir in heavy cream, until combined.
3. Turn the dough out onto a floured surface. Flour your hands, and knead the dough a few times. The outside of the dough shouldn't be sticky, but the inside should still have some moisture.
4. Roll the dough out to about 1/2 inch thick. Using a biscuit cutter, cut the biscuits out and place in the skillet or dish. Brush with a little additional whipping cream.
5. Bake for about 12 to 15 minutes, or until a light golden brown. Brush a little melted butter on top (optional) and serve.



Who is the ISFCA Board??—The Volunteers of the Association

Larry Jewett—ISFCA President

Larry, a proud fourth-generation Idahoan, was born in Mountain Home and spent his formative years on a cattle ranch in Bruneau. A graduate of Rimrock High School, Larry furthered his education at the Homebuilder Association Carpenter School, showcasing his commitment to professional development.

In 1978, Larry and his wife relocated to Mountain Home, where they raised their three children and in 2001, they established a successful sheep ranch. They raise registered Hampshire, Dorset, and Dorset Advantage breeds. Larry is an active member of prominent industry associations, including The Idaho Wool Growers Association, The American Hampshire Sheep Association, and The Continental Dorset Club. Larry is also a lifetime member of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, demonstrating a commitment to environmental conservation. Professionally, Larry has demonstrated his leadership as a Project Manager and Construction Superintendent at a Mountain Home Construction Company. Larry's community involvement is extensive. Serving as the Chairman of the Mellon Water District board, he participated in securing grants and loans for a central water system benefiting approximately 90 families. Larry's decade-long tenure on the Elmore County Fair Board reflects his commitment to community development. As a board member and chairman, he was involved in various projects, including the renovation of livestock barns, improvements to the exhibit hall, and the construction of a small animal barn—all accomplished within budgetary constraints. Larry is currently serving as a Mountain Home Rural District Fire Commissioner, a position he has held for 32 years. He has assisted in the procurement of fire trucks and firefighting apparatus while expanding the fire station without additional tax burdens.

In addition to his professional and civic contributions, Larry and his wife have dedicated over 23 years to Elmore County 4-H. Actively involved in the Rowdy Wranglers 4-H Club, they sell 4-H Market show lambs and have showcased their sheep at the Western Idaho Fair for 18 successful years. Larry's commitment to youth mentorship is evident in his involvement with 4-H activities, from volunteering time for barn remodeling to participating in fundraising events like the dunking tank. Proficient in managing diverse groups and adept at working within budgetary constraints, Larry brings valuable experience to collaborative projects. His ability to build relationships with subcontractors, partners, vendors, and stakeholders underscores his capacity to manage projects and address challenges effectively.

Ken Armstrong—Regional Director

Ken Armstrong of the Lemhi County Fire Protection District. I have been a commissioner for 14 months and came into this position very green behind the ear as far as knowing anything about fire departments. I had supported my local department for years but never took the time to think about what our volunteers did behind the scenes. I was approached to step up when we had a commissioner retire and took the leap to help out.

My background was construction for 30 years, Retired 10 years ago because of a bad back. Employed 4-6 employees in the beginning to over 125 employees at the end of my career. 90 percent of my jobs were commercial or government.

For the last ten years in retirement I had been trying to talk my bride {Brenda} of 49 years into retirement also. When she finally picked a date to retire this past January, I had taken this commissioner job, plus a Lemhi County Watersway commissioner job and also am helping Lemhi County Sheriff on a cold case investigation. So as you can imagine I'm always in trouble with Brenda for being too busy to go play. But I am trying to find more time to enjoy our 2 year old grandson whenever we get a few minutes and to spend time at my cabin and traveling."

Conference Keynote Highlights: The Power of Communication and Relationships in Leadership By: Jimmy Karam, Intrinsic First, LLC

At this year's 43rd Idaho State Fire Commissioners' Association (ISFCA) Conference, attendees were treated to a dynamic kickoff keynote by Jimmy Karam of Intrinsic First, setting the tone for three days centered on our shared theme: "*Communications and Relationships.*"

Drawing from Self-Determination Theory and years of experience in leadership development, Jimmy delivered a compelling message on how to foster environments where firefighters and staff can truly thrive. His keynote emphasized the vital role of autonomy, psychological safety, and meaningful relationships in driving high-performance cultures, especially in high-stakes professions like fire service. The session resonated deeply with attendees, and the conversation continued with a 30-minute Q&A, where Jimmy fielded thoughtful questions on leadership, communication strategy, and creating trust within teams.

Later in the conference, ISFCA President Michael Albrecht led a roundtable discussion exploring real-world communication practices across Idaho fire districts. Jimmy, joined by Aaron Robbins of Intrinsic First, observed and contributed valuable insights throughout the session. Their input underscored the trust and credibility Intrinsic First is building within our fire service community.

Two themes stood out from the discussion:

1. **Consistency builds trust.** Regular, predictable communication strengthens relationships and operational stability.
2. **Capturing and sharing success stories** through internal newsletters or other channels reinforces best practices and helps preserve institutional memory.

A highlight of the conference was the live delivery of Intrinsic First's **ProACTr** training workshop, designed specifically for fire chiefs and administrative leaders. This hands-on session featured their AI-powered conversation simulator, a tool that impressed participants with its realism and relevance. When asked about their experience, one participant summed it up with: "*It was awesome!*" The Idaho firefighter training coordinator immediately expressed interest in the tool, opening the door for potential statewide implementation.

As the conference came to a close, one thing was clear: partnerships like the one between ISFCA and Intrinsic First are helping shape the next generation of fire service leadership. We're excited about the potential ahead, including expanded training opportunities and new tools to support commissioners, chiefs, and their teams.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this year's conference. Together, we're building stronger relationships, and stronger leaders across Idaho.



**MOTIVATION IS NOT SOMETHING YOU DO TO SOMEONE;
IT'S ABOUT CREATING A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT THAT
ENABLES A PERSON TO DISCOVER THE OPTIMAL
MOTIVATION FROM WITHIN THEMSELVES.**

Who is the ISFCA Board??—The Volunteers of the Association

Alan Roberts—ISFCA Vice President

Wife Sue, Children Crystal, Candice, Justin and Shelby. 4 grandkids
Live in Mountain Home Idaho. Business owner from 1983 till 2022 when we sold.

Growing up my father served as the local Fire Chief in a small town in Iowa. He was very passionate about his community service and somehow that transferred to me as well. He had also served his country in WWII. My older brother served during the Vietnam war era, so I was destined to also serve. I was sent to MHAFB as a brand-new airman to serve in the Civil Engineering squadron in 1978. I moved downtown in 1979 and became a member of the local community. I served during the Desert Storm era and was honorably discharged in 1982.

In 1986, I was introduced to the local extrication unit that was being run at that time under the Sheriffs office. The unit at the time had a donated truck from the Fire Department and a set of tools issued from the State of Idaho. Apparently, I was a perfect fit since I only lived 2 blocks from the Sheriffs office and would be able to get the truck started and warmed up since it sat outside with a tarp on it!

Over the many years to follow, we were able to improve the equipment and vehicles for better response and better service. In 2000, the reigns were turned over to a dedicated group of individuals who have been able to accomplish many things. We currently have 7 Rescue trucks serving Mountain Home, Pine, Prairie, and Atlanta all with hydraulic rescue tools and much more. Manpower is at a 16-member roster in Mountain Home alone along with volunteers in the other areas. In the mid 90's I became a State Certified Extrication instructor so we could do our own training. We were also able to now be paid on call for our services by the County. Our call volume in 1986 was about 10-12 per year and now we are now averaging 150 per year.

In 1989 I also joined the Mountain Home Fire Department and am still active today serving as Chief Engineer. I have played a big part in building most of all the trucks in the current fleet for City and Rural Departments. In 2016 I became a member of the Elmore County 911 board helping to oversee the County's Emergency 911 funding. In 2018, I was voted a Commissioner on the Mountain Home Rural Fire District. We have a fleet of 5 brush trucks, 2 pumpers, 3 tenders and half ownership in a 100' platform serving a district that radiuses approx. 9 miles from the city limits of Mountain Home. In 2019 I was selected to oversee the Elmore County Emergency Services Department in a Full-time capacity to handle the Ambulance and Rescue services for the County. Currently, we have approximately 24 Full time and 30 Part time employees managing a 3.3-million-dollar budget and covering over 3000 calls per year.

For all of this I need to thank my wife of 35 years and my family that has put up with me leaving them in many places so I could go do the emergency services thing. No matter what kind of weather we encountered or what was going on, someone needed help and we needed to provide it.

Neal Gier—ISFCA At Large

Neal Gier is a retired farmer from Buhl, Idaho, whose roots run deep in both the soil of the Magic Valley and the fabric of this community. With a lifelong passion for agriculture, Neal now enjoys the slower pace of retirement—though “slow” is hardly the word to describe his schedule.

An avid fisherman, Neal finds peace on the water, but he's just as often found in the shop, restoring vintage tractors and pickups alongside his grandson—a shared hobby that keeps both hands and hearts busy.

Neal has dedicated decades to public service and leadership. He currently serves on the Buhl Highway District Board and is the longtime President of the Buhl Rural Fire Protection District Board, where he's proudly served for over 13 years. His leadership legacy includes terms as Past President of both the Idaho Association of Highway District and the Local Highway Technical Assistance Council (LHTAC), where he championed rural infrastructure and community development.

When he's not working on engines or attending board meetings, Neal enjoys a weekly game of snooker with friends—a tradition that keeps the competition friendly and the stories flowing.

MONTHLY CONNECTS



Idaho State Fire Commissioners' Association (ISFCA) Monthly Connect

Strengthening connections, sharing solutions for a safer Idaho.



Network with peers across Idaho.



Learn about current fire trends.



Share valuable insights and solutions.

Two sessions every month on Zoom

Second Thursday of each month at 1pm Mountain Time Zone
Zoom Meeting ID: 858 8998 8602 / Passcode: 541326

Fourth Tuesday of each month at 6pm Mountain Time Zone
Zoom Meeting ID: 879 3750 7868 / Passcode: 813952



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<https://www.isfca.org/>

SAVE THE DATE

2026 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

When: March 26 - 28, 2026

Where: Best Western Plus, Coeur d'Alene

**Why: ISFCA is the only organization in the state representing
Elected/Appointed Fire Commissioners in the state of Idaho**

Training, networking, and vendors



**If you have raffle items to donate - Please contact
Sue Roberts at 208-941-6400**

THANK YOU SPONSORS AND VENDORS

To all of our Sponsors and Vendors, Thank You for supporting and believing in our organization. Without your continued support, ISFCA wouldn't be able to provide the educational and leadership training that we have.

2025 Sponsors and Vendors

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We highly encourage you, as Fire Districts, to support our Sponsors and Vendors throughout the year with your business, as they support us. Check out our website for their contact information.

Just for fun, here are some "downtime" trivia puzzles that may provide a little mental exercise and light-hearted conversation around the department:

1. Where did "organized" firefighting begin?
2. Who was the first President to be a volunteer firefighter?
3. When were fire district established in Idaho?
4. What was Smokeys Bears Original Name?

Match the correct answers:

1. Ancient Rome 2. George Washington 3. 1943 4. Hot Foot Teddy