Executive Director Announces Retirement from WCIA

Lew Leigh has decided to retire from WCIA on July 31, 2013. He has served 29 years leading the state’s largest municipal risk pool.

During a special meeting in March, the Executive Committee voted to appoint current Deputy Director of Claims and Litigation Ann Bennett to serve as Interim Executive Director beginning August 1, 2013.

The End of an Era

Lew initially began as the claims vendor for Puget Sound Cities Insurance Authority at the pool’s inception in 1981. In 1984, he was asked to be its “Risk Manager.” Since that time he has led WCIA through many unforeseen events, such as a 1985 insurance crisis that left the pool with no reinsurance and its first international arbitration to recover funds from a reinsurer.

In his tenure, WCIA has grown from 11 members to 156, expanding that membership to include cities, towns, special districts, and regional entities such as 911 communication centers. He has worked to broaden member support services to include education and training, risk management and consulting, and pre-defense review of litigation. The organization has also grown its self-insured retention layer from $100,000 to $4 million/loss, one of the largest in the nation.

Lew was also part of a nationwide group of risk pools that formed a captive reinsurance company, Government Entities Mutual (GEM). As a GEM board member for seven years, his leadership contributed to the company’s growth and success, evident by its $89 million in assets that provides a stable layer of liability reinsurance for WCIA.

Lew’s dry sense of humor and direct responses have garnered praise, and sometimes criticism, from the membership; but he is the first person they request to speak to councils on the “do’s and don’ts” of municipal risk management. His departure will certainly mark the end of an era in WCIA history.

Creating a Succession Plan

In preparation for this eventual announcement, Lew has worked since 2003 through the annual goal process to create an in-house succession plan that was sequentially favored by Executive Committees and Full Boards. They believed such a candidate would know the membership, the vision of the organization, and could maintain continuity of operation. Further, such a candidate would exhibit a superior knowledge of claims and litigation, consistent with WCIA’s demanding litigation philosophy.

The committee began implementing this plan by passing Resolution 183-03. This “created an in-house
Lew’s Retirement (continued from page 1)

system for future upper management succession,” allowing the appointment of Deputy Directors. Since 2008, the committee has kept succession planning as an organization goal, continuing to support the plan through organization chart changes and staff professional growth.

After the director’s retirement announcement, the current committee appointed an interim director as outlined in the WCIA By-Laws, Article III, Section 12 (b)(11) exercising the “power to appoint an acting Executive Director...

who shall serve in that capacity for as long as the committee deems necessary, but, no longer than the date of the next Full Board meeting.”

The committee began the process of evaluating the in-house candidate, Deputy Director Ann Bennett, as a next step in the succession plan. After an interview at their April meeting, the committee voted to end the candidate search and present Ann as their recommended choice to the board. The committee found value in her vision for the pool, her technical skill set and her leadership abilities.

Seeking Membership Input

At the next two board meetings, members are encouraged to provide their input regarding the committee’s decision and the succession process. Ultimately in the fall, the board will vote to exercise its “authority to appoint an Executive Director...” as pursuant to bylaw Article III, Section 12 (c) (8).

This process recognizes significant change. The committee desires a director with the exceptional, personal and professional strengths our organization has progressively demanded throughout its history. They also recognize the dwindling national population of potential candidates, and the resulting national trend of selecting from within an organization’s own resources. The committee believes it has found in Ann a candidate who will exhibit the necessary leadership and technical skills that will propel WCIA forward in its mission as the leading risk pool in the state.
In 1995, WCIA developed a nationally award winning program called the COMPACT. As a noun, the word COMPACT is defined as: a formal agreement between two or more parties. The WCIA COMPACT is comprised of several required elements that each WCIA member has agreed to comply with to be a member in good-standing. One of the most important required elements of the COMPACT is the appointment of one person, who has decision making authority in the member agency, to be the WCIA delegate. The appointed delegate serves on the WCIA Board of Directors as a full voting member and is the point-of-contact between WCIA and his/her member agency.

The delegate position comes with responsibilities and opportunities. When a new delegate is appointed by a member, WCIA staff provides a new delegate orientation to convey information on delegate duties and to introduce the delegate to all of the WCIA resources available to the member agency. The delegate works closely with WCIA staff and is provided with information and resources specific to his/her agency. The delegate receives WCIA communications on behalf his/her agency, such as training opportunity notices, WCIA newsletters and risk bulletins, assessment invoices, claim and litigation reports and coverage program materials, to name a few. A WCIA risk management representative is assigned to assist each member. The delegate works closely with the risk management representative regarding risk inquiries, member requested legal consultations, WCIA audit completion, annual review meetings and COMPACT compliance. The delegate works with the Member Services Department to request and coordinate exclusive or regional trainings to meet the education and training needs of staff. When a claim or lawsuit is filed against a member, the Claims Department provides status updates and discusses confidential claims handling strategies with the delegate. WCIA’s Insurance Programs Department provides the delegate with answers to insurance coverage inquiries, evidence of coverage letters, assistance with auto and property schedule changes upon request, etc. The delegate also has an opportunity to serve on a WCIA member committee. Those committees are: Long Range Planning, Budget, Loss Control, Investment, and Executive Committee.

Along with the opportunities, the delegate has responsibilities. See the Full Board Delegate Job Description on page 4, which lists the delegate’s responsibilities and tasks.

As WCIA members maintain complete control over every pool function, WCIA is appreciative of the leadership and direction of our member delegates. Because of our strong board, WCIA is the leading municipal risk pool in the State of Washington.

If you have questions about the Delegates’ responsibilities or opportunities, please contact your assigned Risk Management Representative.

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**Got Sewage?**

By Ann Bennett

Damaged homes and property caused by sewer back-ups are the most frequent claims we receive at WCIA. Understandably, there are usually agitated owners or tenants that need immediate assistance and often their own homeowners or renters insurance will not cover the loss. WCIA wants to receive prompt, within 24 hours, notice of back-ups that caused property damage in order to assist the citizen with clean up referral information and investigate liability.

Members are not automatically liable for all sewer-back up claims. The standard of care with regard to sewers is reasonable maintenance, not to eliminate all possible obstructions. We have successfully tendered claims that are caused by others (restaurant grease, construction debris) when we can identify and document the cause of the obstruction. Early contact by an adjuster also educates the affected property owner that they must mitigate their damage by having clean up and repairs done regardless of the liability determination.

If the loss is discovered during business hours, please call or email WCIA’s claims department as soon as possible. If a back up occurs after business hours, on weekends or holidays please call Evergreen Adjustment Service at 800-933-4235.

“Please do not wait for the homeowner to file a formal Claim for Damages before notifying WCIA.”
### The Duties of being a WCIA Delegate (from page 3)

The list below is found on every Delegate Job Description form, signed by the delegate, alternate and an appointing official for the entity.

1. Function as the primary source to coordinate communication with the Full Board, Executive Committee, and Authority staff regarding its member’s needs. An appointed WCIA Delegate must be in a position of authority to implement policy and procedures requested by WCIA. The Delegate must be responsive and accountable to the WCIA Delegate job description. WCIA will schedule New Delegate orientation within 30 days of appointment.

2. Arrange for orientation of elected officials, department heads and staff.

3. Notify WCIA of changes in or additions to department directors, especially those who are unfamiliar with the organization.

4. Attend at least one, and strongly encouraged to attend three, WCIA Full Board Meetings annually, come informed as to the issues, and vote appropriately. Full Board policies or actions voted by Board Delegates are binding for the member entity.

5. Develop a working knowledge of pool operations, including an understanding of the budget, investment strategies, assessment formula, program coverages, and Authority services and resources.

6. Timely coordinate with the Authority, liability and/or property claims reporting procedures, newsletter distribution, risk management and loss control issues, annual field audits, insurance and indemnity requirements for member contracts, and generally possess the ability to communicate issues throughout the member agency. In order to take advantage of training offered, distribute training announcements within three (3) days to the identified departments.

7. Coordinate insurance coverage letter requests, Authority annual requests for worker hours, and property or automobile schedule updates, additions and changes, in a timely manner.

8. Receive and ensure timely processing of the annual assessment billing.

9. Monitor and coordinate compliance with the COMPACT.

10. Contact WCIA when member programs have increased risk exposure in property and liability, i.e. seek assistance for insurance and indemnification requirements.

11. Other duties developed by the Authority.

### Welcome New WCIA Staff!

The staff at WCIA continues to grow for improved service to the membership. Our new Claims Representative Doug Martin is hard at work handling various claims for the members, such as ones regarding those pesky potholes. Doug comes to WCIA from State Farm Insurance where he worked as an auto liability adjuster.

Most recently joining the team is our new Senior Risk Management Representative Chip McKenna. He previously worked for the Muckleshoot Tribal Nation as a Risk Manager and has already worked with adjacent WCIA member cities while serving in that position. For now, you can expect to see him accompanying our current reps in the field to learn the ropes.

Members will have an opportunity to meeting all our new employees at the Full Board meeting in the fall.