



MICHIGAN PROFESSIONAL FIRE FIGHTER

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Hazel Park Fire Department Sends
Engine to Dominican Republic (21)



2009 MPFFU/MDA
Boot Camp (14)



MPFFU Conducts First FIRE OPS Event (9)

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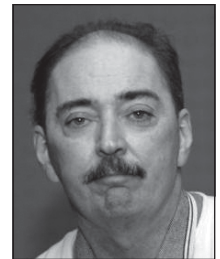
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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

March 31, 2009, was an important milestone for firefighters in Michigan; it marked the 40th anniversary of the implementation of Public Act 312. With the passage of P.A. 312, the era of effective collective bargaining rights began for firefighters, police officers, dispatchers and EMS personnel in Michigan and ended the practice of collective bargaining for public safety workers. The passage of binding arbitration for contract disputes provided Michigan's firefighter with an avenue to improve working conditions and compensation that few others in the country enjoyed at the time.

The passage in 1965 of the Public Employment Relations Act (PERA) gave public employees the right to select exclusive representatives and required employers to recognize and negotiate with unions. It was a precursor to P.A. 312 and it allowed unfair labor practice charges to be brought against parties who refuse or fail to bargain in good faith or who discriminate against unions and their members. It was a great improvement for public employee unions, but it did not provide a resolve to contract disputes without resorting to strikes and other job actions.

The efforts by state and local union leaders that led to the passage of P.A. 312 were nothing short of monumental and heroic. At the local level, firefighters fed up with low wages, long hours, and few benefits began to express their dissatisfaction through job actions. Frustrated by employers ignoring their demands at the bargaining table, firefighters resorted to "red flu" and strikes in response to employers disregarding their demands at the bargaining table.

Job actions by local firefighters got the attention of the governor and state legislators, persuading them to look for a solution to a growing problem. In a report to Governor Romney from the advisory panel he appointed to review PERA, a recommendation was made to implement compulsory, binding arbitration to resolve firefighter and police contract disputes.

Following a decision by the Governor and legislature to finally address the problem, and using the Governor's Advisory Committees' recommendation for binding arbitration to settle fire and police contract

disputes, a bill was drafted by legal counsel for the State Firefighters, Ted Sachs.

State Firefighters Union president Dan Delegato, secretary-treasurer Bob Baker, and Sie Chappell State AFL-CIO legislative director and former Highland Park firefighter, worked tirelessly at the State Capitol to ensure passage of binding arbitration legislation. After a long and difficult battle led by Michigan State Fire Fighters Union, meaningful collective bargaining rights were put in place through the adoption of P.A. 312.

Act 312 was amended in 1972 and extended beyond its original expiration date of June 30, 1972. In 1975 the legislature again amended the act and made its provisions permanent. Since that time we continue to benefit from one of the most successful public sector employment laws in the country.

In 1975 and again in 1980 serious challenges to the Act 312's constitutionality were put forward to the Michigan Supreme Court. In 1975 Dearborn Firefighters Local 412 fought off the challenge by the city of Dearborn argument that P.A. 312: divested home-rule cities of certain constitutional powers; surrendered to the arbitrator the municipal power to tax; and that it unlawfully delegated legislative authority.

Again in 1980, the city of Detroit challenged the delegation of legislative authority in a case involving the Detroit Police Officers Association. MPFFU and the Detroit Fire Fighters Association intervened in the case. The Supreme Court once again upheld the constitutionality of P.A. 312 while rejecting the theory that it divested cities of their home-rule rights.

Today, we continue to experience attacks on P.A. 312 from a few organizations and areas in the state. It's no longer just in the state courts but also in the legislature. The Michigan Municipal League and a handful of cities persist in their efforts to eliminate or amend Act 312. They continue to circulate inaccurate and misleading information regarding the process and functions of Act 312 to legislators and the press.

In response to these attacks, and with over 40 new members in the Michigan House of Representatives in 2009, MPFFU's work at the Capitol includes educating legislators about the history of P.A.



312 to ensure that it remains an effective means of collective bargaining for Michigan firefighters. Working with our lobbyist, we have developed a review of P.A. 312 for the past 10 years. The report evaluated every interest arbitration case that took place in Michigan between 1998 and 2008.

The report clearly demonstrates how well Act 312 is working: Of more than 1200 Act 312 eligible bargaining units—with an estimated 400 eligible for arbitration each year—less than 5% use binding arbitration in any given year to settle their contracts; more than 50% of the time the employer prevails on economic issues; and ability to pay is a primary factor in determining economic awards. All of these issues—overuse of the system by unions, outrageous economic awards, and failure to consider the employers ability to pay—are identified by Michigan Municipal League in their propaganda as problems in the current legislation. The report clearly reveals that these statements by Michigan Municipal League and others on how Act 312 functions are completely inaccurate.

MPFFU will persist in its efforts to deliver the message of how well P.A. 312 continues to fulfill its mission for both employers and unions in resolving issues while maintaining labor peace and providing uninterrupted public safety services for Michigan residents.

The brief review of the history P.A. 312 in this article serves as a reminder of the determination and sacrifices of past union officers and members in the pursuit of fair and effective collective bargaining rights for firefighters in Michigan. While thanking them for their sacrifices, we will continue working to protect and enhance the rights gained by those who preceded us.

POLITICAL ACTION FUND CONSENT FORM

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Section 55(6) of the Michigan Campaign Finance Act provides that a "Labor Organization may solicit or obtain contributions for a separate segregated fund established on an automatic basis, including but not limited to a payroll deduction plan, only if the individual who is contributing to the fund affirmatively consents to the contribution at least once in every calendar year."

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SECRETARY-TREASURER'S REPORT

Tough Times Require Tough Decisions

The economic crisis that is facing our cities and townships throughout Michigan has affected all of us in one way or another.

While most of the headlines have concentrated on the banks and the auto industry, our members are experiencing the most complex financial crisis that firefighters and their employers (Cities and Townships) have faced since the depression.

And, in case you hadn't noticed, this didn't just happen. In Michigan, we have been struggling for the last five or six years. Our locals have been battling with their employers to hold on to their health care, pensions, and staffing levels.

Each new contract has brought new challenges such as co-pays, premium sharing, higher deductibles, defined contribution pensions, and two tier wage and benefit levels and concepts such as Automatic Aid and Fire Authorities as ways to maintain service with less personnel. A few locals have even been confronted with the demoralizing concept of Public Safety or worse yet, total abolishment of their department. Reductions in revenue sharing and rising health care costs spurred most of the cause for alarm.

Even the richer municipalities started jumping on the bandwagon for concessions, rationalizing that if they didn't make cuts now, they too could be facing financial distress in the future as well.

Many locals bit the bullet and did more than their fair share to help balance the budget through various types of negotiated concessionary contract agreements.

Just when many of us thought things were bottoming out, it now appears that the crisis could get worse as many auto plants and other large taxpayers are facing potential shut downs or bankruptcy. Foreclosures and declining home values have seriously compounded the problem.

Many of the same locals that just made concessions in their last contract are under attack again. Is it fair? No, of course it isn't. But the financial problems facing most of our employers are very real. No matter what we may think, no elected official enjoys making budget cuts, especially when it comes to laying off dedicated employees.

That's why, other than in a few isolated locations, it has been very rare for firefighters to ever face lay-offs. But after years of attrition, some cities may have no other choice now but to lay-off employees. That is the easiest, fastest, simplest, and least imaginative way to save the most money.

Unfortunately, there are no easy solutions to avoid this. Should your local make more concessions to help avert the lay-offs? Should you get involved in the debate and suggest cuts in other areas of the municipality's budget? Should you put your faith in the public and hope they will persuade your elected officials to leave the fire department alone? Will the financial problems facing your community magically go away if you can just get rid of those current elected officials that are suggesting the budget cuts?

Your local union officers are facing tremendous pressures that many of those serving before them never had to deal with. In order for them to effectively represent you, there needs to be some serious, educated, informative and realistic communication taking place among your membership.

The members of your local must be factually aware of the financial condition of your municipality. They should understand the revenues and expenditures that make up the total budget of the city or township.

Most importantly, everyone needs to be included in the strategic thinking and planning on how to deal with the budget problems facing your fire department and resulting effects on the members of your local.

Although every situation is unique, there are some things that every local should consider as decisions are made. It is important to know what assets are available to you and, most importantly, what assistance you can reasonably expect to get from your political friends and the citizens of your community.

Anything your local decides to do to combat these budget cuts should avoid backing either of these valuable resources into a corner. Years of building friendships and supporters as a result of good public relation efforts can be destroyed overnight with bad PR or personal attacks on elected officials.

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The best advice that I have heard so far is that you should try to find ways to be perceived as part of the solution rather than be viewed as the problem. Firefighters are the most creative and adaptable employees in the world. It is up to us to find a way to be part of the solution rather than forcing our elected officials to make the hard decisions for us.

Cancer Presumption

The House of Representatives recently voted on our Cancer Presumption legislation. House Bill 4473, which was sponsored by Representative Jennifer Haase, passed on a 96-14 vote. Thanks to everyone who contacted their Representatives about this bill. The members of the Michigan Professional Fire Fighters Union are extremely grateful to Representative Haase for sponsoring the bill and to all of the co-sponsors and other Representatives that voted for the bill. We are now waiting for the Senate to act on the legislation. Call your Senator today and ask them to support the passage of this important legislation. You can find your Senator's contact information on the MPFFU Website.

New State Fire Marshal

Congratulations to newly appointed State Fire Marshal, Ron Farr. Ron was the Fire Chief of Kalamazoo Township prior to being appointed as the state's fire marshal by Gov. Jennifer Granholm. Ron replaces Rep. Andy Neumann who served in the post up until he ran for the House on May 12, 2008. The state fire marshal is charged with overseeing and directing fire service programs in this state and serves as policy advisor to the Governor on the development and administration of fire service policies, programs and procedures. The fire marshal also participates in the develop-

Continued on page 6 ➤

ment, review, and implementation of the Michigan hazard mitigation plan. Ron Farr has served as a member of the State Fire Safety Board for many years. Ron has also been an active participant on the Michigan Fire Service Coalition. The Michigan Professional Fire Fighters Union has enjoyed a good working relationship with Farr over the years and we look forward to working with him to improve the fire service in Michigan.

Collective Bargaining Seminar
The Michigan Professional Fire Fighters Union recently conducted its annual collective bargaining seminar in Livonia. The IAFF provided the instructors and curriculum for the first day of the seminar. Seven different classes were offered on the first day of the event by ten different PEP instructors from all different parts of the United States and Canada. The second day featured general sessions with presentations by MPFFU legal counsel Michael O'Hearon, Arbitrator Stanley Dobry, and Pension Attorney Michael VanOverbeke. Ninety-five members from forty different locals attended the seminar. Make sure your local is represented next year.

Welcome Local 4738-Brighton
Welcome to the newest members of the MPFFU. The Brighton Area Fire Fighters Union is a six person local that joined the IAFF earlier this year. Some of these new members were able to attend the spring 6th district meeting in Sterling Heights where they received a hearty welcome from the other members of the sixth district. They are currently in the process of negotiating their first collective bargaining agreement with the Brighton Area Fire Authority.

Reading for Leading
The MPFFU was very fortunate to secure Dan Mulhern as a speaker at our recent Union Administration seminar. First Gentleman Mulhern, in addition to being married to Governor Jennifer Granholm, is a well known author. His recent book, *Everyday Leadership: Getting Results in Business, Politics, and Life* covers all aspects of what leadership is all about. You can get a free weekly newsletter on his leadership tips by signing up at www.danmulhern.com. As Dan frequently says: Lead with your best self!

2nd District



I'd like to start by thanking Grand Rapids L-366 for hosting the spring district meeting, as well as all of the local leaders that took the time to attend. There were 75 percent of the locals represented. It was great to see such a good turn out on a nice spring day.

Over the last year I have noticed several locals having questions or issues regarding the Open Meetings Act. I did a quick overview of the act during a break-out at the Local Administration Seminar in Livonia. For those that could not make it, I thought I would review the highlights.

Open meetings do have a few requirements including: the meeting must be open to the public, minutes must be taken and a person shall be permitted to address the public body as provided by the meeting rules. All decisions and deliberations by the meeting body shall be done in public with the exception of closed sessions. The act does not cover social or chance meetings. However, the act is in effect if this type of meeting is intended to avoid following the act. Many officials will not meet with a quorum in a social setting to avoid any unintended violation of the act. For example, some municipalities may have a seven person board. The board will rotate through social events like Christmas parties in groups of three to avoid a conflict with the act. This is smart due to the fact that a quorum of four could easily get together and start to discuss business of the board. This could be seen as a violation if it is proved that they intended to meet like this to discuss issues without public oversight. The act covers any state or local board, committee, sub-committee, council, authority, or other group exercising governmental policy or function. The act also states that regular meetings shall be scheduled for the rest of the year within 10 days after the first meeting of the year. Special sessions require at least an 18 hour notice.

Closed session may be called for a number of reasons including discussions regarding the following: discipline, negotiations, purchasing property, employment on a public body, pending litigation, settlement agreements or anything protected by state or federal statute. To see a complete breakdown of the act visit www.mmlarg.com. Yes, that is the Michigan Municipal Leagues website. Ever hear, keep your friend's close, your enemy's closer? Great example. This site has most of the rules municipalities should follow as well as their ideologies about things like cancer presumption and 312. Have a bag near-by and a place to put your feet up. You might be sick and it gets pretty thick.

Around the Second District...
Just like the rest of the state, there are lots of problems that locals are being faced with. Several locals are still in negotiations or arbitration. This includes: Grand Rapids L-366, Wyoming L-2758, Plainfield Township L-3890, Cutlerville L-4385, Muskegon Heights L-615, and Traverse City L-646. Traverse City L-646 and Holland L-759 are both facing department changes including discussions about going PSO or consolidation. Across the district grievances seem to be filed daily. Many of these have to do with new boards trying to impose changes to benefits covered in the CBA. Many of these new board members do not understand the system. Their local leaders and attorneys seem all too anxious to push the issue, forcing us to fight. So be it. Almost every local is facing staffing issues. These include: lay-offs, not filling positions, and reducing daily minimums. These are some of the toughest times we have seen. It is important as local members to keep our heads up and protect what we have. We all have to realize that in this climate we must defend these attacks, give where we can and fight for things we hold dear. In some cases we must take a bend, don't break attitude. We cannot afford public battles while our customers are being told to accept wage concessions, pay more for benefits or to pack their stuff and leave.

Now, more than ever, we need to stay united as a group and focus our energies into surviving this crisis.

I hope you have a safe & nice summer. Enjoy the warm weather. We deserve it after that long winter. And as always—Go Tigers!!!

3rd District

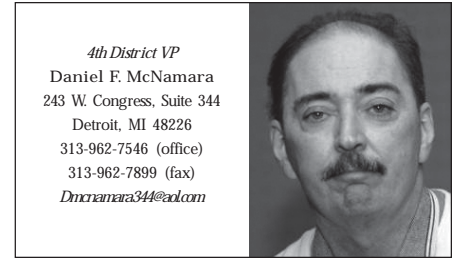


Greetings to the members of the 3rd District and to all members of the MPPFU. I hope that you enjoyed the winter months and had time to spend with your families. Since my last article it seems that the nation's economic problems have finally caught up to what we in Michigan have been experiencing for a few years now. The problem now is the trickle down effect only makes our situation worse. Budget crisis continue to exist for many locals and municipalities. These financial difficulties have, or will result in more station closures, layoffs, and/or a continued reduction in staffing through attrition. Practically every local in the 3rd district is being affected in some way by this recession. That's why political action is so important. Now, more than ever is the time to get involved. For those of you with local elections this year, the filing deadline for candidates is this month. It is imperative that you meet with these people soon and begin the process of educating them on our issues. With the state of our economy the way it is our message is simple. Our safety and the safety of those that we are sworn to protect should not be measured in dollars and cents. Often with elected officials, our safety and the public's safety only matters when it is affordable. For those of you that are dealing with officials that fit that description, it's time to start working toward removing them from office. Lobbying at the local level is one of the most important things your local union can do. We must begin to open dialogues with

our city councils, township boards, mayors, managers, and supervisors. A grass roots effort in your own community is where our biggest gains will be realized. No one is going to do this for us. And unless we take the time to educate them, our city/township leaders will not know about our struggles or the shortages that we face on the emergency scene. Like the general public, elected officials oftentimes simply trust that when the 9-1-1 call is made we show up. But how many of us that are assigned to an engine or ladder company is riding with one or in a few instances, two fewer firefighters than you had a couple of years ago? This is no longer an acceptable practice. Government officials at all levels must be educated and made to understand our needs. The daily structure fires, EMS alarms, and routine calls for service are what's killing or injuring our members. I'm preaching to the choir here but when we are used to riding with three or four on the rig and now it is one or two the chances for a serious or fatal injury has dramatically increased.

"You simply cannot measure a fire departments necessity based on productivity, it must be measured based upon its preparedness and ability to adequately respond in a timely manner with the appropriate resources when the emergency arises." It's very hard to convince elected officials of the truth in that statement. Especially if it's the eleventh hour and your backs are up against the wall. You can't show up at budget time demanding they protect your staffing levels if you haven't taken the time to develop a relationship. They won't listen to you. Being involved politically involves a year round commitment. Attending events, council/board meetings, and fundraisers are great avenues to continue the education process. Start early and you will surely see the benefits of your hard work. I hope everyone has a fantastic summer. Stay safe.

4th District



Sergeant Torin Thornhill
The Detroit Fire Fighters Association has lost active brother **Torin Thornhill**, age 45, to cancer. A tragedy to all of us. Please take a moment to offer up a thought or prayer on behalf of him and his loved ones. Thorn was a good man, a great firefighter and proud of his loving family and they of him.

Our "Rats"
The end of this column features the shoulder patch worn proudly by Local I-35 the "Mighty Rouge Rats." As of today, they are a shadow of their former selves. We should all consider their plight and unite even stronger in these times. To all of the current members, keep the faith and hold your heads high. These are tough times but let's hope that there are better times ahead.

Today's Times
There is no doubt that each and every local has, by now, been affected by the economic climate. The MPPFU and IAFF has never been busier attempting to respond to and support the needs of our locals today.

There is no doubt that our problems will continue. The economy will continue its path and we know that, historically, there will be an uptick. Our challenge is how do we respond in a way that protects us today and attempt to project what we will be at the turn around years ahead.

As our employers attempt to cut their way through our staffing and services that we have negotiated, we see that some of them are using the economics of today to launch an attack on all parts of our collective bargaining agreements. Items that have been untouchable are now on the table along with drastic changes that compromise our safety as we perform at higher levels than ever before as the ripple affect affects our communities.

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4th District...from page 7

It's a time for strong leadership. All of the elected officials from the IAFF, MPFFU and local unions have to step up and be accounted for. Shoulder to shoulder we must face hard times equally.

Solutions?

The options are as they always have been: strong negotiating, politics and grass roots support. These are the times we have always talked about. The good work our locals have done for years should have taken root. Our supporters (taxpayers) have been receiving excellent service and help for a long time. The problem is incredible for them as they watch their homes being foreclosed and the job market shrinking to the point that their jobs are gone.

Nonetheless, public safety still has to be a priority for our communities to attract stability in their budgets. At the risk of being at odds with other groups, public safety has to remain, especially as we get stretched to the limit in supplying them.

Our locals are seeing layoffs and possible privatization as well. We must be creative where we can and have those elected officials band together with our supporters and use the budget to protect us all as we weather the storm. We can't be seen as a lime item liability that can be changes with the fix of a pencil.

Many locals in the 4th district are being pushed against the wall by their employers. We have to work together and get through the long haul. The options are different in

each local and we have to do our best in each incident.

Don't give up and don't feel defeated. Our IAFF and MPFFU have seen these times before. Our lobbying efforts both in Lansing and at home are needed more than ever. Pick up the phone and call your councilperson, representative or other decision maker and make your feelings known as your local's officers meet and try to find solutions.

Cancer Presumption

A happy result so far. The Cancer Presumption Bill has been voted out of committee and moved on the floor of the House of Representatives. It's next stop is the Senate and then on to the Governor hopefully.

There has been a lot of hard work on this Bill again. Let's get it done. Call your Senator today!

See You Around The District
Dan



5th District



How many times in the past has your negotiating team been faced with the dilemma of the issue of a long term contract or a short one or two year contract? It seems like in the past municipalities were always trying to get long term contracts and we were opposed, instead opting for short length ones due to the uncertainty of inflation or maybe what the local cops might get during our long contract. Now, with the economic downturn and the uncertainty of health insurance costs and benefits, it might be a good idea to look at a longer contract as several locals have negotiated recently.

With arbitrators not willing to award health benefits, as we have been used to enjoying for both current and retired employees, a longer contract should be a topic worth looking into if you can get a guarantee of stable rates and benefits. It is becoming increasingly difficult, if not impossible, to seek a \$5.00 co-pay on prescriptions and 100 percent employer paid insurance when virtually every other sector, both public and private, has been forced to increase co-pays and employee contributions for the benefits of the policies.

We in Michigan are fortunate to have our collective bargaining rights with Act 312 to protect us from changes without negotiating. The private sector has not been so lucky where employers can reduce or eliminate completely benefits for current and retired employees without any type of recourse.

While there may be advantages to a long term contract, there may be additional sections in the contract that must be looked at carefully so as not to limit the ability of the local to make changes that could benefit the members mid term. It might appear beneficial to have a long term contract with raises and health insurance locked in for an extended period. What if there is a problem with, let's say, your promotional process that just may require a change to make it

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You too can be a contributor

It's very easy to do. Just send us a story, a picture, or both. It can be about anything that is going on in your local or general information that has something to do with unionism or being a firefighter (union event or of fire, rescue or EMS incidents involving local members) and we will publish it on the web and/or magazine.

Please submit your material ASAP to: MPFFU, 1651 Kingsway Court, Suite E, Trenton, MI 48183-1959

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Note: I also wish to remind you that it is the policy of the MPFF editorial staff to not publish any information that is sent anonymously.

MPFFU Conducts it's First FIRE OPS Event

The Michigan Professional Fire Fighters Union recently conducted a one-day fire ground operations orientation for a group of civilians that included elected public officials and representatives of the media. The event was held on April 14, 2009 from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm at the Lansing Community College Fire Academy. Members of Lansing Local 421, Meridian Twp. Local 1600 and East Lansing Local 1609 helped to organize the event, run each of the stations and share their knowledge with the participants. Chris Lake, Local 421 Vice President, was the lead organizer of the event.

This program was developed by the International Association of Fire Fighters and is known nationally as **FIRE OPS 101**. The program included having the civilians and elected officials suit up in fire fighter protective clothing, donning self contained breathing apparatus, and actually going inside a simulated fire to experience first hand the environment in which firefighters work. Participants also experienced and took part in a simulated cardiac arrest EMS emergency, a hose pull, search and rescue, forcible entry, ventilation, and a realistic vehicle extrication operation. The highlight for many of the participants was experiencing the Lansing Fire Department's Aerial Truck.

Although all of these tasks were done in a controlled environment, they nevertheless provided an opportunity for the participants to see and feel what firefighters deal with on a daily basis.

All of the participants agreed that the experience provided them with a much better perspective and understanding of firefighter issues, including the importance of safe staffing levels and the need for up-to-date vehicles and associated equipment as well as modern personal protective equipment.

Upon completion of the event, participants were provided a certificate of completion and they got to keep the fire helmet that was ordered specifically for them to use in this event.

Lansing Fire Chief Tom Cochran and Lansing Mayor Virg Benero stopped by during the event to observe the activities.



On behalf of the 5,000 members of the Michigan Professional Fire Fighters Union, we wish to express our sincere appreciation and thanks to the following individuals for taking time to participate in our first **FIRE OPS 101** event:

- Randy Richardville, State Sen. 17th Dist. (R)
- Lisa Brown, State Rep. 39th Dist. (D)
- Jennifer Haase, State Rep. 32nd Dist. (D)
- Rick Jones, State Rep. 71st Dist. (R)
- Lesia Liss, State Rep. 28th Dist. (D)
- John Proos, State Rep. 79th Dist. (R)
- Sarah Roberts, State Rep. 24th Dist. (D)
- Sandy Allen, City of Lansing Council member
- Jason Griffin, Legislative aide for State Rep. Jim Stamas, 98th Dist. (R)
- Melissa Yutzey, MPFFU Lobbyist from Kelley Cawthorne

The Michigan Professional Fire Fighters Union also expresses its sincere gratitude to the following individuals for their assistance in making this event a great success:

Lansing Local 421: Chris Lake, Byran Epling, Ellen Vogt, Orval Huff, John Holly, Mike Mulder, Eric Webber, Tim Garver, and retirees Bob Labioda and Tom Roush.

Meridian Township Local 1600: Monty Nye, Kurt Schalu, and Lori Schafer.

East Lansing Local 1609: Gerry Rodabaugh and Blake Holt

Lansing Community College: Jeff Huber and Larry Elliot.

"I was thrilled to have been part of the Fire Ops training and have a tremendous appreciation for the work our men and women do who protect our communities as firefighters."

~ **Lisa Brown, State Rep. 39th Dist. (D)**

"It was an honor and privilege to participate in fire ops. Being able to experience even a fraction of what our brave men and women do on a daily basis to ensure our safety and health really provided me with more insight and appreciation of the fire and advanced life support service. It is my sincere hope that more Fire Ops will be offered and I would encourage my fellow legislators to participate in this invaluable experience. It was an amazing day!"

~ **Jennifer Haase, State Rep. 32nd Dist. (D)**

"Participating in this program has given me an even greater appreciation for the courageous work firefighters do everyday. I can only imagine how much more difficult it is when the simulated drills we took part in become life and death scenarios. I want to thank Paul Hufnagel and the others involved in setting up this unique experience. I have always been proud to support the brave men and women of the Michigan Professional Fire Fighters Union and am even more appreciative of their work after getting just a small part of their extensive training."

~ **Randy Richardville, State Sen. 17th Dist. (D)**

"Lansing Community College is providing excellent training for the professional firefighters of the future...I saw firsthand the advantages of having highly trained firefighters in a hazardous situation."

~ **Rick Jones, State Rep. 39th Dist. (D)**

Continued on Page 10 ←

Fire Ops 101...from page 9

The Michigan Professional Fire Fighters Union has long advocated the appropriate number of firefighters and EMS personnel, as well as mobile resources to assure safe, efficient and effective operation on the scene of a fire or medical emergency. The MPFFU is recognized state-wide for its efforts to build an emergency response system in every community that delivers time critical response to a citizen's call for help. Most of the time, this could not be accomplished without the support of local elected officials and the citizens they represent. State elected officials also play a major role in providing legislation to protect firefighters and revenue sharing to local communities to assure proper funding of local fire departments. The MPFFU plans on offering the FIRE OPS 101 program again in the near future and it is our hope that many more local and state elected officials will be able to take part in this very important and educational program.





After a day of experiencing operations that firefighters routinely respond to, participants expressed a new level of respect for the training, physical demands, and stress that's demanded of firefighters during emergency operations. They now fully understand and support the importance of appropriate staffing levels and proper equipment that are necessary for first responders to do their jobs effectively and safely.

~ Paul Hufnagel, MPFFU President

"The firefighter training was invaluable in bringing to our attention the tools necessary to maintain public safety and high standards of quality," said Proos, chairman of the Michigan House Fire Caucus.

~ John Proos, State Rep. 79th Dist. (R)



FIRE OPS 101





FIRE OPS 101

MDA Boot Camp



2009 Michigan MDA Summer Camps

- June 13-19: Sherman Lake YMCA Camp in Augusta (5 min west of Battle Creek)
- June 21-26: Camp Cavell in Lexington
- June 27-July 3: Camp Cavell in Lexington



2009 MPFFU/MDA Boot Camp

By Monty Nye
Michigan Professional Fire Fighters Union Liaison to the Muscular
Dystrophy Association

The 2009 MPFFU/MDA Boot Camp was held April 16th at the Park Place Hotel in Traverse City. Eighty-five MPFFU members, representing over 40 different locals were in attendance. Our agenda differed a little this year. Emphasis was placed on strengthening our connection with MDA patients and their family's. I think we were very successful at accomplishing this task with several great speakers, including:

Michael Chambers, who we met two years ago when he saw our Boot Camp in Mt. Pleasant and wanted to stop in and say thank you. Michael is one of the most positive and sincere individuals that you will ever meet.

Kristy Kehl of Grand Rapids L-366, talked about how you can have a successful FTB fundraiser.

We also heard from **Greg LaPratt** of Detroit L-344. Greg read a letter from his father, who has been diagnosed with ALS and is battling this terrible disease.

Don Hageman, an ALS patient, gave a powerful account of his ALS diagnosis and its impact on his daily life.

Michelle Fox shared the story of her beautiful daughter **Malorie** and her battle with SMA (spinal muscular atrophy). If you want to see one of the most compelling reasons for participating in the Fill The Boot campaign, I urge you to visit www.malriefox.com, it will make you ask yourself what else can I do to help.

Kristen Clements spoke about her son **Alex** and their hope that the future will bring a cure. Alex is our 2009 State Goodwill Ambassador and he spoke of his participation in current clinical trials and shared a day in his life with us.

Marissa Penrod of Commerce Twp, gave a very moving speech about her six year old son **Joseph**, who has Duchenne muscular dystrophy, a genetic disorder characterized by progressive muscle wasting and weakness, and she stressed that the time to act is NOW!

The last of our speakers had just left the podium when the power went out and the fire alarm began to sound. Hotel staff advised us that we had to evacuate the building and as we exited, we felt much safer when we noticed that E-2 of Traverse City Fire Department was already on scene. The rest of us can only aspire to have such fast response times. We were soon allowed back into our meeting room where Traverse City L-646 hosted a hospitality hour, albeit in the dark, Thanks T.C.

The awards portion of the Boot Camp had to be moved to Boons Long Lake Inn. Many awards were given out and the awards ceremony concluded with **Aileen Pettinger** of Saginaw L-102 receiving the *Bob Mcalvey Memorial Award* for 2009. Congratulations Aileen!

The evening continued with entertainment by renowned comedian Hanibal Burress followed by a pub crawl, which raised \$1060.00 with the promise of another \$1000.00.

I personally want to thank all of our great speakers and all of our members who selflessly spent their valuable time with us and a



special thanks to **Michelle Damstra** and the rest of the MDA staff for making this a great event.

The MPFFU has designated the last weekend in July as the official MDA/MPFFU "Fill The Boot Weekend." I hope that you all have a safe and successful Fill The Boot this year and if you have any questions or there is anything I can do to help do not hesitate to contact me at mnaye@aol.com

Emotional messages delivered at this year's 6th Annual MDA Boot Camp.

*By Michelle Damstra, Regional Coordinator,
MDA Grand Rapids, MI*

More than 40 locals were in attendance for this year's 6th Annual MPFFU/MDA Boot Camp in Traverse City, Michigan. The event was held at the Park Place Hotel in downtown Traverse City. Members of locals traveled in from all over the state to take part in this emotionally charged event. The goal for this year's program was to be more "inspirational and motivational." The MDA patient families that spoke delivered just that.

Patient families giving their message of hope included: Michelle & Malorie Fox (Ada, MI), Michael Chambers (Lowell, MI), Don Hageman (Lansing, MI), Marissa Penrod (Commerce Twp, MI) and our 2009 State Goodwill Ambassador Alex Clements and his mom Kristin (Kalamazoo, MI)

These are just a handful of the families within the state of Michigan dealing with a neuromuscular disease. There are many more that need your help!

The group was also addressed by Greg LaPratt, a member of Detroit Local 344, whose father has ALS. Greg shared a letter from his father expressing his continuous uphill battle with this horrible disease. Even through the progression of the disease its clear Greg's father has retained a light heart and a sense of humor. The LaPratt family has been able to take full use of the benefits and services of MDA. Services that aren't possible without the fundraising efforts of the firefighters.

Kristy Kehl, a member of Grand Rapids Local 366, put it all into perspective by breaking it down. Using a term the group could relate to, Kristy presented the call for action for a successful Fill the Boot.

L – Location. Must find an active intersection!

U – Unit of time. Must have a schedule with time blocks.

N – Name. Contact every officer and battalion chief.

A – Advertise. MDA can help with the media!

R – Resources. MDA is your resource for supplies, water, food, etc.

R – Reason! The MDA patient families need to be your REASON.

No matter how big or how small a local, it is possible to execute a successful Fill the Boot. All it takes is one person to get the ball rolling and make it happen.

In 2008 the Michigan Professional Fire Fighters raised just over \$421,000. The state of Michigan was ranked 17th in the country and had two locals in the top 100 in the country for total income. Detroit L-344 ranked #76 raising \$47,051 and Grand Rapids L-366 ranked #83 raising \$45,678. Michigan was also represented by 3 locals securing a spot in the Top 100 income per member. Bangor Twp L-1682 ranked #12 raising \$1300/member, Portage L-1467 ranked #86 raising \$602/member and Egelston Twp L-3901 ranked #97 raising \$577/member.

Other highlights at this years Boot Camp included: (awards for 2008 totals)

- Golden Boot Award: Detroit 344
- Most Improved: Portage 1467
- Per Capita: Bangor Twp 1682
- District 1: Marquette 643 – \$8,073
- District 2: Grand Rapids 366 – \$45,679
- District 3: Bangor Twp. 1682 – \$16,895
- District 4: Detroit 344 – \$47,052
- District 5: Portage 1467 – \$18,661
- District 6: #1335 Waterford – \$18,780

Last year we introduced the Captain Bob McAlvey Memorial Award and presented to recipient, Jon Jacobs Bangor Twp. L-1682. This year Jon, along with members of the Meridian Twp L-1600, presented the award to Aileen Pettinger Saginaw L-102.

Captain McAlvey said it best. "What if all it took was one more dollar?" Bob lost his battle with ALS in 2006. This award is presented in honor of him and the great work that still needs to be done to find a cure for Muscular Dystrophy. Congratulations Aileen!

I hope that everyone enjoyed Boot Camp and that you left feeling inspired, motivated, and that YOU truly make a difference in the lives of children and adults



with MD. Without you, it's not possible! Please don't give up! Remember the clip showed during Marissa's speech? The clip from Facing the Giants... "don't quit, keep pushing, keep fighting, you can do it!" You make the difference. You are the difference. Thank you for taking the time to join us and listen to the stories of our families.

For more information about Fill the Boot or about getting involved in our summer camp program please contact me at 616.459.4410 or mcdamstra@mcdusa.org

See page 14 for summer camp locations and dates

2009 Michigan MDA Summer Camps

June 13-19: Sherman Lake YMCA Camp in Augusta (5 min west of Battle Creek)

June 21-26: Camp Cavell in Lexington

June 27-July 3: Camp Cavell in Lexington



5th District... from page 8

work better. If there hasn't been a promotion in quite some time the process could be flawed and once the contract is ratified and signed there is no going back. I doubt the city is going to be willing to open the contract for something that would benefit the members and not them.

Make sure all your members are polled and the contract is reviewed carefully section by section to see if there is any chance that something could arise during the course of the contract life that may need changing. A short term contract allows for changes quicker than a long term one.

Remember that this is just something your local *may* want to look at. I'm not saying a long term contract is good for everyone and may not be for anyone, but it may be worth looking at if other items in your contract are solid and don't need some kind of "tweaking."

Leoni Township continues to fight the threat of P.S.O. and keeping their jobs. There should be a millage vote in August for operations of the fire department. They are going to need help from other locals in getting the word out to the public for support of the issue. More will follow when additional information is obtained.

You too can be a contributor

It's very easy to do. Just send us a story, a picture, or both. It can be about anything that is going on in your local or general information that has something to do with unionism or being a firefighter (union event or of fire, rescue or EMS incidents involving local members) and we will publish it on the web and/or magazine.

Please submit your material ASAP to:
MPFFU, 1651 Kingsway Court,
Suite E, Trenton, MI 48183-1959

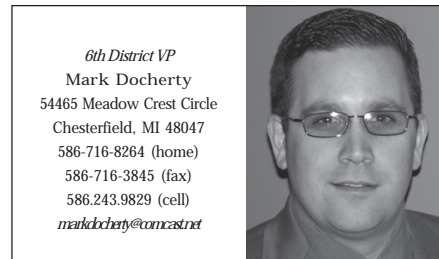
Phone: 1.800.886.7338

Fax: 1.800.454.1757

Email: tchesney@mpffu.org

Note: I also wish to remind you that it is the policy of the MPFF editorial staff to not publish any information that is sent anonymously.

6th District



I wish this article could be coming to you in better times, although that is not the case. As we all know, times are very tough right now and getting worse. Municipalities are suffering from plummeting revenues and large increases in legacy costs. All of which, is making it very difficult for us at the bargaining table, with many locals just fighting to keep members off the unemployment line. This creates situations in which our political leaders begin prioritizing which services they need to cut. Let's face it, every municipality is facing cuts. No one is immune to this economy. In a perfect world, our elected officials would make the right choices; placing a priority on public safety, understanding that your safety is directly impacted by staffing on the fire ground, understanding that even in tough times your department needs to be properly equipped and trained, and standing by the fact that fire based EMS is a better option than privatization. But as we know this is not a perfect world and that proper understanding rarely exists without one thing. **POLITICAL ACTION!!** We must educate our elected officials and support the ones that make the hard decisions to stand by public safety. When a city attempts to close a recreation center, a pool, or even an ice rink, they will get hundreds of calls and incredible pressure from their constituents. When they attempt to decrease manning, if it were not for our education of residents, they probably would not get any calls. If you don't believe me, just ask any resident what your daily or rig manning is. I will bet they have no clue. All they really care about is that if they call the fire department someone will come. This is a public relations issue

that we will always face. Since we cannot educate every resident (doesn't hurt to try), we need to educate our elected officials. And when they show us the proper support and stand by us, we need to stand by them. This is why we need to maintain relationships with our elected officials and not just ignore them for years and then get upset when they don't understand or support us. It is an ongoing process and is why the IAFF has developed their Fire Ops 101 program. The program is for elected officials and is intended to show them exactly what we do and how we do it. This is one example of a resource that the IAFF has provided to aid locals. But it needs to be done before you are facing cuts. It is usually too late once they have announced the potential cuts. Councils rarely back down, once a path is determined. We must educate our officials now!

Never has it been more important to set up a PAC fund or contribute to your local, MPFFU or IAFF PAC fund. Your local needs the money to support the council members that support you. The MPFFU needs the money to support the legislators that support PA 312, our right to binding arbitration, our cancer presumption bill, or the fight against "Right to Work" legislation to name a few. The IAFF needs the money to support our legislators that are fighting to bring much needed money back to our fire departments to try and stop layoffs or a national collective bargaining law in case we lose the right to bargain at the state level. These are all very important issues that we need to protect us and our safety and it can't be done without the proper resources. It is not only money that is needed. Much of the support an elected official needs is in the form of time. They need grassroots campaigning such as helping get signatures on petitions or going door to door with flyers. All of this is important, we just need to make the effort and it will pay off big in the future. If your local is not politically active and would like to change that, please give your District VP a call and he will give you the information and tools to get started.

MPFFU.ORG

Joint Labor Management Committees: A Labor Perspective

*By Peter Zarek, West Bloomfield Local 1721
MPFFU Education and Training Committee*

The union movement has always been about having a seat at the table. Whether it be protecting employees' health through work place safety laws, or protecting their well being through labor laws that address their rights in the work place, Labor must continue to serve its members needs. Most of us are familiar with Act 312 that established binding arbitration in the State of Michigan. Laws like this and many others that have been earned by Labor have given many of us the standard of living that we have today.

Joint Labor Management Committees (JLMCs) are not a new phenomena in the work place, they have been in existence almost from the time of the Labor Movement itself. With today's difficult economic climate, many municipalities and locals are looking at any way possible to just maintain services, let alone improve and expand them. JLMCs are a way for parties to work together to solve the myriad of problems facing organizations today. This article is to serve mainly as an introduction to JLMCs. I am in no way to be considered an expert on JLMCs. This is my opinion as a local officer.

Overview

Generally JLMCs cover issues that are out of the scope of contractual issues. This includes grievance procedure or any outstanding grievances. Most often the only occasions Labor and Management meet is either at the bargaining table, or at grievance proceedings. These are most often adversarial settings with a general lack of distrust and a Win or Lose result. JLMCs are a way for both sides to come together and work in a mutually rewarding environment. For Management, it is a chance to solve issues affecting them without the threat of union grievances and labor actions making their way out of the Department and into City Hall's hands, or worse to an outside Arbitrator. It is an opportunity for Management to establish an open line of communication with Union leaders and membership, and to show that it is open

to employees' ideas and truly interested in improving the workplace. This directly relates to increased productivity by employees and makes them feel as though they are truly partners in workplace.

The advantages of JLMCs for Labor are many. One of the most important of these is that it establishes an opportunity to resolve minor problems before they proceed to the grievance level. This saves hours of aggravation and union money spent on resolving problems that started as minor and have festered into major issues. Another advantage to labor is that they open a line of communication directly to top management. Establishing quarterly meetings with upper management where there is not an adversarial relationship goes a long way towards a genial workplace. JLMCs are a way for Labor to bring to the table issues that are important to the union that management would never touch during negotiations such as work schedule, uniform, or shift trade policies. With the ever increasing pressure on unions for the last 30 years since Reagan's attacks on Labor and the ease with which some blame all of today's problems on unions, JLMCs are a way to change the public's perceptions of union activities. To be able to illustrate mutual change in an organization to both City Hall and the Citizens goes a long way to erase preconceptions that labor is a road block. If the citizens see that the union is willing to work with management in an effort to improve an organization, it can help immensely in passing upcoming millage renewals or funding increases. A final point to the benefits of a JLMCs for labor is the fact that it shows the employees that their opinion and input is valued. It gives employees an ownership stake in the organization and the policies that are instituted. I know I myself find it much easier to come into work when everyone is happy and enjoying the workplace. For some of you this may seem like a strange mythical place, but it is out there.

Setting up JLMCs

Assuming that both parties are willing to buy into the concept, the first step is that both sides must admit that there are in fact

problems in the organization that need to be fixed. They must then be able to express their opinions on the issue to the other side freely, openly and honestly. If a problem is diagnosed by one side and the other deny it is an issue, then quite frankly a JLMC will never work. Both sides have to be willing and active participants in order for the committee to proceed.

The next step is the establishment of the purpose, scope and guidelines of the committee. These should be worked out by both sides, put in writing, and signed by both sides to show commitment by both parties. The size of the committee should be established. Care should be taken that the number is not too small as to negate those interested in joining, nor too large as to make it unworkable. The number on the committee should always be an odd number so there will be no stalemates. Permanent members from both sides should be placed on the board with a number of guest spots available. I would advise against anyone from outside the organization being included, as JLMCs are meant to keep any "dirty laundry" in house.

The frequency and duration of meetings must be established and strictly adhered to. The frequency of meetings is strictly up to each individual organization. At first the committee may want to meet often in order to get the process started, however once established, quarterly meetings work well as it gives both sides plenty of time to work on issues between meetings. Nothing will kill a JLMC quicker than if one side starts to cancel meeting dates. The impression of not caring about the importance of meetings will spread like wildfire and the JLMC is then useless. The length of the meetings is just as important as the frequency. If meetings are allowed to drag on with no end in sight, they will seem as if the problems are to immense and unworkable.

Meetings should be well run, almost like a 30 minute union meeting. Both sides should present a written agenda to one another a week prior to each meeting. The chair of the meeting should rotate each time, labor one month, management the next. The agenda should be adhered to, however urgent issues should be taken care

of first. Remember this is NOT contract negotiations. The issues should be those that do not fall under the scope of the contract, you are not there to constantly negotiate the contract or open it up to changes management feels they need. Another topic that should never be discussed are any outstanding grievances. Minutes should be kept by both sides. Both secretaries should then meet to pool their minutes into an acceptable version and publish them in an approved manner. A reading of the minutes and a report by committee members should be introduced at each union meeting.

During the meetings, try to keep the discussion on topic and concentrate on the issue at hand. Remember at these meetings everyone is equal and should be treated with respect. Try to leave personalities at the door. The meeting is an excellent time to gain insight into managements agenda and rationale. Don't assume you know the answers to questions or topics that arise. Be direct in your questioning, ask for specifics. Try not to minimize any topic as being unworthy of discussion. And never ever fail to ask WHY. WHY does management want this? Why are they interested in that? This is one the rare times when you can find out what the rationale (if there is any) is behind their decision making process.

Fantasy Land Fire Department
Now I'm no wide eyed Pollyanna. I realize

that the situation has to be almost perfect for all of these things to work out and make progress. However, the rewards to your local and the influence that the union can then exert on the organization are tremendous and worth the effort.

There are of course pitfalls. I have seen my local hit some of these, and they quite frankly have left a very sour taste in my mouth.

It is very easy for the union to seem complicit with management. Committee members can be seen as being in bed with management. The perception that management is simply using the JLMC as way to force changes on members. Management may bring up issues that quite frankly the union has no interest in, or that the union is secretly negotiating behind the members back.

Management must be convinced that this is not an attempt by Labor to usurp managements rights to run the organization. This is probably the most difficult issue that most organizations will have to overcome.

A common attitude I have encountered in the past is that if there are nine people on a committee, management gets 10 votes. This goes against the spirit of the JLMC and the idea of Labor and management working to solve issues together.

Another potential problem is committee members, be they labor or management, working towards their own benefit.

When a member begins to steer the committee in a direction that does not reflect the views of the local membership as whole they should be removed from the committee or risk poisoning the entire process. The importance of keeping accurate minutes is paramount here to prevent members from either intentionally or not, misleading upper management or City Hall as to the workings of the committee.

If these problems arise the best option for the Local is probably to walk away from the committee and not lend its name to any other committees that management tries to establish. If management won't respect the basic rights of the union to be involved and have a seat at the table then there is nothing to be gained.

Conclusions

Here is a news flash, times are tough here in Michigan. Forty years ago great leaders of Labor crafted one of the most exemplary examples of labor law in the United States. Yet herewe are in 2009 still defending Public Act 312 to Legislators and Citizens. With the Media's and the Public's willingness to lay blame at the feet of organized labor, it is imperative to use any available means to advance the cause of Unionism. If used correctly JLMCs can be an excellent way to advance your locals input and influence in the day to day decisions that directly effect our memberships well being.

Local Union Administration Seminar

By Andy Houde, MPFFU Education and Training Committee

The Local Union Administration Seminar was held on March 2, 2009 in Livonia. There were a number of speakers, all with a common theme of local leadership.

The seminar was lead off by Mr. Dan Mulhern, the husband of Governor Jennifer Granholm. Mr. Mulhern's topic was titled "Lead With Your Best Self." He spoke on how it is important to maintain your leadership ability in the current economic climate. He used personal examples involving his own life experiences to help drive his points' home.

MPFFU General Council Michael L. O'Hearon was the second presenter. Michael's presentation "The Unions Role in Employee Discipline Cases" was very informative. His first topics were Weingarten and Garrity rights. Both were cases decided by the US Supreme Court that helped clarify the Union and an employees' rights during investigatory interviews. Both are often misunderstood and Michael helped to clarify both to the members in attendance. Michael attempted to discuss duty of fair representation,

but due to numerous questions about Weingarten and Garrity rights, he was only able to touch on DFR.

After a great lunch, the attendees broke into groups for three sessions; "Training for Grievance Handlers" by WSU professor Tom Karson, "How to Be a Successful and Effective Union President" by MPFFU VP's Shaun Abbey, Mark Docerty, Chris Reynolds, and "Performing the Duties of Secretary and/or Treasurer" by Terrence Chesney, MPFFU Secretary-Treasurer, and Ronald P. Tank CPA Godfrey, Hammel, Danneels & Company. All three sessions were assisted by members of the Education and Training Committee. The majority of participants were new executive board members (2 years or less). All three sessions taught basic rules and practices relevant to running our locals. Even the experienced union officers in attendance were able to pick up some knowledge during the day. Even my own locals' secretary, Matt Sahr, picked up a few points to help run our monthly meetings more effectively.

This was a great opportunity for local leadership to learn how to manage their local and network with other leaders from across the state. I hope to see you at the next seminar.

Use of Electronic Media by the Union and its Members

*By Michael L. O'Hearon,
MPFFU Legal Counsel*

During various recent surveys of local union officers within the Michigan Professional Fire Fighters Union, it became obvious that nearly all of our locals utilize electronic mail (e-mail) to communicate with their members and fellow officers; however, a frighteningly small number of those local officers are familiar with their employer's policies regarding use of electronic media at work. When discussing electronic media, my primary focus is on e-mail; but other electronic forms of communication such as text messaging; voicemail; cell phone use; webcams; blogs; e-bulletin boards; fax machines, and the employer's computers themselves are all areas of concern. The reason they are areas of concern is that, when you utilize these means of electronic communication at work, you are utilizing your employer's property. As such, there is no expectation of privacy when you use your employer's property to communicate for union purposes. That is why I have suggested that, as a general rule, you should not use your employer's e-mail system or any of the employer's electronic media for union business.

Most, if not all, firefighters have been issued an e-mail address by their employer and some employers require that each firefighter check his or her e-mail at least once each shift for the purpose of receiving directives and other communications from the employer. Because this system is so available and expedient, it is only natural for you to communicate with your brothers and sisters in your local by using these employer-issued e-mail addresses. However, every single e-mail sent or received using the employer-issued address passes through the employer's server. Depending upon the size and wealth of your department, your employer may or may not have an information technology (I.T.) specialist on its payroll. If there is an I.T. person working for your employer, it is part of that person's job to monitor, not only the volume and speed of communications passing over the employer's network, but its content as well.

To be sure, some employers are more concerned about what is being transmitted over its system than others. But, even if your employer does not employ its own I.T. specialist, they are readily available in the market on a contract basis. If your employer has any reason to want to know what you are e-mailing your members about, it can find out if you are using its e-mail system.

For this reason, it is important for each individual to consider the content of every message they send while at work. Some e-mail is purely informational, conveying primarily facts, such as the dates, times and places of upcoming meetings and the contents of newly formed agreements with the employer. Most of this information is readily available to the employer and poses little risk that the employer will obtain information which the union would prefer it did not have. However, take the message about a newly bargained agreement and add to it the additional information, intended only for your members, that a particular clause might enable members to obtain more favorable leave time than the employer intended. This additional information, if intercepted by the employer, could cause the employer to request clarification and may cause problems for the ratification. Likewise, any bargaining strategy communicated between members of your bargaining committee using the employer's email system could be easily surveilled and effectively neutralized by the employer.

The implications of the realization that your employer owns its system and you have no expectation of privacy extend into more areas than just communication with your members. It is not uncommon for you to communicate with your labor attorney or the MPFFU via e-mail. Doing so on your employer's e-mail system jeopardizes the security of the information you are exchanging. Your communications with your attorney are protected by the attorney/client privilege. You cannot be forced to testify about any communications you have with your attorney when the communication is a component of you seeking or receiving legal advice. However, the privilege is extinguished upon the disclosure of the com-

munication to any third party. Therefore, if your employer reads an e-mail between you and your attorney concerning the facts of an upcoming grievance arbitration hearing, you could be forced to testify about that communication at the hearing. This type of surprise at a hearing could easily be the difference between winning and losing your case.

Communication with the MPFFU via your employer's computers illustrates at least two potential information breach problems. Your e-mail correspondence with MPFFU officers is subject to the employer scrutiny already discussed, making any advice you might receive from MPFFU officers known to your employer as soon as you get it. An additional problem arises when accessing the MPFFU website from your employer's computer. While there is information on the website that is available to anyone who goes there, as you know, there is a large volume of excellent information available to members only. When you access the "Members Only" section of the website, your employer can not only see and record your password; but can view and obtain copies of anything you view or download. Much of this information is the compilation of countless hours of time and effort studying certain problems confronting our locals, as well as invaluable advice from practical experience of other union members and their local officers. It is an incredible resource, which none of us wants in the hands of any employer.

You might also communicate with the news media or various political allies via e-mail. Doing so on your employer's system discloses your plans prematurely. Generally, the reason to communicate with the media is to publicize the union's position on a certain issue. By giving the employer the foreknowledge of the union's public stance, you enable the employer to neutralize your efforts. Likewise, when the union supports political opponents to the current regime, or dissident members of the administration, it is often critical that you are the one to determine when such support or alliances are revealed. By using the employer's e-mail system for such commu-

nications, you forfeit any strategy involving timing. Additionally, your correspondence could potentially be used against you in a public relations effort launched by your employer.

The simple, though slightly inconvenient, solution to this problem is to utilize only private e-mail addresses when conducting union business. Virtually everyone has a private or home e-mail address. Each local should put forth the effort to obtain the private e-mail address of each of its members and admonish all members not to use the employer's e-mail address for anything other than department business. This being said, you must remember that the employer also owns the server through which all e-mail traffic at work passes; which means that if you use your home e-mail address to conduct union business but then use your employer's computer system to check your home e-mail, you have defeated the purpose. Use your private e-mail addresses from your home or union computers. Do not hand your confidential union correspondence to your employer by using your employer's computer equipment.

P O R N

Got your attention? Unfortunately, despite the fact that there have been a number of

cases of union members being disciplined or discharged for viewing pornography on the internet while at work, a few of our members still seem to be unpersuaded that this is a bad idea. Please accept this as official notice: **LOOKING AT PORN ON THE INTERNET WHILE AT WORK IS A BAD IDEA!** Depending upon your employer's policies regarding internet or computer usage, your employment could be terminated for the fleeting thrill. Your job as a firefighter is your greatest asset. It is what you and your family rely upon to provide for all of your needs. If you cannot get through a shift without looking at porn, see a doctor! Keeping your job even provides the insurance necessary for you to get help.

Hopefully, your local had a hand in creating your employer's current computer policy. Unfortunately, this seems to be the exception rather than the rule at this point in time. As such, our members could be subject to discipline, not just for looking at porn, but for a wide array of seemingly innocent activity. Policies which prohibit the use of the employer's property for any non-departmental purpose could be read to preclude members from checking their home e-mail address or surfing the internet for anything not work-related.

The policies governing the employer's computers are fair game for negotiations. In these uncertain economic times, employers should be more likely to agree to make concessions on non-economic issues such as rules governing computers and internet use. This is an opportunity for you to bargain for rules that serve your needs. Point out to your employer that there is no cost involved in what you want and, likely, you will be well received. Some of the benefits you could obtain through bargaining include the ability to send meeting notices to your members; the ability to check personal e-mail at work; web surfing during down time, and the ability to interface with other websites, like online purchasing etc. Be sure that restrictions are explicit. Avoid ambiguous words like "inappropriate" or "objectionable." Time restrictions should be clearly stated as well.

The internet and all electronic media are tools that we have all come to rely upon and take for granted. Do not lose sight of the fact that they are your employer's tools as well. Take the recommended precautions and avoid unnecessary disciplinary actions and inadvertent disclosure of confidential Union information. Where your employer's electronic property is concerned, you are better safe than sorry.

Dominican Republic and Hazel Park Fire Department

By Kyle Rowinski, Local 1414

This past January Hazel Park Fire Dept. had a unique opportunity to bring a fire truck down to the third world parts of the Dominican Republic and put it into service. HPFD had received two new apparatus, one from a grant and one purchased by the city to replace our currently 20-year-old trucks. One of the out of service trucks had market value and was sold. We were left with a truck that was only valued at the price of scrap metal, but had a working engine and pump. With the help of a government program, the truck was flown into Santo Domingo, DR. To try to put into words what was seen and experienced is a difficult thing to do. As we tend to complain about the standards of our modern day equipment, we went to an area where the thought of ever being able to perform frontline fire attack/extinguishment with an apparatus was only a dream. Today, it is a reality for the town of Villa Elysia, Dominican Republic.

However, the work is not finished. The firefighters have no PPE, tools or ambulance. So, as many locals are receiving grants for new equipment, tools, and gear I would appreciate if you would



consider donating your old OOS gear, apparatus, and tools to help us bring them up to speed. As we know, fires and emergencies have no boundaries. What we consider useless here could provide protection and life saving capabilities for our new friends in the Dominican. Please contact me for all questions and donations at krowinski@comcast.net.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**CONTACT: Jennifer Wright Dorr
202-293-5330**

Get Connected and Save on Union Wireless Service with AT&T

Discount now available on 3G iPhone Plans

Now you can save on your monthly wireless plan from AT&T with a 10 percent discount when you sign up for a new or renewed two-year plan because of your union membership. Plus, there may be special offers on phones and accessories that you may be eligible for that can save you even more. You can even save on plans for the new 3G iPhone.

This special 10 percent discount off the regular monthly rate for individual or family plans from AT&T is available only to union members and retired union members who are new and current AT&T customers.

AT&T Mobility is the only wireless company that is virtually 100 percent union, with 40,000 CWA members under contract. "For union families, the choice in wireless is clear," says CWA President Larry Cohen. "And now members can take advantage of these special savings while supporting their fellow union members at AT&T and dealing with a company that respects workers' rights to organize."

There are three ways to get the discount:

- 1) Call **1-800-897-7046** and use Discount FAN number 00113662. You may be asked to fax proof of union membership.
- 2) Online at **UnionPlus.org/ATT**. You will be asked to provide your union name and local number.
- 3) Visit your local AT&T store and bring proof of union membership (a Union Plus Credit Card, union membership card, or copy of a paycheck showing union dues deduction) along with the AT&T union discount coupon found at UnionPlus.org/ATT or FAN number 00113662. The discount is available at AT&T stores only, not at authorized AT&T kiosks in malls or dealers like Best Buy or Radio Shack.

If you are a new or current AT&T customer, you must sign up for a two-year service agreement to begin the discount.

The 10% discount is not available on additional lines for family plans, unlimited plans or plans for the original iPhone. This offer cannot be combined with any other discounts. This offer is available only to qualified union members and retired union members. Union identification is required.

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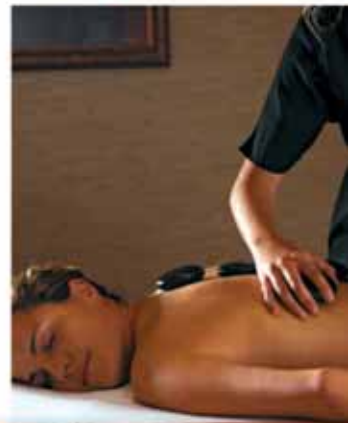
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MPFFU Conducts First FIRE OPS Event (9)

