

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Southern Inyo Fire Protection District encompasses an area of approximately 1250 square miles and provides vital services to the communities of Shoshone, Tecopa, Charleston View, Stewart Valley, Chicago Valley, and Sandy Valley. The legal function and authority for existence is described in the State of California Health and Safety Codes 13800 – 13970 known as the Fire District Law of 1987. The primary function of the district is the protection of Life and Property from Fire, provide Emergency Medical Services and HazMat Mitigation. The Southern Inyo Fire Protection District was organized in November 18, 1993.

The responsibility of the employees of this District is a serious one. To discharge such responsibility properly requires a thorough knowledge of the objective and standards of the District, and its organization and of all its services provided to the public.

Therefore, this manual is intended to fulfill three purposes: (1) To outline the organization and functions of the District; (2) To describe in detail the duties and responsibilities of its employees' and (3) To establish policy, procedures and standards of conduct that will assist the employees in the full performance of their duties. In addition, this information will aid in governing the relationships of employees to each other, the Administrative Personnel appointed by the Board of Directors, the Board of Directors and with the public during routine and emergency situations.

## **SUPERVISION**

The Board of Directors of the Southern Inyo Fire Protection District shall exercise complete authority and supervision over the District. The Chief of the District shall be directly responsible to the Board of Directors in all matters pertaining to the District's functions and operations in his capacity as Chief Administrative and Operational Officer of the District.

## **FUNCTIONS OF THE DISTRICT**

The functions of the Southern Inyo Fire Protection District shall be:

1. To extinguish all fires within the jurisdiction of the District.
2. To assist other fire agencies as defined in the Mutual Aid Agreements.
3. To maintain all property of the District in serviceable condition.
4. To enforce all laws and rules governing the Prevention and Suppression of hazardous materials.
5. To investigate the cause of all fires.
6. To provide fire protection facilities in accordance with the growth and population changes within the District.
7. To provide rescue and emergency medical aid to all persons confronted with a life or safety hazard within the District.

# **SOUTHERN INYO FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT NEW BOARD MEMBER INTRODUCTION**

## **I. No Kidding, I won? Now what do I do?**

- a. Show up
- b. Pay attention
- c. Ask questions
- d. Don't quit

## **II. Get Oriented – Do your homework.**

- a. Tour District facilities
- b. Read the last independent Auditor's report
- c. Meet with the Fire Chief/General Manager and his/her management team.

## **III. Get Oriented – Find Answers to These Questions.**

- a. What are the district's present strengths?
- b. In what condition is employee morale?
  - 1. Who or what is the motivator of that condition?
- c. Is there a spirit of cooperation between the district and other local agencies and their leaders?
- d. Is there a plan for where the district should be in the near and long-term future?
- e. What are the district's future needs?
- f. Is the community informed about the district's progress toward accomplishing its goals?

## **IV. Qualities of an Effective Director.**

- a. Mature – “it's not all about you”
- b. Cooperative Attitude - Adapt to your board's culture, established norms, and organizational procedures.
- c. Expertise – Understand district's purpose (homework) & limitations. Stay current on districts issues: governance & services.
- d. Competent – Effective and competent communicator (and listener).
  - Ask appropriate questions
  - Consider before drawing conclusions.

## **V. Convictions of an Effective Director.**

- a. Ethical
  - 1. Use sound, moral judgment regarding district decisions.
  - 2. Examine procedures that could be questionable.  
Example: Compensation for directors.  
Practice open, ethical leadership – AB1234
  - 3. Avoid conflicts of interest  
Example: Doing business with the district
- b. Independent
  - 1. Think, act & speak independently
  - 2. Independent not for sake of publicity
  - 3. Share opinions even if not a member of the majority.

## **VI. Traits of an Effective Director.**

- a. Be prepared for meetings – review all material
  - 1. Understand legal and fiduciary role of board and staff.
- b. Present for all board and committee meetings.
- c. Available
  - 1. Accessible and responsive to constituents.
- d. Community minded.
  - 1. Enthusiastic about district activities
  - 2. Supportive of other community events & projects.
  - 3. Encourage public participation & input
- e. An advocate for your district and special district governance state wide.

## **VII. You are Only One of the Board's Directors**

- a. Support decisions made by the board.
  - 1. Bad mouthing creates sense of division.
  - 2. Maintain a united approach – one voice.  
You have a right to disagree – even if you vote nay on a motion, once the motion is passed, support the board's decision - "WE NOT I".
- b. Special favors not part of being director.
  - 1. Buying surplus property, selling equipment
- c. Uninvolved in day-to-day operations.
  - 1. Personally liable for your own acts or omissions – district liable for board actions.
- d. Avoid "micro-managing"
  - 1. Even when your reasons sound so logical.

## **VIII. Typical Excuses of Micro-Managers.**

- a. The public expects me to have the answers
- b. How can I make policy if I don't know the details?

- c. It's the only way to make sure it gets done
- d. I have experience in the subject
- e. We can't trust staff

#### **IX. Managing the Manager.**

- a. Directors should also be professionals.
  - 1. Don't publicly abuse for personal purposes
  - 2. Don't coalesce with employees
- b. Dissatisfied with Manager's performance?
  - 1. First verify your basis of opinion is factual
  - 2. Role Theory
- c. Be specific when requesting
  - 1. Allow adequate time for response
- d. Provide an annual evaluation of the Manager's performance
- e. Need to meet with the Manager?
  - 1. Make an appointment – don't just walk-in.

#### **X. Board's Role/Responsibilities In Legal Issues.**

- a. Only Board can bind district contractually – signed by Chairperson
- b. Know and comply with conflict –of-interest laws
- c. Comply with open-meeting laws (Brown Act)
- d. Follow advice of legal counsel
- e. Remain uninvolved in day-to-day operations
  - 1. A director is personally liable for his/her own acts or omissions.
  - 2. District is liable for the board's actions

The above referenced information is just the tip of the iceberg. This gives you a general outline on how to conduct yourself as a district board member. However, we strongly urge you to take training classes available for Code of Ethics – AB1234, which has to be taken by each board member upon appointment/election, (a copy of completion of course is kept on file in the district office), and renewed every two years.

There are other courses available and recommended from California Special Districts' Association (CSDA), such as the Governance Academy. All training/travel expenses are paid for by the district and we encourage you to take part in this training.