

# THE RISK JOURNAL

A PUBLICATION FOR MMRMA MEMBERS

FEBRUARY 2012

## Preview: Risk Management Workshop Sets Wide Scope

FROM CYBER RISK AND social networking to the growing financial risk in municipal bonds—and the eternal challenges of dealing with difficult people—the 2012 Risk Management Workshop covers the widest scope of risk management topics yet.

The annual workshop will be held March 1–2 at the Lexington Hotel in Lansing, preceded by meetings of the Membership and Finance committees on February 29.

### 2012 Legislative Agenda



Opening the workshop is longtime Michigan political analyst

Tim Skubick, joined by Patrick Harrington of the Lansing-based lobbying firm Muchmore, Harrington, Smalley and Associates.

Skubick, anchor/producer of public television's "Off the Record" talk show, is known for his ear-to-the-ground knowledge of current legislation, tempered by 40 years as a political journalist.

Don't miss this opportunity to hear the insights that only the longest-serving member of Michigan's political press corps can give.



*If you haven't yet registered for the conference, please do so immediately, as the official deadline is February 1. Call Denise McGinn at 517 333-3628 or email her at [associationg93@aol.com](mailto:associationg93@aol.com) for availability.*

### Breakout Sessions Focus on Risk Control Today

Following the format of past workshops, morning and afternoon breakout sessions offer a choice of topics.

#### Morning sessions feature:

- *Safety and Accident Review Committee*, led by Director of Risk Management Chuck Schwab
- *Open Meetings Act*, led by attorneys from Cummings, McClorey, Davis & Acho
- *How Claims are Processed*, led by MMRMA Director of Claims Michael Ellis

#### Afternoon sessions feature:

- *Social Networking and Hiring Practices*, led by attorneys Beth Young and Gregg Schultz
- *Freedom of Information Act*, led by Chris Johnson and Carlito Young of Johnson, Rosati, LaBarge, Aseltyne & Field
- *Legal Update*, led by MMRMA Director of Claims Michael Ellis

### Municipal Bonds: How Safe?

Traditionally, municipal bonds have been regarded as a safe haven for conservative investors, municipalities included. The 2008 credit market collapse was a game changer, shaken by an avalanche of bank failures, credit defaults, municipal bankruptcies, tightening of credit, and the understandable plunge in investor and consumer confidence.

To sort out current market risks and best practices for the future, we've asked Michael McGee of Miller, Canfield, Paddock and Stone, to share the long view on investments from one of the oldest law firms in the Midwest, founded in 1852, just 15 years after Michigan statehood.

### Cyber Risk for Municipalities

Personally, we all worry about losses from credit card theft, but for municipalities, the stakes from the compromise of confidential data are exponentially higher.

Inga Goddijn of Markel Corporation, an international property and casualty insurance holding company, will give an overview of current risks and regulations, cite examples of loss, and discuss strategies for structuring coverage to protect against cyber losses.

### Don't Let Difficult People Ruin Your Work Life



Who better to teach you how to deal with difficult people than the author of the best-selling *Dealing with People You Can't Stand?*

Dr. Rick Brinkman, who has been featured on CNN, CNBC, and in *The Wall Street Journal* and *O, The Oprah Magazine*, shares his secrets on how to get the worklife monkeys off your back, once and for all!

# Westland Mayor Brings Entrepreneurial Spirit to MMRMA Board

**SPEND TIME TALKING WITH** William Wild, mayor of the City of Westland, about the characteristics of a successful municipality, and you'll hear terms like "healthy," "green," and "fiscally responsible." For Wild, these aren't merely buzzwords. With a background in automotive recycling—a family business his father started and that Wild later purchased—many of these seeds were planted long before he got involved in local government.

Today, they're bearing fruit. Last November, Westland launched "Passport to a Healthy City," partnering with a nearby hospital and local businesses and empowering residents to fill their passports with stamps and win prizes by participating in educational, nutrition, and exercise activities. "Our goal is to become one of the nation's healthiest cities," Wild says.

Westland also aims to be green. In 2010, the city's single-stream curbside recycling program won a national award from the Conference of Mayors. Wild and his team also launched an ongoing project, "Westland Mission: Green." Through this initiative, Wild encourages residents, business owners, and elected officials to help Westland become one of Michigan's greenest cities through inexpensive, environmentally friendly endeavors such as clothing donation boxes, recycled road surfaces, and a community garden.



While such programs may sound costly, Westland's two-year budget is balanced, despite a previously projected \$15 million shortfall in fiscal year 2011–12 alone. This was achieved without requesting additional millage or cutting any major services to residents.

Start looking at the programs behind the buzzwords, and it's not difficult to understand why Wild ran unopposed in his 2009 mayoral re-election campaign.

### Improved Customer Service

"The residents of Westland are our customers," says Wild, who credits much of his success to his education in the workaday business world. "We weren't the biggest," he says of his recycling company, "so we had to distinguish ourselves from larger competitors by providing the best customer service." This ethos inspired Westland's Very Important Resident (V.I.R.) program, which Wild introduced in his first month as mayor.

Designed to take municipal service to the next level, the V.I.R. program enacted a new protocol for handling resident

concerns in a timely, professional manner. It also established standards for business attire and a training schedule of customer service seminars for city officials.

Wild sees Westland's small business owners as customers, and he designs programs and activities for their benefit. "Passport to a Healthy City," for example, helps generate revenue, positive word of mouth, and goodwill for participating companies.

At Westland's first annual Blues, Brews & BBQ festival in 2011, Wild and his team made sure that the restaurants and other vendors made a profit—and the city donated its proceeds to the nonprofit organizations that generously provided volunteers to help staff the festival.

### Valuing Strong Partnerships

Wild clearly admires, and strives to create and participate in, strong partnerships. It's no surprise, then, that he decided to run for MMRMA's Board of Directors. He had some experience with workers compensation insurance pooling through his automotive recycling business, and he appreciated the member-driven aspects of pools and their benefits to his company.

Wild remembers being introduced to MMRMA when he joined Westland City Council in 2001. From the outset, he was impressed by the professionalism of everyone at the

organization. "I saw how Westland depends on MMRMA," he says, "and I knew the city was very fortunate to be a member."

Serving on the Board of Directors has only cemented his positive perspective. "MMRMA is not just another insurance company," he says. "The depth of knowledge of the staff and Board is unique, and it's the kind of organization I'm proud to invest my time and efforts in."

Wild's mayoral seat, his role on the MMRMA Board, and professional activities with the Conference of Mayors and other organizations keeps him busy. Fortunately for his wife, Sherri, and their three children, Wild spends plenty of time with them as well.

Sherri, a sixth-grade science teacher, attended Westland John Glenn High School, graduating two years after Wild. Their daughters, Lily, 6, and Payton, 4, participate in dance and gymnastics, while their nine-year-old son, Luke, shares his dad's affinity for hockey.

Wild still dons skates himself and helps organize an annual charity event in which local players challenge a team of Red Wings alumni. Proceeds from the event help fund Westland projects. On and off the job, it's clear that Wild works hard to help improve the lives of Westland residents.

# 911 Training Helps Reduce Emergency Response Risks

By Mike Berthā  
Risk Control Consultant

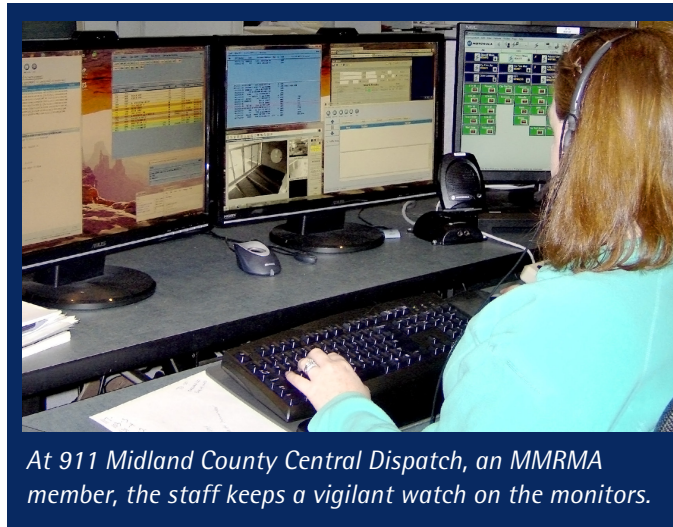
**IMAGINE LOOKING OUT YOUR** living room window and seeing fire and smoke billowing from the roof of your neighbor's home. Instinctively, you'd reach for the phone because, since we were children, we've been told to dial 911 for help.

Now pretend you're stopped at an intersection. The truck in front of you runs a red light and crashes into a car with a woman and her two young children inside. What's your gut reaction? Grab your cell phone and dial 911.

We don't often think about the people on the other end of the line when we call 911, but we're very glad they're there. The women and men of Michigan's statewide 911 centers make up a dedicated group that answers the call 24/7, 365 days a year. Among these professionals are MMRMA members who volunteer their time and expertise on our 911/Telecommunications Advisory Committee.

## Success in Limiting Loss

The 911/Telecommunications Advisory Committee has enjoyed an extremely low loss history and is dedicated to maintaining that trend. Its successes can be attributed to the committee's strategy in two areas: 911 director training and resource sharing.



*At 911 Midland County Central Dispatch, an MMRMA member, the staff keeps a vigilant watch on the monitors.*

## Training Helps Reduce Employee-related Claims

As with other municipal departments, employment issues create a significant area of exposure for 911 communication centers. Employee-related claims and litigation most often arise from improper employee management or violation of general labor relations issues.

To minimize such employment exposure, MMRMA's 911/Telecommunications Advisory Committee hosts an annual three-day training session for directors of 911 departments that includes employment training as a cornerstone.

Each year, MMRMA's 911 director training brings nationally recognized experts on the top issues affecting emergency response departments. Last October, Jim Marshall of the 911 Training Institute presented *Survive and Thrive Together in the 911 Center*. Marshall shared

powerful insights about how the stress of 911 centers affects dispatchers' physical and emotional health and offered "in-the-moment" strategies to manage distress during the most psychologically demanding calls.

Also at the 2011 training, attorney Chris Cooke of Cummings, McClorey, Davis & Acho outlined the requirements of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and best hiring practices for high-pressure jobs such as 911 dispatchers.

Sherry LeVeque, from General Motors' OnStar satellite service, showcased the program's features and demonstrated how enhanced technology can interface with 911 centers to improve service.

## Sharing Resources Statewide

Resource sharing has always been a significant part of the 911/Telecommunications Advisory Committee's strategy

for reducing loss and risk exposure. Not only do the committee members share their own knowledge and expertise, they also draw on the know-how of the technology experts on their 911 center staffs.

The committee has also produced two CD compilations of written policies, procedures, and rules in use by member 911 centers statewide. Each governmental entity has a distinct culture, and so do their protocols. Through such sharing, the entire membership has a baseline of best practices and procedures they can customize to their community's needs.

In 2011, the committee completed a second CD, *Policy & Procedures: Examples for Dispatch Centers, Volume II*, based on protocols from the 911 centers in 11 MMRMA member communities. The CD, released at the 2011 Annual Meeting, will be available in the Resource Room at the 2012 Risk Management Workshop.

No matter what the emergency, Michigan citizens dial 911 for help. MMRMA's 911/Telecommunications Advisory Committee will continue to help our members meet these calls for help in ways that maximize service and minimize risk.



Snowmobile enthusiasts glide on Michigan's more than 6,100 miles of maintained trails. Upper Peninsula runs are consistently ranked as America's best.

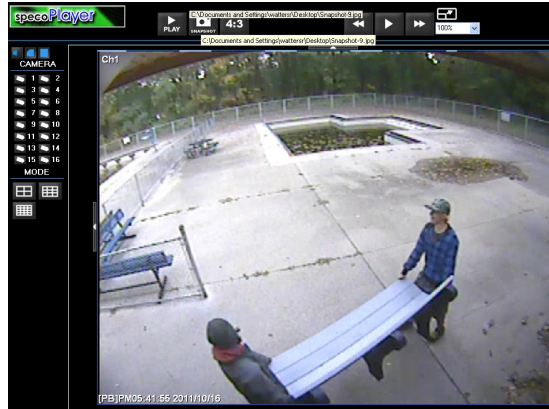
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The *Risk Journal* is published six times a year for members of the Michigan Municipal Risk Management Authority. We welcome your feedback. To comment or suggest story ideas, please contact Tamara Christie, communications specialist, at 734 513-0300, 800 243-1324, or tchristie@mmrma.org.



Thanks to security cameras installed at Port Huron's public pools, vandals causing property damage were caught red-handed.

**THE CITY OF PORT HURON** is among the members taking advantage of an MMRMA security-related RAP grant. With the help of 50/50 matching funds, Port Huron's Recreation Department installed security cameras at its outdoor swimming pool locations in May 2011. By that fall, the cameras were put to the test, and they proved effective in helping reduce loss.

"The pool was closed for the season," explains Port Huron Recreation Director Nancy Winzer. "When a maintenance person noticed the damage, we immediately checked the video footage from the security cameras."

The recordings showed that two teenagers had jumped the fence and caused significant property damage by bouncing cinder blocks off the diving board and throwing bench seats into the empty pool. Their actions damaged a valve and other parts of the pool.

The city filed a police report and, based on the apparent age of the suspects, police circulated photos from the video to area middle schools and high schools. Soon, the vandals were identified. They confessed and also implicated a third teen who had gone with them to the pool but didn't go inside the fence.

"Thanks to the security camera footage," says Winzer, "the vandals are facing criminal prosecution." The city will also seek restitution for the damages.

## Security Grant Limits Doubled

At year's end, the MMRMA Membership Committee approved nearly \$150,000 in Risk Avoidance Program (RAP) grants for security systems and doubled the Standard Grant Guideline's aggregate limit for security systems from \$25,000 to \$50,000 per member.

RAP applications are reviewed quarterly and funds are typically granted on a dollar-for-dollar basis, with members contributing half of project funds and MMRMA matching the other half.

The next deadline for RAP applications is April 30, 2012. For an application form and guidelines, go to [mmrma.org](http://mmrma.org) or contact Cara Kowal, Risk Control Coordinator, at 734 513-0300 or [ckowal@mmrma.org](mailto:ckowal@mmrma.org).

Winzer, who was recently appointed to MMRMA's Parks and Recreation Risk Control Advisory Committee, says she's "excited to be involved and looks forward to sharing ideas with the rest of the committee."

MMRMA appreciates all member employees who serve on its various committees and enhance services to the membership at large. We also recognize the Membership Committee for its ongoing efforts in implementing the RAP program and reviewing grants. These participants' generous contributions of time and knowledge help MMRMA remain a leader in municipal risk pooling.