

Wisconsin State Fire Inspectors Association News

By Ronald Omernick
Wausau Fire Department

Hi,

I would like to take a moment to introduce myself. My name is Ronald Omernick and I have the honor of being elected as the new President of The Wisconsin State Fire Inspectors Association. I would like to say "Thank You" to our Association members for their vote of confidence, and look forward to making our Association the Best that it can be. I would also like to say "Thank You" to our outgoing President and now Past President Tod Doebler. Tod has done a wonderful job guiding our Association for the last two years. He has many accomplishments to his credit and has kept the passion in fire prevention alive.

I am very excited about representing the Wisconsin State Fire Inspectors Association for this next year. Some of my background would include getting started in the fire service back in 1983 with the Wittenberg Volunteer Fire Department. That experience was very beneficial to me. I was able to live the volunteer life, truly experiencing it, and being a part of it. It taught me how very dedicated the volunteer force is and how caring they are about their communities and the people who live in them. It also taught me about some of the trials and tribulations that our volunteers have to deal with on a day to day basis. Mandatory/unfunded training, old equipment to work with, constant budget problems, forever repairing equipment, and outdated turn out gear, were just some of the incessant issues that we faced back then. In fact, I can remember that there were times when we were grateful, just to be able to afford the Black Jack roof patch.... so that we could keep the rain out of our fire station. Those problems united us, made us stronger, and helped us to think of creative ways to keep going. I had many great and memorable experiences there. It was those experiences in caring for people, that prompted me to move on to a full time career in the fire service.

In 1986 I applied for a position with the Wausau Fire Department. I was able to land the job and have been here ever since. I worked my way up through the ranks and am now the Departments' appointed City Fire Marshal. I enjoy promoting my Department and the City of Wausau both economically, and as a wonderful place to live.

My experience with The Wisconsin State Fire Inspectors Association started out when I became a member in 1997. Over the years, I was voted in as Secretary Treasurer of Area 9, Chair for Area 9, 2nd Vice President in 2006, and served as 1st Vice President for the last 2 years. My election to President of the Wisconsin State Fire Inspectors Association comes at a great time for me. The Associations Fall Conference Committee has decided to hold our Annual Fire Prevention Professionals Conference, right here in Wausau. The dates for this event are November 2 – 6, 2009 at the Plaza Hotel and Convention Center. (201 N 17th Ave, 715-845-4341). I am going to enjoy promoting this event in our city and am happy for the economic benefits that this convention will bring to my community and our area businesses. I would also like to express a special "Thank You" to our Conference Committee members who spent endless hours making sure that everything went right during our 2008 conference, and look forward to working with them in 2009. The members of this Committee are Guy Santelli, Sue Phillips, Laurie Frey, Theonita Cox, Jill Glanz, Tom Clark, Matt Merten and Jeff Pollard.

I would also like to congratulate Guy Santelli. He has been voted in as our new 1st Vice President. Guy works for the Kenosha Fire Department. His hard work and diligence have been instrumental in making our convention a great experience. His ideas and positive work ethic have increased the attendance at our convention making it even more successful than in previous years. The City of Kenosha has much to be proud of with Guy Santellis' dedication.

The Associations' new 2nd Vice President is Sue Phillips. Sue works for the Town of Menasha Fire Department as their Deputy Fire Chief and Fire Marshal. Sue has also spent many hours planning the Associations Fire Prevention Conference. She has earned her Executive Fire Officer Program Certificate from the National Fire Academy and is an adjunct instructor for the National Fire Academy. I see Sue as a very valuable addition to our Executive Board and look forward to working with her in the future.

My near term work for the Association will include revisiting our committee structure and assigning people to the open positions left by vacancies caused by members moving on. This is important so that the day to day work process for our Association keeps marching forward. I will also be working on developing a budget for this next year and work with our treasurer and auditors to make sure that we continue to have transparency and good accounting practices.

In other news, The City of Wausau recently suffered a fire tragedy..... times three. We experienced a residential fire where three children died. This illustrates the justifiable need for residential fire sprinklers. We have to keep promoting these valuable tools so that our homes will have these life saving devices in place and working for us at all times. Technology has advanced to the point where the cost of a home fire sprinkler system has become very affordable. These three tragic deaths come at a time when budgets are really strained due to the economic downturn. Their deaths point out the fact that more money, not less, needs to be allocated to the fire service and spent on fire prevention/education so that every one will know and understand the value of residential sprinkler systems. We hope for and work toward the goal of having residential fire sprinkler legislation passed and implemented in our state soon. It is imperative that we continue to work with our state and local leadership promoting these valuable life safety tools. I would like to commend Robert DuPont, our Fire Prevention Section Supervisor for the State of Wisconsin Department of Commerce. I have come to know and appreciate his continued hard work and diligence in managing our fire codes and all the discussion that these codes generate. Proposed fire code legislation can tug and pull at him from all directions. This makes it all that more important that we as an Association do whatever we can to support him in his efforts to make Wisconsin a safer place to live.

Please Remember:

A Meaningful Lifeis not..... who you are....

A Meaningful Lifeis not..... what you have....

A Meaningful Lifetruly is.....How you live it.

And in the Fire Service,

that means a positive...fire safe attitude, in our daily lives.

Stay Safe

Ronald Omernick