

Special District Association of Colorado

SDA NEWS

APRIL 2026

Supporting Community-Based Government

SDA Regional Workshops

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June 2026

sdaco.org

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Designed by Emmett Jordan



2026 SDA Annual Regional Workshops are Headed to a Town Near You!

SDA, the Colorado Special Districts Property and Liability Pool, and the law firm of Collins Cole Winn & Ulmer, PLLC are thrilled to be hitting the road in June to bring you these lively and educational trainings!

These workshops apply to all types of districts and are sure to provide a wealth of valuable information for your district. We will cover a wide variety of important topics such as minutes, meeting formats, open meetings, conflicts of interest, and public records, just to name a few. We will also discuss establishing and developing a strong safety culture within your district. On top of all this, we will give you the scoop on this year's legislative changes and how they affect your district. And, as always, there will be plenty of time to answer all your questions, big or small.

Whether you are a Board member or district employee, a seasoned professional or brand new to your position, we will have something for everyone (don't forget these workshops are for all district types, not just Title 32 districts).

Did we mention that every attendee will also receive a copy of the 2026 SDA Board Member Manual and the legislative update for 2026?

Having this many pertinent and timely issues discussed all in one place is an opportunity you can't afford to miss!

Registration will be opening soon so make sure to watch your emails and the SDA website at www.sdaco.org for all the details. The cost is \$40 per person.

We can't wait to see you in June!

LAKEWOOD

Friday, June 12 | 8:00-11:30 am

West Metro Fire Protection District Training Facility

FOUNTAIN

Monday, June 15 | 8:00-11:30 am

Fountain Sanitation District

PARKER

Monday, June 15 | 1:00-4:30 pm

Parker Water and Sanitation District

KERSEY

Tuesday, June 16 | 8:00-11:30 am

Platte Valley Fire Protection District

NORTH DENVER

Tuesday, June 16 | 1:30-5:00 pm

The Greg Mastriona Golf Courses
at Hyland Hills Clubhouse

GRANBY

Wednesday, June 17 | 9:00 am-12:30 pm

Grand Fire Protection District

VAIL

Wednesday, June 17 | 9:00 am-12:30 pm

Vail Recreation District Golf and Nordic Clubhouse

CLIFTON

Thursday, June 18 | 8:00-11:30 am

Clifton Water District

DURANGO

Monday, June 22 | 8:00-11:30 am

Durango Fire Protection District

BUENA VISTA

Tuesday, June 23 | 9:00 am-12:30 pm

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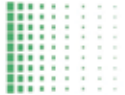


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SDA Legislative Briefings

Your All-in-One Place for Legislative Information and Discussion

Did you know that the SDA Legislative Briefings are the perfect way to not only hear the latest updates on legislative hot topics, but to also weigh in on the important issues we're discussing?

These briefings, held every other week via Zoom, are a one-stop shop for all things legislation. We provide the latest up-to-date information on proposed bills at the Capitol and give you time to ask questions and weigh in on how these issues could impact your district.

And, since all the briefings are held via Zoom, it is easy for anyone from across the state to participate!

Below is the schedule for April and May:

- » Tuesday, April 7 at 12:00 pm
- » Tuesday, April 21 at 12:00 pm
- » Tuesday, May 5 at 12:00 pm

To register, please visit our website at www.sdaco.org. Mark your calendars now, and we look forward to having you join us!

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Year Two of the Designated Election Official Fellowship is Underway

Building on the successful first year of our Designated Election Official Fellowship program, year two officially kicked off last month, and we are thrilled that this valuable training is once again underway.

The Designated Election Official (DEO) Fellowship is tailored specifically for people currently serving as a DEO for their district or planning to step into that role in the near future.

With over 90 people participating in the group, our first meeting of 2026 was held via Zoom and covered a variety of important topics, including:

- » The purpose and structure of special district elections
- » TABOR, statutory, and director elections
- » Key dates for upcoming special elections (October, December, and February) as well as the November 2026 and May 2027 elections
- » Mail ballot vs. polling place requirements
- » Early planning considerations to ensure compliance and a smooth process

Following the kickoff meeting, we will continue to

meet over the next year to help DEOs prepare for their role. The program will include an in-person election training in May and multiple virtual sessions developed to foster peer learning among new and experienced DEOs.

Our goal is to provide clarity, confidence, and connection for those responsible for administering special district elections. With the training designed for both first-time DEOs and those getting ready for the 2026 and 2027 election cycles, these sessions will provide the practical guidance and timely updates DEOs need to conduct successful elections.

“Local government is the closest form of governance to the people, allowing for more direct representation and responsiveness to the unique needs of our communities,” said Ann Terry, SDA’s CEO. “DEOs have the chance to contribute to this system by overseeing an election process that reflects the diverse voices and opinions within their districts.”

If you are a DEO or anticipate serving as one, we strongly encourage you to participate as well! Please watch your emails and the SDA website at www.sdaco.org for information on our next training session.





The South Metro Hazmat team responded to a call at a pool on January 20, 2026.

SOUTH METRO FIRE RESCUE

Protecting One in Every 10 Coloradans

By Susan M. Thornton, MS

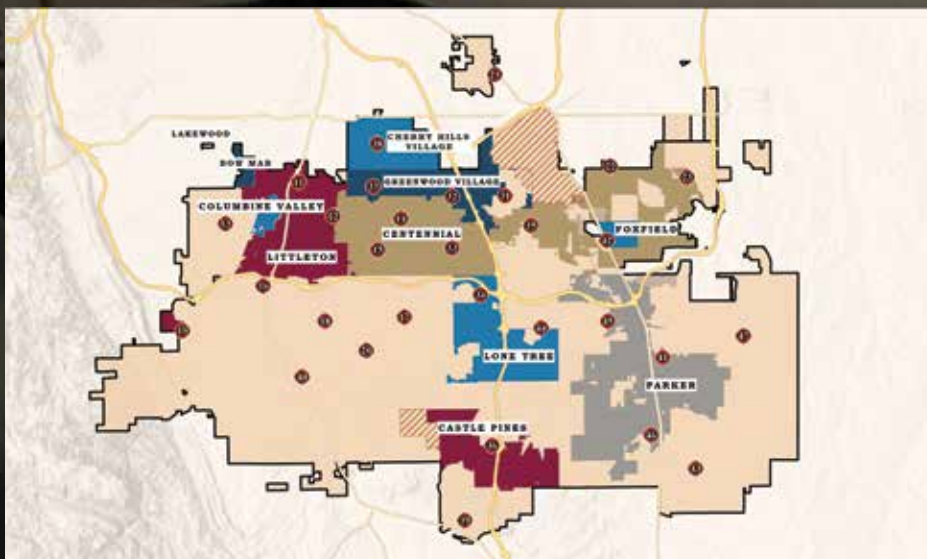
South Metro Fire Rescue covers an impressive area, nearly 300 square miles, and protects 571,500 residents, which is one in every ten people in Colorado.

This includes people who live or work in 13 metro districts and 15 municipalities (including Littleton, Centennial, Columbine Valley, Parker, Lone Tree, Greenwood Village, Foxfield, Cherry Hills Village and Bow Mar), plus portions of Aurora and Lakewood and the unincorporated communities of Castle Pine, The Pinery, Four Square Miles, and Louviers.

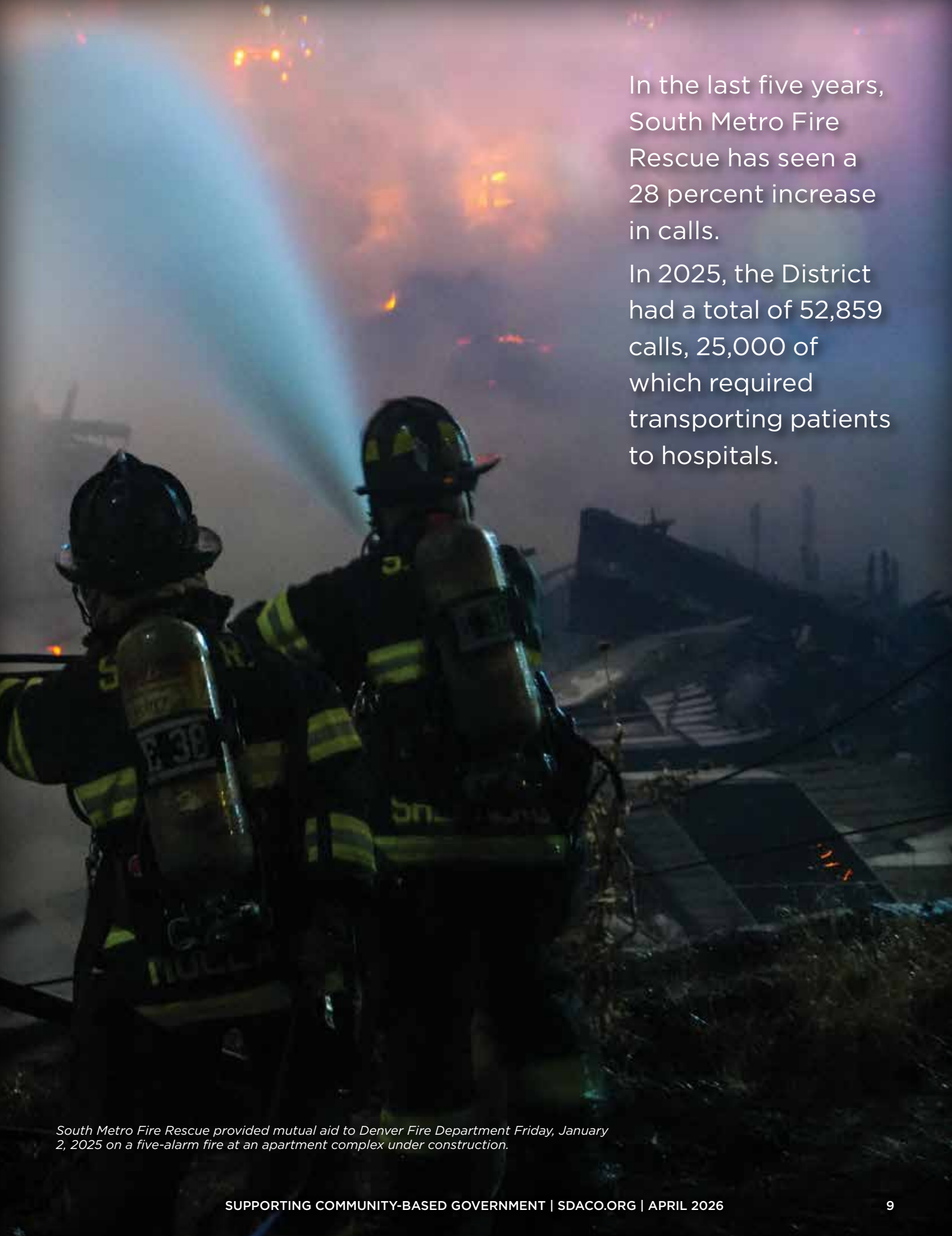
The District also protects Lockheed Martin, Centennial Airport, and Cherry Creek and Chatfield State Parks.

In the last five years, the District has seen a 28 percent increase in calls. In 2025, it had a total of 52,859 calls for help, 25,000 of which required transportation to hospitals.

Continued on page 11



South Metro Fire Rescue covers nearly 300 square miles.



In the last five years, South Metro Fire Rescue has seen a 28 percent increase in calls.

In 2025, the District had a total of 52,859 calls, 25,000 of which required transporting patients to hospitals.

South Metro Fire Rescue provided mutual aid to Denver Fire Department Friday, January 2, 2025 on a five-alarm fire at an apartment complex under construction.



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A South Metro wildland fire team battles the Ridgegate Fire on August 31, 2018. With Colorado experiencing a series of very dry years, wildfire prevention and mitigation makes up a significant portion of the District's efforts.

A Growing, Full-Service District

The District grew in 2018 when it merged with Cunningham Fire Protection District, and again in 2019 when it unified with Littleton Fire Rescue.

Today, with 30 stations and more than 800 employees, the full-service district provides fire prevention and suppression; fights wildfires; licenses events and food trucks; and issues construction permits. It operates two fire training centers (including two five-story towers), two burn buildings, and a driver's operating track.

Wildfire Mitigation

With Colorado experiencing a series of very dry years, wildfire mitigation makes up a significant portion of the District's efforts.

Matthew Assell, the District's Public Information Officer, says the District has a special Wildfire Mitigation Group that goes out into the community, walking

neighborhoods and meeting with individual homeowners to point out how wildfires can be prevented.

Explorer Program

The District also runs the South Metro Fire Rescue Explorer Program for young adults, ages 16 to 21. This program provides an inside look at the fire service and gives participants the opportunity to experience what it's like to be a firefighter through hands-on training and career development activities.

Through the Explorer Program, members become familiar with the equipment and skills utilized by firefighters on a daily basis and the requirements of a career in the fire service. Among many other things, participants learn basic emergency management training and take part in live fire training scenarios. The program operates under the Department's Training Bureau and is taught by experienced firefighters from around the District.

Two Foundations

In addition, South Metro partners with two nonprofit foundations. One—the South Metro Firefighters Professional Foundation—provides resources for firefighters who have unexpected family, medical, or financial emergencies.

The other—the South Metro Safety Foundation—offers classes in babysitting, youth safety, CPR, first aid, and teen and senior driving skills. In 2025, approximately 2,600 people went through these classes or received safety education, resulting in safer communities.

National Search for a New Chief Attracts 76 Applicants

In 2025, the District saw the retirement of its long-time Fire Chief, Bob Baker, and began a national search for a new Chief. Seventy-six hopefuls applied from across the country.

After careful consideration, the District's Board selected John

Continued on page 12



Increased costs led the District to seek a three-mill increase in tax levy in 2025, which the voters approved.

Curtis to be its next Fire Chief.

Chief Curtis has been with the District for more than 20 years, most recently as Deputy Chief of Emergency Services, where he oversaw operations, emergency medical systems, dispatch, fleet services, and special operations. He assumed command as Fire Chief on April 23, 2025.

Chief Curtis holds a Master of Science in Organizational Leadership and a Bachelor of Arts in Kinesiology from the University of Colorado. He is also a graduate of the Fire Service Executive Development Institute, located in Maryland.

Rising Costs Lead to a Successful Tax Increase Request

The District's total revenues, excluding payments for transfers, were \$264.3 million in 2025. The mill levy was 12.25, with property taxes making up 77.3 percent of the District's budget.

Unfortunately, Chief Curtis says, the District's costs have been continually increasing. For example, a bunker coat that cost \$1,757 in 2019 now costs \$2,350; 100 feet of fire hose that cost \$658 in 2019 now costs \$927; and a new fire truck that would have cost

\$725,000 has increased by 79 percent in six years and now costs \$1.3 million.

Because of these increased costs, the District went to the voters in the fall of 2025 to request a three-mill increase, which the voters approved. Despite the increase, Chief Curtis observes that the District's mill levy remains one of the lowest in Colorado.

Future Outlook

Asked about the future of South Metro Fire Rescue, Chief Curtis describes the future as bright. "Guided by our mission to save lives, protect property, and serve our community, we continue to advance innovative approaches to all-hazard response, reduce community risk, and strengthen partnerships that matter," he says.

He also notes that the District is a responsible steward of taxpayer resources, saying, "We ensure our citizens receive the highest level of care when emergencies occur. Our values, excellence through professionalism, accountability, compassion, and engagement, are at the heart of everything we do. I am honored to serve alongside the dedicated men and women of this



Fire Chief John Curtis

organization and look forward to the opportunities ahead as we lead with integrity and purpose." 🍌

Editor's Note: The January 2026 issue of SDA News includes a very informative article about South Metro's successful mill levy increase last year in the November elections, including the work the Board did in evaluating the need for the increase and the outreach to voters and stakeholders.

It's Almost Time to Submit Your Nominations for the 2026 SDA Annual Awards!

Do you know a District Manager, Fire Chief, Executive Director, or Board Member who has made extraordinary contributions in his or her role? If so, now is your chance to nominate an exceptional person for a 2026 SDA Annual Award!

Each year at the SDA Annual Conference, we have the pleasure of honoring outstanding individuals with awards in the following categories:

- » Manager of the Year
- » Board Member of the Year

This year the awards will be presented at the Annual Awards Luncheon on Tuesday, September 15 during the SDA Annual Conference in Keystone.

The nominations will be opening soon so please watch your emails and the SDA website at www.sdaco.org for all the details!

If you have any questions about the awards, please contact Anthony Sandoval at 303-863-1733 or anthoney@sdaco.org.

SDA is pleased for the opportunity to recognize the people who demonstrate remarkable dedication to serving the citizens of our state. We look forward to receiving your nominations! 🍷





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 Cleora North Metropolitan District
 Confluence Early Childhood Development Service District
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 Eastern Hills Metropolitan District Nos. 21-23
 Eastgate Metropolitan District Nos. 2-6
 EC West Community Authority Board
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 Frontier Estates Metropolitan District
 Hancock Metropolitan District Nos. 1 and 2
 Haven Valley Metropolitan District
 Lorson Ranch Metropolitan District Nos. 5 and 7
 Miners Park Metropolitan District Nos. 1 and 2
 Montava Metropolitan District Nos. 2-7
 Monument Ridge Metropolitan District Nos. 1-3
 Mountain View Estates Metropolitan District No. 1
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 North East Metropolitan District
 Otis Rural Fire Protection District
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 Ponderosa Ridge Metropolitan District Nos. 1-5
 Ramblewood Metropolitan District
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 Ridgway Library District
 Smith Metropolitan District Nos. 2 and 4
 South Pueblo County Conservation District
 South Vale Water District
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 Southridge Metropolitan District
 Sterling Ranch Colorado Metropolitan District No. 4 Subdistrict E
 Sterling Ranch Colorado Metropolitan District No. 7 Subdistrict D and E
 Sugar Creek Metropolitan District Nos. 2-4
 Summerfield South Metropolitan District Nos. 1-5
 The Bend at Lakewood Metropolitan District
 Two Rivers Marketplace Metropolitan District
 Village Center Metropolitan District
 Western Hills Fire Protection District
 Wildwood Ridge Metropolitan District
 Wilshire Metropolitan District Nos. 1 and 2

Associate Members

Organization	General Type of Services
Adams County Government	County government services for Adams County
Allegiant Management	Association and commercial management services for properties in Grand County
Ameresco	Energy infrastructure solutions provider
CertaPro Painters of Northern Colorado	Exterior and interior painting services
Counties & Commissioners Acting Together (CCAT)	Coalition of counties and commissioners representing counties across the state
Elevated Clarity	Special district accounting and administration
Environmental Landworks Company Inc.	Landscape architectural design services for residential and commercial landscaping
eUnify	HOA management software
JVAM	Law firm rooted in Colorado's mountain communities
Keesen Landscape Management	Commercial landscape management services
Maizeland Electrical Group	Commercial electrical services
NMHolder Financial, Inc.	District management
Orrick Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP	Public finance as well as bond, disclosure, underwriters', and special tax counsel
Procam Services	Property maintenance services
R. Tracy Research and Consulting LLC	Accounting/financial firm
Rizzetta & Company, Inc.	Community management and consulting firm
RowCal	Full-service HOA property management
Sentinel Point Management & Accounting	Accounting, consulting, financial, management, and administration
Tangent West	Executive recruiting firm

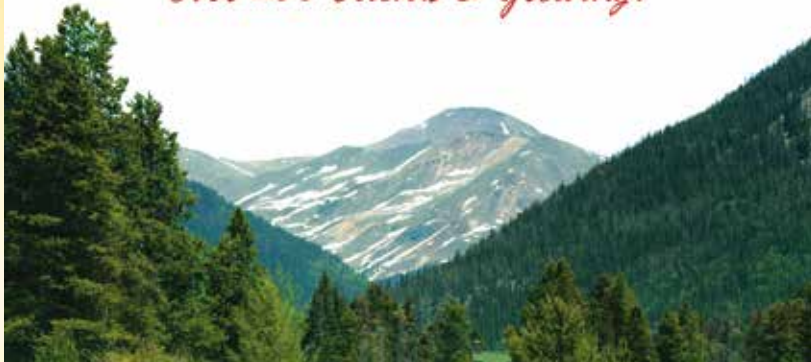
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Playground Inspections

Guest article by the Colorado Special Districts Property and Liability Pool

The Colorado Special Districts Property and Liability Pool remains committed to our more than 2,500 public entities as *Your Risk Management Partner*. Each month, we are focusing on a different program or service we offer our membership, either at no cost or at a discounted rate. This month, we're highlighting our playground inspection services, which allow us to help members evaluate potential playground hazard risks and make recommendations that provide security and knowledge where it's needed most—all at no cost.

Free Playground Inspections for Members

Playgrounds should be places for fun, not unexpected risk. Our safety consultants help your district prepare for the unexpected by identifying potential hazards before they turn into injuries, claims, or costly repairs.

We work alongside you to evaluate potential losses and provide practical recommendations

that strengthen safety, improve compliance, and give your team the confidence and knowledge they need.

What We Provide

Our on-site playground inspections focus on reducing liability and protecting guests, property, and community. Inspections—conducted by a Certified Playground Safety Inspector (CPSI)—focus on:

- » Comprehensive playground inspections
- » Hazard identification with written reports, including hazard ranking and photographs
- » Updated guidance on rules, regulations, and requirements
- » Review and development of policies and procedures
- » Support for liability, property, workers' compensation, health and safety, and regulatory compliance

All inspections are available to members at no cost.

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) recommends that playground inspections are completed annually. Don't wait for an incident to uncover a hazard. Submit your playground inspection request at **csdpool.org/request-a-safety-consultation**.

To learn more, visit our website at **csdpool.org/safety-consulting**.

As *Your Risk Management Partner*, we remain committed to providing specialized coverages tailored for public entities, exemplary claims support, and safety and loss prevention services to ensure everyone within the organization—from Board members to supervisors and staff—has the tools they need to succeed. If you have any questions about the resources mentioned here, please visit **csdpool.org** or message us at **csdpool.org/connect**.



Metro District Manager Certification Program Being Developed

We are thrilled to announce that SDA, the Metro District Education Coalition (MDEC), and the University of Denver have partnered to develop a Metro District Manager Certification Program.

The group is currently refining course content, finalizing the syllabus, and coordinating instructor recruitment for the program's inaugural class. Subject matter experts in various fields are also being identified to serve as instructors and contribute to this important professional development initiative.

We will have much more to come on this exciting new opportunity for our members so stay tuned for all the details!

Lessons on Local Government (LOLG) Welcomes New Program Director

The Lessons on Local Government (LOLG) program is a longstanding partnership between SDA and the Colorado Municipal League (CML) which serves as a resource for elementary, middle, and high school teachers in Colorado. The program provides a wide variety of age-appropriate lessons and resources to help educators easily find curriculum materials that meet the state's social studies and civics standards.

After many successful years, LOLG has recently welcomed a new Program Director, Justelle Grandsaert, who brings over 26 years of experience teaching government and integrated world studies in the St. Vrain Valley School District. In addition to her classroom expertise, Justelle is the primary author of many lessons that form the core of the LOLG curriculum.

LOLG is also currently conducting its annual poster contest with a theme of "Community Helpers in Local Government." The contest is open to students in grades 1 through 5 and encourages participants to explore and celebrate the vital roles of local government employees in their communities.

In addition, Justelle has recently led several student workshops at Colorado Mesa University and the University of Northern Colorado, further advancing LOLG's goal of fostering civic engagement and understanding among students.

For more information on the LOLG program, including all of the classroom lessons that are available, please visit:

www.lessonsonlocalgovernment.org.



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