



HIGHLIGHTS OF THIS ISSUE

Page 2
JPIA BOND SALE

Page 3
MACo MEETINGS

Page 4
A.G. LETTER OF ADVICE:
MILL LEVY

Page 5
WOLVES

Page 6
PUBLIC HEALTH
EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Page 7
COUNTY NEWS

Page 8
NRIS SEMINARS

Page 9
LAPTOP ERGONOMICS

Page 10
ELECTION REFORMS

MACo News
Montana Association of Counties
2715 Skyway Drive
Helena, MT 59602
Phone (406) 457-7207
Fax (406) 442-5238
Website: <http://maco.cog.mt.us>

ARTICLES ARE WELCOMED
BEFORE THE 20TH OF EACH
MONTH

Email: macopb@maco.cog.mt.us
Subscriptions are \$25 per year.

HOMELAND DEFENSE FUNDING EVOLVING

Three different sources are contributing to Montana's Disaster and Emergency Services funding:

1. Emergency Management Performance Grants (EMPG) are the only source of direct federal funding for state and local government that can be used to provide basic emergency coordination and planning capabilities. EMPG, which is part of the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA), provides states the flexibility to allocate funds according to risk vulnerabilities and to address the most urgent state and local needs for disaster mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. States award funds to local governments on a 50% / 50% split.

Montana receives \$1,542,988 of the nationwide amount of \$165,140,000.

2. The Office of Domestic Preparedness (ODP), within the new Department of Homeland Security, manages \$1.3 billion in grants for state and local first responders. The grants are for equipment, training, exercises and planning. States must allocate 80% of the equipment funds to local governments within 45 days. Montana's allocation is \$5,303,000.

The formula for these funds may be changing. Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge urges a change in the grant formulas, which are now based on population, to re-

flect an area's vulnerability and likelihood of terrorist threat. NACo supports any changes to the program which will continue funding to both large and rural counties.

3. The War Supplemental program is designed for security and response services. Governor Judy Martz recently announced \$14,047,000 for funding to Montana.

Montana's DES mission for the new funds is to "coordinate efforts to detect, prepare for, prevent, protect against, respond to and recover from terrorist attacks within Montana." General goals are:

1. Assess risk in Montana
2. Enhance response capabilities
3. Increase coordination and interoperability
4. Better prepare our state
5. Improve use of technological capabilities.

Montana county funding levels will be presented in the August MACo News.



Harold Blattie, MACo Assistant Director, and Jim Greene, DES Administrator, recently met to review Montana plans and funding.

JPIA BOND SALE FOR LIABILITY EXCESS REINSURANCE



L-R: Gordon Morris, MACo Executive Director
Vernon Petersen, Fergus County, JPIA Chair
Mae Nan Ellingson, Bond Counsel, Dorsey & Whitney

The MACo Property and Liability Insurance Program has issued bonds to fund a self-insurance layer of coverage for the liability portion of the program. This approach was modeled on the successful MACo Workers' Compensation bond program, which was paid off early.

The amount needed to cover the annual debt service on \$5,000,000 worth of bonds is at the same level as the current annual reinsurance premium. This should result in stabilization of premium costs.

Each of the 45 member counties adopted a Resolution of Intention to participate in the bonding, to enter into the Liability Program and to adopt and issue a promissory note. The promissory notes are payable over 20 years. Neither the amount of the current premium nor the amount for the debt service on the bonds is outside the general property tax limitations.

The final closing on the bond sale occurred June 23 at the MACo offices. Current coverage expired June 30. On July 1, the MACo Liability Reinsurance became self-insured.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

July 4	Independence Day Holiday
July 9	MACo Executive Committee Conf. Call
July 10-16	NACo Annual Conference; Milwaukee
July 16-18	County Attorney Association; Fairmont
July 31	MACo Econ. Dev. Committee; Fort Benton

UPCOMING EVENTS

August 10-14	Clerks of District Court Association; Forsyth
August District Meetings	
August 13	Districts 8, 9 & 12; White Sulphur Springs
August 14	Districts 10 & 11; Ravalli Courthouse
August 18	Districts 4 & 5; Lobby Cafe, Conrad
August 20	Districts 1, 2 & 3; Ekalaka
August 21	Districts 6 & 7; Red Lodge
August 15	Urban Counties meet with Dept. Transportation
September 1	Labor Day Holiday
September 14-19	Clerks and Records Association; Forsyth
September 21-24	MACo Annual Conference; Lewistown
September 22-26	Treasurers Association; Dillon
Sept. 29-Oct. 3	Magistrates Association; Helena
October 13	Columbus Day Holiday
November 6-9	NACo Human Service Conference; Miami
November 11	Veterans Day Holiday
November 18-20	JPA / JPIA Trustee Retreat
November 27	Thanksgiving Day Holiday
December 3-5	MACo Board Retreat
December 25	Christmas Day Holiday

MONTANA STATE TRAVEL RATES

The recent Legislature did not change the current rates for employee travel. These rates continue:

Motel / Hotel Rooms:

October 16 — May 14	\$35 a night
May 15 — October 15	\$55 a night
(except Big Sky at \$125, Polson/Kalispell at \$64 in summer / \$55 in winter, West Yellowstone \$92 in summer / \$55 in winter)	

Mileage

36¢ a mile up to 1,000 miles; then 33¢

Per Diem

\$5	Morning meal	
\$6	Mid-day meal	
\$12	Evening meal	TOTAL \$23

FALL DISTRICT MEETINGS SUGGESTED AGENDA ITEMS

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| 1. District Chair nominations and selection | 5. Mental Health summit report |
| 2. Officer nominations | 6. Homeland Security Grants |
| 3. Workforce Investment Board nominations | 7. MACo Conference update |
| 4. NACo Full membership proposal | 8. PILT assessment; dues increase |

DISTRICT COURTS AND LEGISLATIVE CHANGES

More than sixty people representing 41 counties learned of impacts from the recent legislation for district courts (SB 490 and HB 489). The meeting was sponsored by MACo and the Association of District Clerks of Court.



Sessions covering the biennial legislative appropriation and the reimbursement process were conducted by Jim Oppedahl, Court Administrator for the Montana Supreme Court. In addition, the current ACLU lawsuit concerning indigent defense and public defenders was presented by MACo and Katrina Martin from Utick and Grosfield

The afternoon was devoted to a general meeting for the district clerks of court.



Jim Oppedahl, Court Administrator
Montana Supreme Court

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

June 5, 2003

Selections from Minutes

Budget FY04

Dan Watson, Fiscal Officer

WIR dues and expenses will increase by \$4,200 over the next two years. The Board is considering a PILT assessment of 0.001% of the prior year's PILT receipts, with a minimum of either \$10 per county or \$50 per county. MACo will advise members during the August District meetings.

Watson stated that concern over lack of reserves could be addressed by a dues increase. The Board opted to request that the Tax and Finance Committee prepare a proposal for the membership effective FY 2004, not in conjunction with the WIR assessment.

100% NACo Membership

Gary Fjelstad, Past President

Fjelstad pointed out that nine Montana counties were not NACo members. In return for full membership MACo would receive 7 registrations worth \$2,520, a \$2,000 association bonus for full membership, and a 25% rebate to the state association for the members dues (\$720). MACo would also have an additional member on the NACo Board of Directors. MACo Board agreed to pay the dues for these counties to achieve 100% participation

Fjelstad acknowledged that this would require a lobbying effort on the part of both the Executive Committee and the Board, in order to keep the nine

counties paying their own dues the next year. This will be discussed at the district meetings.

Dues Committee

Howard Gipe, Urban Counties

Urban Counties are asking Board approval for a MACo committee, presided over by the MACo President, with two urban county representatives (Commissioners Bill Carey, Missoula, and Howard Gipe, Flathead) plus two members appointed by the MACo President. Gipe advised the Board it was their intent that the committee explore the possibilities of restructuring the Board representation and Association dues.

Mental Health Summit

Bill Kennedy, 1st Vice President

The MACo Health and Human Service Committee will be the base for a mental health summit to include health center chairs, providers, system users and others. A planning committee will set the "who, what, when and where" for the summit in August or September.

OTHER BUSINESS

The Executive Committee will seek an "Executive Committee to Executive Committee" meeting with Montana Contractors Association. This should be coordinated with the Transportation Committee

IRS is coming after taxes associated with the reimbursement of commuting mileage. It appears that reimbursements for commuting costs must be reported as gross income.

Attorney General LETTER OF ADVICE

Attorney General Opinion was requested by Nickolas Murnion, Garfield County Attorney.

Dear Mr. Murnion,

You have requested an opinion from the Attorney General as to the following question:

Is Garfield County required to obtain voter approval to authorize the county to impose a mill levy sufficient to generate the amount of property taxes actually assessed in the prior year from both voted and non-voted levies for health care facilities in Garfield County?

Since your question can be answered by reference to the governing statutes as construed in a prior opinion of this office, it has been determined that this letter of advice rather than a formal opinion is appropriate in response to your question.

In 2001, the Montana legislature adopted fundamental changes to the manner in which local property taxes are assessed and accounted for. With reference to your question, the legislature repealed numeric limits on various local property tax levies for specific purposes and amended MCA 15-10-420 to cap local property tax levies at the number of mills required to raise the amount raised from property taxes in the prior year, adjusted for inflation. Thus, as you note in your letter, the ten mill limit on property taxes for county hospital purposes previously provided in MCA 7-6-2512 (1999) has been repealed, and Garfield County's property tax mill levy has been capped as provided in MCA 15-10-420 (2001).

In his opinion 49-5 (2001) Attorney General McGrath held that the mill levy cap provided

in MCA 15-10-420 (1) (a) (2001) applies to all property tax mills levied by the county that are not expressly excluded from the cap, and not to the mills levied for individual purposes under statutes such as MCA 7-6-2512. In that opinion, the Attorney General held that the City of Great Falls' mill levy for airport purposes in FY 2002 was not limited by the number of mills levied in 2001. Rather, the city was permitted to levy enough mills to raise the same amount of money raised by its property tax levy for all purposes subject to the cap provided in MCA 15-10-420, adjusted for inflation as provided in the statute, and the local government had the discretion to allocate to the airport authority whatever amount it chose from the amount raised.

Under this interpretation of the statute, Garfield County is authorized to levy sufficient mills for FY 2004 to raise the amount raised from property taxes in FY 2003, adjusted for inflation. It is up to the county commission then to determine what portion of that revenue will be allocated to the county hospital. No election is required to authorize a levy sufficient to raise the amount allowed by the statute. Rather, MCA 15-10-425 quite clearly provides that an election is required only to impose a new mill levy, to increase a mill levy that is required by law to be submitted to voters, or to levy mills that would raise an amount in excess of the amount raised by property tax mills that are subject to MCA 15-10-420 (1)(a) levied in the previous year, adjusted for inflation.

This letter of advice may not be cited as an official Opinion of the Attorney General

S/ Chris D. Tweeten
Chief Civil Counsel

GALLATIN COUNTY COURTHOUSE RE-DEDICATION

Gallatin County invites Montana county officials to celebrate the complete remodeling and restoration of the Courthouse on **Friday, August 8**, with opening ceremony at 9:00 am. In conjunction with that event, they also have the honor of displaying the United States Declaration of Independence, which is touring the country.

The remodeling project features new heat, air, electrical, and computer systems which were incorporated in a historically-sensitive manner. Other high tech features include a DLP projector, 12' x 9' screen, remote-controlled window shades and lighting, and leading edge sound/recording system. The project was phased in over 4½ years. Montana counties that are preparing to remodel and/or update their courthouses will want to tour the courthouse and visit with the architect and contractors.

Wolves

Since 1974, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS) has managed wolves under the Endangered Species Act. The biological recovery goal for the northern Rockies wolf population is 30 or more breeding pairs for three years in the combined states of Montana, Idaho and Wyoming. The biological requirements for recovery were met in 2002.

Before USFWS will de-list, federal managers must be confident that the population of gray wolves will persist. To provide that assurance, Montana is to present a plan. Upon approval of the state plan, management authority for wolves will return to the state governments where wolves reside. Under Montana statute, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) is the agency charged with wildlife management.

Montana's Plan offers five alternatives.

1) No action; 2) Updated Plan from the Governor's Council; 3) Additional Wolves; 4) Minimal Wolves; and 5) USFWS and Alternative Two. (Public comment period for the FWP proposed plan for wolf management has ended.)

For the first five years after the gray wolf is de-listed, FWP will be required to document that the wolf population is secure within Montana.

Draft Environmental Impact Statement March 2003
Montana Gray Wolf Conservation and Management Plan

The 2003 Montana Legislature passed four bills relating to wolf status:

HB 262—Management of Predators

HB 283—Analyzing Costs Associated with Wolves

HJR 32—Wolf De-listing

SB 209—Annual Game Counts; Maintaining Species

Some Montana counties are hoping to affect future actions for wolf re-introduction by passing resolutions or supporting other statements.

The **Phillips County** resolution prohibits "the presence, introduction or reintroduction of wolves" inside the county boundaries. Commissioner Carol Kienenberger said there has been no talk of introducing wolves, but the resolution is a pre-emptive move. "We have seen the problems that have arisen with wolf reintroduction in other counties. We would prefer they aren't introduced here," she said. In their comments on the

FWP draft wolf management plan, the Commission wrote, "*We feel that it is a must to get the wolf de-listed for the sake of our farmers, ranchers, hunters and, in general, the safety of all of our citizens. We prefer Alternative #2 with a couple of exceptions. They are to establish a zone for the wolf population and give landowners more flexibility in the Central and Eastern Zones of the state of Montana. We believe that the administration, de-listing language from Alternative #4 should be added to the Central and Eastern Zone in Alternative #2.*"

Lake, Carbon and Fergus Counties

concur with the Montana Shooting Sports Association comments on the FWP plan which recommends a new alternative that would most closely resemble "Alternative 4. Minimal Wolves". The new alternative would spell out the requirements from new 2003 state legislation.

Fergus County has concerns with plans for the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument and the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge, which could become home for wolf packs. Commissioner Carl Seilstad said, "In the case it is ever talked about, Fergus County does not want wolves in the county."

Carbon County Commissioner Albert Brown reports four recent depredation incidents in the County from groups of wolves.

Valley County Commissioner Dave Pipin said, "The fact remains that wolves are predators whether they are endangered or not."

Choteau County Commission Chair Ken Evans said, "Livestock is one of our biggest enterprises. We need to have control."

In addition to statements and actions by county officials, other public comments include:

The grizzly, the mountain lion, the eagle...all of these, at one time or another, have been endangered and had to be protected. Wolf management should stay with the federal level.

Even if wolves were vegetarians I think some people would hate them.

Everyone needs to learn how to deal with this predator.

The problem arises when one considers the results of forcing wolves into public land, mostly in western Montana, rather than a more equitable, wider pattern of distribution.

MONTANA PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE CAPACITY

Fifty counties and seven reservations responded to a recent assessment of Montana counties and the ability to respond to public health emergencies. (Data was not available for Granite, Jefferson, Liberty, Lincoln, Phillips and Pondera Counties.) 35 public health agencies are county agencies and 15 are city-county agencies. The survey reviewed six areas:

1. Preparedness Planning
2. Epidemiology Capacity
3. Laboratory Capacity
4. Communications Network
5. Health Information Dissemination
6. Education and Training.

Preparedness Planning

Public Health Emergency Response Plans were most often addressed in local DES plans. Some rural counties have no plans at all.

No plans address the procurement and use of personal protective equipment for radiological agents, the verification of provisional credentials, or professional liability coverage.

More than half of the public health agencies (36) have designated a public health emergency coordinator and most (43) have identified legal counsel for emergencies.

38 agencies have directories with emergency contact information. 46 agencies collaborate with neighboring jurisdictions and have members on the local emergency preparedness group. Most agreements with emergency response partners are informal and unwritten.

Epidemiology Capacity

40 counties have designated epidemiology contact persons. 45 counties employ public health nurses and 34 have registered sanitarians. More than half of the agencies can disseminate medical management information to local response partners within one hour of an event.

Laboratory Capacity

About half of the agencies have laboratory services in their jurisdiction to investigate emergency incidents within four hours of notification. Only fourteen public health agencies have access to microbiology labs to rule out presence of anthrax, brucellosis, tularemia and plague.

Sixteen counties have formalized agreements with the state lab to perform testing if local labs cannot provide the level of testing that is needed. 35 out of 53 agencies have key contact people in law enforcement to whom they can communicate lab results. However, there are few formal agreements with law enforcement or first responders to ensure proper handling of specimens.

Communications Network

37 agencies have formal health alert systems, although only a few operate 24 / 7. Only ten agencies have tested the capacity to reach response partners. At least 35 agencies use patient identifiers to protect from unauthorized access and routinely conduct data backup.

Health Information Dissemination

Only 15 public health agencies have an emergency response plan. The most common item is the link with an Emergency Operations Center to release reports and health alerts. However, almost all agencies (47) use media channels (printed and broadcast) to disseminate information.

Twenty agencies produce printed information on anthrax and smallpox and a third of the counties provide fact sheets on biological agents and other public health threats.

Education and Training

Several public health agencies responded to a public health emergency in the past twelve months, but few have participated in any training exercises. Over half of the agencies cover expenses for staff to attend training and most train their own staffs. Most agencies participate in joint training with state public health agencies, LEPC or TERC. Almost all agencies allow employees to take courses during work hours (43) and use Internet (44), but lack of time is perceived as a barrier. Phone conferencing, computer conferencing and satellite downlinks are also used.

Training subjects have included disease reporting and investigation; basic education on biological and chemical agents, and incident command systems.

COUNTY NEWS

BUDGET PLANNING

YELLOWSTONE COUNTY is considering a public vote for funds to comply with new federal election requirements. (see article page 10)

RAVALLI COUNTY is ending its "in-lieu-of" payments for employees who opted out of the county-provided health insurance; in addition, it is considering a switch from composite rate health insurance (all employees pay the same amount) to a tiered system to reflect family size.

BLAINE COUNTY is considering a switch in health insurance coverage from variable premiums based on age to a plan which has a fixed premium regardless of age.

CUSTER COUNTY, following retirement of the Cemetery sexton, split sexton duties between the Extension Office, and the weed / mosquito district supervisor and crew.

PARK COUNTY is considering alternatives for upgrading its solid waste incinerator, such as closing the incinerator and shipping waste out of the county or shortening the number of days per week for incineration. The County must let the state know its plans by September and must complete improvements by May 2005.

FALLON COUNTY is contracting at \$30 / hour for work to fulfil the GASB 34 Fixed Asset and Inventory requirements .

WEEDS

BUTTE SILVER-BOW COUNTY has received a State Noxious Weed Trust Fund grant for weed control along the Big Hole River in **BUTTE-SILVER BOW, BEAVERHEAD, MADISON, and ANACONDA-DEER LODGE COUNTIES.**

BROWNFIELDS

YELLOWSTONE COUNTY is working with Billings on a possible application for a grant to clean up problem properties that have been rendered unmarketable due to possible contamination.

CASCADE COUNTY and the City-County Planning Department have reached the next stage for grants for petroleum and hazardous material cleanup.

LIBRARIES

YELLOWSTONE COUNTY will be participating in discussions for a combined city/county/school district/ University library.

FERGUS COUNTY has been asked to continue the one-time increased level of funding approved for last year's library budget.

9-1-1

LINCOLN COUNTY is asking **FLATHEAD COUNTY** to serve as the public safety answering center for the north end of Lincoln County.

DEVELOPMENT DISPUTES

RAVALLI COUNTY is in informal settlement negotiations with the landowners denied permission to develop a subdivision. The landowners are seeking compensation for lost property value.

GALLATIN COUNTY is facing two controversies brought by landowners. One is suing over the requirement for a trail easement to be included as part of a subdivision. Another homeowner is being asked to either tear down the new house or apply for a zoning variance to allow the roofline to jut over the ridge line.

LEVY MAIL BALLOT

TETON COUNTY mail ballot for a special 10-mill three-year levy for the nursing home passed with a 57% return on ballots.

TREASURE STATE ENDOWMENT PROGRAM

Beaverhead County wastewater	\$500,000
Blaine County bridges	322,782
Butte-Silver Bow-Ramsay water	255,000
Cascade County bridges	230,840
Cascade County water/waste	500,000
Cascade County-Black Eagle	214,200
Flathead County water district	500,000
Gallatin County bridges	500,000
Hill County bridges	175,803
Judith Basin County water district	330,000
Lake County solid waste district	500,000
Lake County-Pablo wastewater	500,000
Lewis & Clark County bridges	170,575
Madison County bridges	174,529
Missoula County wastewater	499,335
Park County-Cooke City water	500,000
Park County-Gardiner water	500,000
Phillips County water district	112,500
Pondera County bridges	137,500
Richland County bridges	351,625
Sheridan County bridges	210,775
Stillwater County bridges	500,000
Sweet Grass County bridges	235,954
Teton County-Power water	500,000
Yellowstone County water district (tentative)	500,000
Yellowstone County bridges	\$172,710

WASHINGTON'S SPOKANE COUNTY COMMISSIONER

Jack Roskelley and his son, Jess (University of Montana student), successfully climbed Mount Everest's 29,035' summit. The climbers endured high winds, sickness, loss of equipment and other team members turning back. The climb began in March and was concluded at the end of May. Jess is the youngest American to reach the summit.

Free Information Free Seminars

Montana's Natural Resource Information System (NRIS) offers Internet access to extensive water information, including fisheries, water quality and quantity and groundwater resources information (wells, water rights).

NRIS also houses the Montana Natural Heritage Program (NHP), where scientists collect, manage, and disseminate biodiversity information on plants, animals, and natural communities.

The data is available in GIS format for users to map, overlay, and analyze the information to help make land-based decisions.

NRIS also sponsors free monthly seminars on Friday afternoons at 3:00 pm, except in November:

July 25	NRIS TopoFinder II
August 22	Thematic Mapper
September 26	(TBA)
October 24	Census Resources
November 19	2003 GIS Day
Dec. 12	Earthquake Mapping
January 23	Grassland Birds

Each seminar will be at the Montana State Library, 1515 East Sixth, Helena. Registration is not required; however, attendees are encouraged to contact Anastasia Burton at 444-5357 or aburton@state.mt.us prior to attending, as occasionally there is a scheduling change.

NRIS speakers are willing to visit Montana locations with customized presentations which are often free of charge.

To access data and services, or to learn more about up-

MACo PRESIDENT'S 2003 SCHOLARSHIPS



BRIANNE VIALPANDO-GONE



KARLENE EGBERT

The 2003 President's Scholarships have been presented by former MACo President Victor Miller. The annual scholarships are awarded to graduates from the President's home county who plan to attend a Montana college.

Winner of the \$1,000 scholarship is Brianne Vialpando-Gone, who is a recent graduate of Harlem High School. Brianne plans to attend MSU-Bozeman to study neuro-cell biology. She hopes to become a neurological surgeon.

Winner of the \$500 scholarship is Karlene Egbert, recent graduate of Turner High School. Karlene plans to attend MSU-Billings to study psychology. She hopes to become a speech pathologist.

The scholarships were presented to the recipients during awards ceremonies at their respective schools.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE MAKE MOTEL ROOM RESERVATIONS NOW

MACo Annual Conference will be September 21-24 in Lewistown. Motels have set aside only a limited number of rooms for MACo guests. However, if we make reservations early and the motels realize we need more rooms, they will open more to accommodate MACo. Be sure to ask for rooms set aside for MACo.

Yogo Inn (conference center)
NO MORE ROOMS AVAILABLE

Mountain View
538-3457 (Ilene)
Single \$32.25 Double \$42.65

Super 8
538-2581 (Annette)
State summer rate \$55 + tax

B & B Motel
538-5496
Single \$45 Double \$50

Sunset Motel
538-8741 (Candy)
Single \$34.32 Double \$43.68

Trails End Motel
538-5468 (Julie)
Single \$38 Double \$43

Symmes/Wicks House Bed/Brkfst
538-9068 Single \$45 to \$75

"This assembly is like no other that ever existed. Every man in it is a great man—an orator, a critic, a statesman, and therefore every man upon every question must show his oratory, his criticism, and his political abilities; and the consequence of this is that business is drawn and spun out to immeasurable length. I believe if it was moved and seconded that we should come to resolution that three and two make five, we should be entertained with logic and rhetoric, law, history, politics, and mathematics concerning the subject for two whole days, and then we should pass the resolution unanimously in the affirmative."

John Adams, writing to his wife, Abigail
about the First Continental Congress, 1774

**ERGONOMIC RISKS
FROM LAPTOP COMPUTERS**
Presented by Emelia McEwen
MACo Assistant Risk Manager

35,000,000 laptop computers are expected to be produced in 2003! Dependency on the laptop as a primary workstation has been quickly established in all types of office work. Some large companies are planning complete shifts from desk-top to laptop models. However, this convenience of portability has led to a wide range of ergonomic situations.

The Omaha, Nebraska, police department added laptops to squad cars so officers could perform quick background checks and other high-tech functions while on patrol. However, awkward postures (twisting from the driver's seat to the passenger side to access the monitor and keyboard) and barriers to vehicle controls put the project on hold until the ergonomic risks can be resolved.

In spite of the convenience of mobile computing and the sheer demand for portable workstations, the basic design has changed little in 20 years. With the keyboard attached to the monitor, neither the neck nor the hands can be comfortably positioned. Invariably, the neck suffers from being angled and flexed to view the low display. Studies show that raising the entire unit to accommodate the neck places stress on the shoulders, arms, wrists and hands. This is a lose-lose design. In addition, hands can suffer from being too large to navigate the tight keyboard or from isolated finger use from the trackball mouse. The palm rests in front of the keyboard tend to isolate the typing and mouse movements to individual finger and hand muscles, rather than allowing the forearm to float freely over the keys. Thumbs become sore from hovering over the touch pad to avoid inadvertently moving the cursor. Eyestrain can occur from the monitor being too close.

Suggestions / Recommendations

1. **External Devices** Attach external keyboard and mouse; raise the screen to eye level.
2. **Docking Stations** Plugging in to a docking station or a port replicator will transform the laptop into a desktop. Using a simple cable

(\$13 to \$20) to expand the mouse port is an inexpensive fix for part of the problem.

3. **Weight and Protection** The light weight is subject to breaks, costly repairs and less protection. Carrying cases are more ergonomically correct (padded shoulder straps; backpack design; etc.) but do not offer protection for the equipment. The average weight of a laptop and attachments, in a carrying case, is 18 to 34 pounds. According to the American Medical Association, no more than 15% of a person's body weight should be carried or strapped on for transport.
4. **Monitor Height** Some companies are designing ways to elevate the monitor from the keyboard and mouse.

Laptop Tips

1. Use external devices

Make every effort to set the laptop like a desktop, with the monitor at eye level and the keyboard and mouse at lap level. Travel with an external keyboard or borrow one; pack a cable splitter so the single port will accommodate both keyboard and mouse; use books to raise the display to eye level.

2. Find laptop-friendly workspaces

Ignore high tables and use towels and pillows for extra support; use an armless chair for full arm freedom.

3. Pack full sized mouse and keyboard

Laptop keyboards without number pads may have full sized keys.

4. Program macros and use shortcuts to decrease keystrokes

5. Beware of getting too comfortable when working at home.

Lying on a couch and typing can cause neck and back pain. Make the effort to be ergonomic at home, too.

6. Carry only the essentials

Summarized from
"Laptops as primary workstations present ergo risks"
by Lori Stotko; Supplement to CTD News;

Stotko is a registered occupational therapist and certified hand therapist who runs Mid-Peninsula Hand Rehabilitation & Ergonomics in California. E-mail address: lori@ergohand.com

NACo INFORMATION

WESTERN INTERSTATE REGION (WIR) EISSINGER ELECTED



WIR 2nd Vice President Connie Eissinger, McCone County, MT
NACo President Kenneth Mayfield, Texas

McCone County Commissioner Connie Eissinger was elected by unanimous ballot to serve as Second Vice President of NACo Western Interstate Region (WIR) at the annual conference in Reno, Nevada. Eissinger was unopposed for election and will serve through the vice presidencies, becoming WIR President in 2005.

Elected as McCone County Commissioner in 1991, Eissinger has been particularly active on the NACo Public Lands Steering Committee since 1994. She was awarded WIR's highest honor, the Dale Sowers Award in 2001 in recognition for her efforts on behalf of public lands counties.

WIR represents the interests of public lands counties, mostly in the Western United States, and is NACo's oldest affiliate.

WIR 2003-2004 OFFICERS



L-R: Donna Ruffing, Wyoming, 1st Vice President
Don Davis, Colorado, President
Connie Eissinger, Montana, 2nd Vice President

FEDERAL ELECTION REFORM

Each state is guaranteed to receive at least \$5 million for meeting the requirements for training poll workers, buying out punch-card and lever voting machines, providing voter education and improving election administration.

Other grants will be available for improving polling place access for disabled voters, for research and development to improve voting technology, for pilot programs to test new voting systems and equipment and for state protection and advocacy systems.

REQUIREMENTS

Each state must:

Provide voters an opportunity to check for and correct ballot errors in private and independent manner;

Have a voting system with manual audit capacity;

Provide at least one voting machine per precinct that is accessible to the disabled;

Provide alternative language accessibility pursuant to the Voting Rights Act;

Have a voting system whose error rate does not exceed the rate established by the Federal Election Commission;

Define what constitutes a legal vote for each type of voting machine used in the state;

Provide provisional ballots to ensure no individual is turned away at the polls;

Maintain clean and accurate voter registration lists;

Implement a uniform, centralized computerized statewide voter registration database to ensure accurate lists;

Segregate and separately count ballots cast after poll-closing time, as a result of a court order.

Individual voters must:

Provide a driver's license or the last four digits of the Social Security number when registering to vote. If an individual does not have either number, he or she will be assigned a unique identifier.

Provide identification when they cast their ballots, if they registered by mail.

PLEASE SUPPORT MACo SUPPORTERS

ROSCOE STEEL & CULVERT

The **Most Reliable** Source of Products
Required for County Road Projects

406 / 656-2253
2847 Hesper Road
Billings, MT 59102

406 / 542-0345
5405 Momont Rd.
Missoula, MT 59802



Gordon E. Hoven
Montana Public Finance
406 443-4958



Securities products and services are offered through U.S. Bancorp Piper Jaffray Inc.,
member SIPC and NYSE, Inc., a subsidiary of U.S. Bancorp. 509-0634

PORTER W. YETT

**Grading & Paving Contractor
Soil Stabilization**

**PULVERIZE BLEND
RECYCLE
Asphalt Cement Lime
Bentonite**



Highways - Shoulders - Airports
Secondary Roads
Parking Lots - Haul Roads - Building Sites

**For More Information and Job Estimates
Steve Yett Call (503) 282-3251 Hugh O'Neal**

MORRISON - MAIERLE

ENGINEERS • SCIENTISTS • SURVEYORS • PLANNERS

Providing resources in partnership with clients
to achieve their goals

Billings • Bozeman • Helena • Kalispell • Great Falls • Missoula • Phoenix



Phone: 406-442-3050
Fax: 406-442-7062
Web page: www.m-m.net

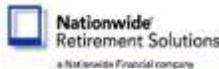


Prepare for the Future

Through partnership with the National Association of Counties, **Nationwide Retirement Solutions** helps public employees prepare for life events through retirement planning, educational programs, and numerous investment options.

Nationwide's commitment to county employers and employees includes comprehensive communication and administrative support as well as advanced interactive systems and technology.

To learn more, contact Nationwide Retirement Solutions at 1-877-NRS-FORU or visit www.NRSFORU.com.



**MACo / JPIA
Property & Casualty Insurance
for Public Entities**

**Greg Jackson
Marketing Director**

**Phone (406) 457-7210
Fax (406) 442-5238**

- *Internet
- *Long Distance
- *Private Line
- *Equipment



Call today to learn more about Touch America

1.877.671.7426

www.tamerica.com

Board Of Directors

President: Carol Brooker
 Commissioner, Sanders County
 1st Vice President: Bill Kennedy
 Commissioner, Yellowstone County
 2nd Vice President: Doug Kaercher
 Commissioner, Hill County
 Fiscal Officer: Dan Watson
 Commissioner, Rosebud County
 Urban Representative: Howard Gipe
 Commissioner, Flathead County
 Past President: Gary Fjelstad
 Commissioner, Rosebud County

District Chairs

1. William Nyby, Sheridan County
2. Todd Devlin, Prairie County
3. Joan Stahl, Rosebud County
4. Art Kleinjan, Blaine County
5. Arnold Gettel, Teton County
6. Joy Schanz, Golden Valley County
7. John Prinkki, Carbon County
8. Elaine Mann, BroadwaterCounty
9. Bernie Lucas, Meagher County
10. Paddy Trusler, Lake County
11. Alan Thompson, Ravalli County
12. Thomas Hatch, Powell County

Associate Board Members

Leo Gallagher, Lewis & Clark County Attorney
 Janice Hoppes, Pondera County Clerk / Recorder
 Marilyn Hollister, Rosebud Co. Clerk / District Court
Joseph Christiaens, Pondera Co. Coroner's Office
 Gary Olsen, Broadwater County Justice of Peace
 Karla Christensen, Garfield County
 Superintendent of Schools
 John Strandell, Cascade County Sheriff
 Jess Anderson, Cascade County Treasurer

Staff

C. Gordon Morris.....Executive Director
 L. Harold Blattie.....Assistant Director
 Carla Smith.....Financial Officer
 Oline BartaAdministrative Assistant
 Marie McAlearPublications Officer
 Karen HoustonMeeting Planner
 Ray Barnicoat.....Risk Manager
 Emelia McEwen.....Assistant Risk Manager
 Greg Jackson.....JPIA Marketing Director
 Jack Holstrom.....Personnel Services
 Fran Monro.....JPA/JPIA Admin. Assistant

Affiliate Members

alternative service concepts (asc), Helena
 Browning Ferris Industries of Montana (BFI)
 Employee Benefits Mgmt. Services (EBMS)
 Entranco, Inc., Helena
 GeoComm, Inc., Missoula
 Life Care Services, Missoula
 Montana Association of County Information
 Technology Administrators (MACITA)
 Montana Association of County Road
 Supervisors (MACRS)
 Montana Contractors Association, Helena
 Montana Dakota Utilities (MDU), Helena
 Morrison-Maierle, Inc., Helena
 MSU Extension Service, Bozeman
 Norman Grosfield, Helena
 NorthWestern Energy, Helena
 Roscoe Steel & Culvert , Billings & Missoula
 Short Elliott Hendrickson, Inc., Bozeman
 Stahly Engineering, Helena and Bozeman
 Tractor & Equipment Company, Williston ND
 Tractor & Equipment Company, Great Falls
 Tractor & Equipment Company, Billings