



the Sunshine FIRE·brand

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1

LATE SUMMER 2009

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Looking back and looking forward—Chief Stratton says goodbye
- Learn simple steps that can help your home survive a wild-fire
- “The beetles are coming!” - Find out ways to create a healthy forest
- Poster contest for children of all ages

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- Chief's letter 2
- Fire Marshall's Letter 3
- CWPP Update 4
- Fire Prevention Week 5
- Poster Contest 5
- Bark Beetles 7
- Seasonal Flu 7



Photo: Luis Sinco, Los Angeles Times, September 02, 2009

As we write, the STATION fire in LA (above picture) reminds us of the risks we face living in the wildland-urban interface (WUI). Together, however, our efforts at prevention and mitigation can reduce the dangers of a similar

type of fire in Sunshine. IN this our newsletter, we aim to help the realization of those efforts as we have these past 40 years. Of course that history is your history too as SFPD has grown into what it is today from the support

you have given it. AND as much as we look back in this issue of the FIRE·brand, we also look into the future. AS we do so, please share your thoughts with us. Contact information is on page 8 of this newsletter.

Founding of the Sunshine Fire Protection District

The first discussion which led to the creation of the modern-day SFPD occurred in 1967, when Sunshine residents John Tveitaraas, Gary Stahl, and Lloyd McIrvine joined Gold Hill Fire Dept Chief Frank Finn in a discussion about fire protection for Sunshine. Lloyd was a contractor and Gary was building his house in Sunshine Canyon. Lou Rose also played a significant role in proposing and starting the SFPD. He moved away shortly after the department came into existence. At that time, Boulder Rural said they would cover our district. But Lloyd, a resident of what would become Whispering Pines, said, “No, we should start our own fire district.”

“What really lit the fire beneath us was the Sunshine Fire,” said John Tveitaraas, referring to the fire that occurred the following year and had damaged the North side of Sunshine Canyon Drive/CO 52 below 6 mile marker. The 1968 Sunshine Fire damaged grass and timber. Some of the internal fires really blazed up but were inside the fire line. The wind was blowing and Fire Ranger Terry Beeson would not allow the able bodied ones to go down and knock it down. Most of the people were untrained and afraid to go near the blaze. With 12 years of experience in fighting fires at a ranch where fires were commonly set by the Midland

Terminal RR, Harry Covey was confident that 6 good men could handle it nicely but the community didn't have even two that could be counted on, so it burned all day and into the night. Finally, the wind died down and with the road serving as a fire break the fire quieted down. Neighbors stood guard all night, fighting spot fires as they appeared on the North side of the road. A fire line was established down to bare mineral soil and they kept the fire inside with hoes, shovels, the trombone water backpacks and hard work.

(continued on page 7)

Parting thoughts....



“Being a volunteer firefighter isn’t about fighting fires or racing to an emergency scene. Its about connecting with the people around you”



Is this a seven-year itch? I really don’t think so. It is true I was once married for seven years... and this doesn’t feel anything like that. I’m not being abused. I am not dreaming of greener pastures. I am not bored and looking for new excitement. It’s simply time for a different direction in my life, and time for someone else to have the fun I been having.

As of September 1st I will no longer be fire chief of the Sunshine Fire Protection District. Bruce Honeyman, who has been our fire marshal for longer than I have lived in Sunshine, will be taking over the operations of the district. And believe me, you will be in very capable hands.

The past seven years as fire chief have truly been a wonderful time in my life. What attracted me to this job was the opportunity to get to know my neighbors. To learn the true pulse of your community there is nothing like holding the hand of a friend as they are being hoisted into the back of an ambulance, or comforting a long time resident who has just lost a loved one. I can’t tell you how many times someone in need looked into my eyes and told me how wonderful it was to have someone there they know and trust. Being in a volunteer fire department is not about fighting the fires or racing to an emergency scene with red lights flashing. It’s about connecting with the wonderful people around you. And that has been the real gift to me

as fire chief.

Of course, it’s not just about the people we serve. I have had the pleasure of leading 15 to 20 of the world’s most wonderful volunteers. There is just something unusual about people who are willing to get up in the middle of the night to make sure their friends are safe. People who dedicate a Saturday a month to learning how to be knowledgeable and safe firefighters are an exceptional breed, and Sunshine has some of the best. We have volunteers that have lived here most of their lives. We have volunteers that don’t live in Sunshine at all. We have young ones, and old ones; ones that know what they are doing, and ones that are just learning. All of them are trying to give something back. They have become my closest friends. This community is very lucky to have such an unusual group of dedicated neighbors.

I can’t go very far without mentioning the wonderful support I have received from our SFPD Board of Directors. Pavel Bouska, Joyce Schroeder, Frank McGuire, Jen Lansky and Don Dick have given of their time and energy tirelessly. They never argued with me, always let me have my way (well almost) and allowed me the freedom to operate the department as I saw fit, always keeping a watchful eye to assure the community got what it was paying for. I thank each of you board members for your counsel, advice and friendship over these years.

I will certainly miss being fire chief. There are some great memories and accomplishments. Of course the burning of our fire station was somewhat of a low point. No fire chief wants to

say he lost his own house. But from the ashes has come a wonderful new station that will be a major asset to the community for many years. Our new station #2 is considered to be one of the finest fire stations in the mountains. Our fleet of fire trucks is in its best condition ever. Our firefighters are the best trained firefighters Sunshine has ever had, among the best in the county. One of the highlights of my tenure was watching five brand new recruits go through fire academy together to become state certified; then continue on to become certified Emergency Medical Technicians. This is extraordinary dedication for volunteers.

Probably the biggest accomplishment has been the completion of the Community Wildfire Protection Plan. Where most communities simply hire a consultant to patch together a safety plan, ours is truly a plan researched, designed and written by the community. Thanks to Abby Silver and Johanna Hurley for making me look so good.

However, the real success of a fire department is in the results. In these seven years no firefighter has gotten hurt. And no houses have burned. I consider this an important accomplishment, and one I most certainly did not do alone.

While I am stepping down as chief, I am not stepping away from the fire department. Wanda and I have no intentions to leave Sunshine. And after a few weeks of R&R I will be responding to SFPD calls just as before, supporting the new leadership in everyway I can. I would invite you to do the same.

-Steve Stratton, Chief SFPD

Got d-Space?



There is a certain rhythm to our Fire District trainings: in the Fall we generally practice structure firefighting drills; in Winter, when flowing water is often prohibitive because of the cold, we turn our attentions to medical skills; when Spring comes we start a series of wildland fire fighting exercises to prepare us for wildfire season. The problem, though, is that wildfire never seems to go on vacation: consider the recent 3,000-acre Old Stage Fire this last January.

The perennial question we ask is: How prepared are we for fighting a wildfire in Sunshine? At the individual level we take the annual wildland training refresher and physical fitness test. As a fire department we check and repair the wildland fighting equipment and make sure that the cisterns are in good working order; we practice water delivery and talk about the tactics and strategies of surviving a wildland fire. We also spend a fair amount of time discussing structure defense: how and when to deploy equipment and firefighters at individual structures to help the structures survive the passage of a wildfire.

Several months ago I called a number of insurance companies to get an assessment of the factors that they use in developing fire insurance policies. The question that I asked was:

What can we do as a fire department to help lower fire insurance premiums? As many of you know, the Insurance Services Organization (ISO) gives fire districts a rating that reflects the district's aggregate ability to provide fire suppression. As you can imagine, it's a complicated assessment that includes the number of firefighters able to respond to a structure fire, response times, and so on. When I talked to the insurance companies about fire insurance I fully expected the ISO rating of the district to be the primary factor in assessing fire insurance. To my surprise, it wasn't. As one agent told me, there is a growing understanding among underwriters familiar with the urban / wildland interface that a major wildfire quickly can overwhelm the fire fighting resources of an area and that the structures that have the best chance of surviving are those that have good defensible space. As a result, fire insurance assessments are based on those factors that will enhance a structure's survivability: defensible space that is tailored to the site (e.g., a structure on a steep building site will have greater defensible space downhill); fire resistant decking; combustible away from the structure (e.g., no firewood stacked under the deck); good fire department access, and so on. In fact, what the insurance companies are looking for are the evaluations that go with the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) assessments.

As many of you know, voters overwhelmingly passed Ballot Question 5A in November 2009. The ballot question asked for a mill levy on property taxes to fund District activi-

ties in support of the CWPP. Some of the first work paid for by the 5A money has already begun along Sunshine Canyon Drive. For the most part, the 5A money will be used to implement District-wide and inter-District wildfire mitigation strategies such as fire breaks. While the 5A money will help slow or stop the spread of wildfire at the District level, you as a homeowner still need to make your home as fire resistant as is possible. Remember, too, that your home can also be an ignition 'source': you want to lessen the likelihood that a fire starting at your home can spread to the adjacent wildland.

The creation of defensible space can seem daunting at first but remember that the ultimate D-space does not need to be created all at once: develop a plan (we can help you do that) and start with the easy and more obvious things first. For example, clear the combustibles from around your home; clean out the gutters; cut the light, flashy fuels (grasses, weeds) from immediately around your home. Here is a link to the 2008 Newsletter containing my Spring To Do List: <http://www.sunshine-fpd.org/newsletter/Summer-08.pdf>.

Remember, your Fire Department is here to help you. Give us a call if you want to discuss the development of your defensible space plan.

-Bruce Honeyman, Fire Marshal SFPD

"What can we do as a fire department to help lower fire insurance premiums?"




SFPD Community Fest
 Saturday, September 12th, 2—6 pm
 SFPD Fire Station #2
 Silent Auction, Baked Goods, Chili & More!!!!




Community Wildfire Protection Plan



Mitigation Crew—
(left to right) Jim Bratton,
Jack Shepard, David
Lasky, Landon Painter,
Sam Robinson.
Not pictured: Zach Little-
field, Arthur Lundquist

*“We’ve had
great support
and cooperation
from this
community”
- David Lasky*

Recently, we spoke to Dave Lasky, Fire Mitigation Coordinator on a day when the Four-Mile Mitigation Crew was hard at work chopping, chipping and stacking wood. He talked about this summer’s CWPP Mitigation Project along Sunshine Canyon Drive.

“Steve, Bob and Abby deserve a lot of credit,” Lasky stated. “Their volunteer hours have saved us time and the community many hours of work.” He explained that Steve Stratton, SFPD Chief, Bob Bundy, Assistant District Forester, and Abby Silver, Chairman of the CWPP, have been meeting with property owners, walking the properties, identifying trees to be cut and those to be spared, and getting permissions and financial commitments from property owners. Property owners pay approximately 10% of the cost to mitigate their land or \$150/acre.

Holding a map of entire project area, Lasky talked about the process his crew follows as they work their way down the canyon. Individual ‘units’ are delineated that correspond to both property boundaries and

topographical fire behavior models. The team mitigates each work unit from start to finish before moving on to the next unit.

Bob Bundy, Colorado State Forester, enters each unit first determining which trees will be cut. “Bob has found a lot of Dwarf Mistletoe,” remarked Lasky, and he described the removal of the diseased trees as “brutal”. Removing the diseased trees does slow down the crew, but their removal is vital to the health of the forest.

Landowners can tie pink ribbons around trees they wish to be spared. However, all work done by Four-Mile Mitigation is ultimately inspected by the state and must meet state performance criteria for creating a healthy forest. Leaving too many trees uncut could compromise the state’s inspection.

Tree limbs cut within 50’ of the road are dragged to the road for chipping. Limbs from trees further than 50’ from the road are lifted onto slash piles to be burned at a time when conditions are safe for their disposal.

Some stretches of Sunshine’s Ponderosa Pine forest will remain untouched for now. That property belongs

to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and is scheduled to be mitigated sometime next spring. “All work done on this property will be paid for by the BLM,” assured Lasky.

“We’re on schedule and on budget,” Lasky said with confidence, “and I think we’ll get to CR 83. The longer the money lasts, the further down Sunshine Canyon we can go.” Steve Stratton is monitoring the progress of the work and the money spent. And, every penny counts. “When property owners let us park near the work it also saves time and operating costs” added Lasky. “We’ve had great support and cooperation from this community.”

This June, SFPD was awarded \$4,000 from the Boulder County Chipping and Transportation Reimbursement Program. This was in recognition of the high importance of mitigation work in our District .

- Johanna Hurley & Abby Silver



CWPP Meeting update...

The Sunshine CWPP Task Force met on September 2nd. Everyone was updated regarding the progress of the current mitigation

project. As of the 2nd, 19.1 (50%) of the planned acres have been completed. Members began taking up the issue of slash disposal and proposed to have a

community meeting November 22nd. Watch for further details regarding this meeting. The next CWPP meeting is scheduled for December 9th.

Sparky says: “Stay Fire Smart, Don’t Get Burned”

Once a child touches a hot stove, as the cliché goes—he learns his lesson, stay away from a hot stove. This cliché does not take into account the pain and suffering from burns and burns should not be part of the learning process.

That’s why Sunshine FPD is teaming up with the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) for Fire Prevention Week 2009 – October 4-10 – to urge everyone to “Stay Fire Smart! Don’t Get Burned.” This year’s campaign focuses on ways to keep homes fire safe and prevent painful burns. Additionally, fire safety educators will be teaching local residents how to plan and practice escape from a home in case a fire occurs.

The statistics are staggering. Each year roughly 3,000 people die as a result of home fires and burns, and more than 200,000 individuals are seen in the nation’s emergency rooms for burn injuries.

The most common types of burn injuries result from fire or flame burns, scalds and contact burns. Burns are painful and can result in serious scarring and even death. When we take extra caution in our homes to ensure that the curling iron is out of children’s reach or pot handles are turned away from the edge of the stove, such injuries are entirely preventable. Keeping our homes safe from fire and preventing devastating burn injuries is a healthy change we can make happen.

By following simple safety rules, you can “Stay Fire Smart! Don’t Get Burned”:

1. Keep hot foods and liquids away from tables and counter edges so they cannot be pulled or knocked over.
2. Have a 3-foot “kid-free” zone around the stove.
3. Never hold a child in your arms while preparing hot food or drinking a hot beverage.

4. Be careful when using things that get hot such as curling irons, oven, irons, lamps, heaters.
5. Install tamper-resistant receptacles to prevent a child from sticking an object in the outlet.
6. Never leave a child alone in a room with a lit candle, portable heater, lit fireplace or stove, or where a hot appliance might be in use.
7. Wear short or close-fitting sleeves when cooking.
8. Set your hot water temperature no higher than 120 degrees.

Fire Prevention Week is actively supported by fire departments across the country. For 85 years fire departments have observed Fire Prevention Week, making it the longest running public health and safety observance on record.



NFPA Fire Prevention Week Poster Contest....

Sunshine FPD, Four Mile FPD, & Gold Hill FPD have teamed up to sponsor what we hope will be an annual Fire Prevention Week Poster contest.

Everyone can participate. Top 3 posters in the child (ages 1-18) and adult (ages 18+) groups will be awarded a prize and all submissions will be put on display in all three District’s fire stations.

Posters (or postcards) can be

designed around the “Stay Fire Smart! Don’t Get Burned” theme or one of 12 safety tips:

1. “Give space heaters some space. Things placed too close to space heaters can catch on fire”.
2. “Firefighters are your friends. Never hide inside. Always go outside when there is a fire.”
3. “Matches and lighters are tools, not toys!! If you find a match or lighter, tell an adult.”
4. “Have smoke alarms in your home to protect you and your family. Have a smoke alarm for each floor of your home”.
5. “If your clothes catch fire, stop where you are, drop to the ground and cover your face, and roll.”
6. “Remember: In case of fire in your home, always go to a neighbor’s house to call 911.”
7. “If there is smoke in your house, crawl low under the smoke and get out and stay out!”
8. “Home fire sprinklers control and extinguish fires in your home, giving you more time to escape.”
9. “Have a meeting place outside your home that the whole family knows about. Once outside, never go back inside!”.
10. “When cooking, turn handles toward the rear of the stove. Grease fires can quickly get out of control. If you have a grease fire, cover the pan with a lid to smother the fire.”
11. “Draw a fire escape plan for your home and practice it with the whole family. Make sure you have two ways out of every room.”
12. “Keep your holidays happy, turn holiday lights off before going to bed.”

Rules: posters must be no bigger than 11”x17”; postcards 4”x6”. Any art medium can be used including computer graphics, paints, crayons, pencils, cut-outs, etc. Write name, address, and the name of the fire department into a sealed envelope taped to the back of poster. Posters can be submitted at any SFPD, FMFPD, & GHFPD station or business mailbox. Questions? contact newsletter@sunshinefire.org

Bark Beetles: How can Boulder County Help?



Bark Beetle

"In the next 3-10 years much of our mature lodgepole pine forests might be killed"

- Ryan Ludlow

In recent years a bug the size of a grain of rice has been making a lot of headlines and is on many people's minds throughout Colorado's mountain communities. This tiny bug is the mountain pine beetle (MPB), a species of bark beetle that is native to the forests of Colo-

rado. Unfortunately, Boulder County forests are not immune to this little critter and have already begun seeing increases in beetle populations throughout its higher elevation forests.

In the next decade MPB and other bark beetles will have a profound effect on Boulder County's forests. Current research from our neighbors to the west suggests that in the next 3-10 years much of our mature (greater than 6 inches) lodgepole pine forests might be killed. On the other hand, there is less certainty about what the impacts will be to our lower elevation ponderosa pine forests. It is clear that in mixed conifer forests, where both lodgepole pine and ponderosa pine grow

together, beetles are indiscriminately infesting both types of tree. However, it is not clear what the full impact will be to our lower elevation ponderosa pine forests. In an effort to help private landowners prepare for and reduce the impacts of the current bark beetle epidemic, Boulder County has increased its ability to provide outreach to forest landowners. This is where I come in; my name is Ryan Ludlow, and I am the Forestry Education and Outreach Coordinator for Boulder County Land Use. I work with local mountain communities to provide various tools and strategies for managing private forested lands in order to better prepare residents for the coming bark beetle epidemic. I will be traveling throughout Boulder County providing trainings and workshops to community groups, HOA's and individual landowners. If you have questions about forest ecology, bark beetles or management strategies for maintaining a healthy forest, feel free to send me an email at pine-beetle@bouldercounty.org or call 720-564-2641.

As the bark beetle outbreak continues to spread through Boulder County, there will be a growing need for govern-

ment agencies to help forest landowners maintain a healthy forest and dispose of hazardous trees from their property. Our Board of County Commissioners have responded to this need by creating community forestry sort yards along the Peak-to-Peak corridor. These County run community facilities will accept wood and slash at no charge from private property in order to mitigate wildfire risk, remove dead trees, and promote a healthy forest. Please visit: <http://www.bouldercounty.org/foresthhealth> for further information about sort yards and forest management. In addition, if you are interested in staying informed about bark beetle management, forest restoration projects, community forestry meetings and forestry articles of interest please sign up for our email listserv by visiting the above website and clicking on "Sign-up: Forest Health listserv".

Our future forests are in your hands and it will be important for everyone to actively manage their land to create healthier forests, which are less prone to future insect and disease outbreaks. I look forward to working with you and your community!

- Ryan Ludlow, BCFCOC



Free Mountain Pine Beetle Workshop

On Sunday Oct. 4 at the Nederland Community Center. Representatives from Boulder County, Gilpin County, US Forest Service and Colorado State Forest Service will help you improve your skills at identifying recently infested trees and provide strategies that may reduce

the impacts of bark beetles on your backyard forest. Fall is a great time to survey your backyard and cut newly infested trees. We will start at 1PM with a short indoor session followed by a more hands-on outdoor session at the proposed Nederland Sort Yard site on Ridge Road. Bring water and dress for

the outdoors; the event will take place rain or shine. For more information go to the Boulder County Forest Health website. Page 8 has details about a talk specific to Sunshine by Ryan.

Please RSVP at:

rludlow@bouldercounty.org
or by calling 720-564-2641.

Tips for Preventing Seasonal Flu



Flu season in the United States generally runs from November through May, with a peak in outbreaks in January or February. Each year over 225,000

people are hospitalized, and more than 35,000 people die from complications attributed to seasonal flu. What many people don't realize is that there are a few simple steps that they can take that will help to minimize their chances of contracting this illness.

1. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends the following precautions to minimize your chances of getting seasonal flu: Get vaccinated

each year – while there may be many strains of seasonal flu, the vaccine will protect you against the 3 strains that research suggests will be most prevalent in the upcoming season.

2. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze
3. Wash your hands often with soap and water, and always after you cough or sneeze. Encourage other family members to do the same. Alcohol based sanitizers are also effective.
4. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread most easily this way.
5. Try to avoid close contact with people who are already sick.

If you think that you might be coming down with the flu, see a doctor immediately. You can also visit the CDC web site for more information at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu>.

- Please note that seasonal flu is different to the H1N1 flu or "swine flu" that we've all been hearing about, and while many of the above tips may be effective in preventing the spread of swine flu, it will require a different vaccine (expected later this fall). For more information on swine flu, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu>

- Peter Beresford,
Chief Medical Officer SFPD

"Each year over 225,000 people are hospitalized, and more than 35,000 people die to seasonal flu"

Founding of Sunshine Fire Protection District

(continued from page 1)

One of the other incidents that lent urgency to creating a fire department was a chimney fire that John Tveitaraas had soon after he moved in. Boulder Rural was called but it took them over 45 minutes to respond and reach John's house. In the meantime, John went up on the roof and with the help of friends, started shoveling snow down the chimney, which saved his house. The reality of the long time it would take Boulder Rural to respond helped convince people of the need to have a fire department.

That same year, a group of residents (Forest Jones among them) held a meeting at the ranch in Gold Hill with Fire Ranger Terry Beeson of the Forest Service. Out of this meeting the Sunshine Fire Protection District would grow.

The first Board was made up of Lloyd McIrvine, John Tveitaraas, Bob Doherty, Haydee Battany (who served as Secretary

of the Board) and also current resident Bill Walters. Lloyd McIrvine and John Tveitaraas were instrumental in attaining the permit for the special district. Fred Niccore was the first fire chief (called "Captain" at the time). When he moved away after a couple of years, Lloyd McIrvine took over and the name changed to "Chief". Other early chiefs include Lou Feierabend, Bernie Jarrell, Jim Stoleberg, and Bob Heflin. Former chief Jim Burch spearheaded the effort to put cisterns at critical locations around the district.

Lloyd, a contractor, and another contractor named Milton Moore, started the building plans for the first firehouse. In 1969, the whole neighborhood began work on construction. The event was a major "barnraising" involving the entire neighborhood.

John Tveitaraas, Don Dick, Fred and Madeline Niccore worked on the wiring. Harry Covey and David Whitney worked on the North and South walls, laying cin-

derblock. The left wall, the one that stayed up for the remodel, was installed by Beebe Doherty and John Tveitaraas. The roof was shingled by John Tveitaraas and Rand Schlar and several of the neighborhood boys.

Several anecdotes survive those early years of the SFPD. One such story involves the occasion when SFPD applied for a privy permit. A representative from the County came up and looked at the firehouse, declared that it was built without a permit, and put up sawhorses to block the entrance. Lawyers who lived in the area did some research, and lo and behold, discovered that Sunshine was still incorporated: the fire station was reopened. Sunshine was quietly unincorporated by the County in 1975.

- David Wheeler & Megan Meehan

Part II will be included in our Autumn edition of the Sunshine FIRE-brand



311 County Road 83
 Boulder, Colorado 80302
 Phone: 303.786.7731
 Emergency: 911



Upcoming events in your own backyard.....

SFPD Community Fest

Saturday, September 12th

2—6 pm

SFPD Fire Station #2

5800 Sunshine Canyon Dr.

Silent Auction, Baked Goods, Chili & More!!!!

Suggested donation: \$7/person, \$20/family—Children 12 & under are free

If you would like to donate auction items:

Contact: **Beth Byerlein** @ 303.440.9559 or byerlein@ionsky.com

If you would like volunteer or bring some chili:

Contact **Jen Lansky** @ 303.442.2709 or jen@lansky.cc

Mountain Pine Beetles in Sunshine

October 19th

7—9 pm

SFPD Station #1

Ryan Ludlow, the Boulder County Forestry Education and Outreach Coordinator, will begin talking about the predicted impacts of the mountain pine beetle will have on forests in Sunshine.

Join us and learn what you can do to create a healthier and more beetle resistant backyard forest!

Comments or submissions are always welcome!! —

Please contact: Brett Haberstick at newsletter@sunshinefire.org , Bruce Honeyman at chief@sunshinefire.org