

the Courthouse Journal

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Washington Association of County Officials
Washington State Association of Counties

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New Primary Election Should Run Smoothly

County Auditors and the Office of the Secretary of State (OSOS) are busily preparing to conduct the state primary election next month and are educating voters as to a new way of choosing their candidates.

On September 14, voters will be facing a new style of primary ballot for the first time in nearly 70 years. On November 5, during the General election, they will vote as to whether they want to keep the new primary. The upcoming primary election has been the most talked about issue by the Legislature, the Governor, the Secretary of State, the county auditors, the Washington State Grange, and the political parties in many years. The press has had a field day and the public is just now beginning to realize what is involved.

For the first time in memory, Washington State's voters will be asked to declare their allegiance to one political party and will choose only among one party's candidates when they vote in the primary. No more skipping around on the ballot voting for anyone they please.

The OSOS recently issued a status report to the Legislature outlining the implementation of Washington's new primary. Part of that report concerns the emergency rules that set forth statewide standards. It says, in part:

"Key features of these rules include the following.

- **Ballot Style.** Consistent with the legislation, County Auditors may use either a consolidated ballot or separate ballots.
- **Consolidated Ballot.** If a consolidated ballot is used, the format of the ballot is established.
- **Nonpartisan Candidates.** For counties using separate ballots, nonpartisan candidates will appear on a nonpartisan ballot and on each party's ballot. Voters will be instructed to vote and return only one ballot.
- **Use of Color.** Use of color on the ballot is made optional with the County Auditors. If color is used, a lot drawing has assigned red to the Democratic Party, green to the Republican Party, and blue to the Libertarian Party.
- **Order of Parties on the Ballot.** Consistent with existing state law pertaining to the general election, the order the parties will appear on the ballot in the primary will be the same as the order the candidates will appear on the general election ballot.
- **No Record Kept of Voter Ballot Choice.** The rules reinforce the statutory requirement that no record be kept of a voter's ballot choice."

Six counties have opted to use the consolidated ballot. They are King, Snohomish, Pierce, Kitsap, Chelan and Klickitat counties. All

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We welcome your suggestions and contributions. The weekly deadline is noon Wednesday.

Direct inquiries and correspondence to *The Courthouse Journal*, 206 Tenth Ave SE, Olympia, WA 98501-1131 or www.wacounties.org.

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CPO PROGRAM

Julie Conlan, Certified Public Official
Coordinator

others will use four separate ballots – Democratic, Republican, Libertarian and nonpartisan. Voters will be instructed to vote only one ballot. The others will be discarded

Auditors are developing voter outreach programs to educate the public and encourage them to vote. The OSOS has budgeted \$700,000 for a statewide educational mailing to 3 million households and \$1 million for a Radio/TV educational campaign. The elections division of OSOS has coordinated seven work sessions with auditors focusing on the new primary and on implementation of the federal Help America Vote Act (HAVA).

Governor Locke has allocated \$6 million for county costs in administering the primary, above what the election normally costs. In cooperation with the Office of Financial Management, the OSOS

has distributed this money to the counties under a cooperative agreement with the Washington Association of County Officials (WACO). Money has been distributed to the counties, based upon auditors' best estimates of additional costs.

After the Governor vetoed the "top two" portion of the original primary election legislation passed earlier this year, alternate language left in the bill established a "Montana" style open primary. The Washington State Grange challenged the veto in the Washington State Supreme Court, but the Court denied the appeal. In turn, on July 2, the Grange filed an initiative for a "top two" primary with the OSOS, with over 300,000 signatures. The initiative has been certified and will appear on the November ballot.

WACO Nominations Open

Nominations are now being accepted from county officials who wish to be included in the slate of candidates for the WACO Board of Trustees. The election of officers and board members will be held during the WACO/WSAC Joint Conference at the Red Lion Hotel at the Park, in Spokane, October 5-8.

Any county official is eligible to run for WACO Secretary-Treasurer or as a Trustee-at-large for their county class. Two WACO members have unofficially made known their interest in the Secretary/Treasurer position. Tradition is that officers move up through the chairs so usually only the Secretary-Treasurer is contested among the officers.

Travel expenses for WACO officers and Trustees are paid by WACO.

This ensures that any county official can serve without placing undue burdens on county budgets.

The following positions are subject to election this year:

1. **President**
2. **President-elect**
3. **Vice President**
4. **Secretary-Treasurer**
5. Trustee-at-large **Position 2** (county population from 125,000 to 500,000)
6. Trustee-at-large **Position 4** (county population from 12,000 to 40,000)

Trustee-at large positions are for two-year terms. Terms for trustee-

NOTE: Legislative Committee schedules and agendas can be found at <http://www.leg.wa.gov/wsladm/calendar.cfm>

at-large Positions 1, 3 and 5 will expire in 2005.

Please consider running for a position on the Board of Trustees! Be part of WACO's future!

The nomination process is the following:

- **Any WACO member interested in being nominated must send a letter of intent and a resume to each member of the Nominating Committee, as well as to the WACO office, by September 10 (current officers included).** The Nominating Committee members and their addresses are listed at the end of this notice.
- The Nominating Committee will meet by conference call in mid-September to finalize the slate of candidates.
- All WACO members will receive information about each candidate and a copy of the Nominating Committee's report prior to the conference.
- On Wednesday morning, October 6, during the WACO business meeting at 8:00 a.m., Nominating Committee Chair Judi Morris, Jefferson County Treasurer, will present the slate of candidates to the membership and call for floor nominations. Following the Nominating Committee report, all candidates will then have the opportunity to address the membership.
- WACO members can cast their ballots from the end of the business meeting on Wednesday until 11:45 a.m. on Thursday, October 7. Proxy voting is prohibited by the WACO Bylaws.

- The Nominating Committee will tabulate the election results immediately following the closing of the polls and the new officers and Board members will be announced at the WACO business meeting on Thursday, at 1:30. They will be sworn into office on Thursday evening at the banquet, along with the new WSAC officers.

If you are interested in running for a position on the WACO Board of Trustees, please submit a brief resume along with a cover letter stating the position you are seeking to each member of the Nominating Committee below, by September 10. Please send a copy to the WACO office, as well.

Conference registrations will be out this month and we will get a draft copy of the program out to everyone as soon as possible. Please note when making your conference plans, that WACO Affiliate groups will be meeting on Tuesday, October 5 this year, from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Nominating Committee:

Judi Morris, Chair
Jefferson County Treasurer
P.O. Box 571
Port Townsend, WA 98368

Dianne Dorey
Lewis County Assessor
351 NW North St. MS:ASR01
Chehalis, WA 98532

Dave Cook
Yakima County Assessor
128 N 2nd Street
Yakima WA 98901

Corky Mattingly
Yakima County Auditor
128 North 2nd Street
Yakima, WA 98901

Betty Gould
Thurston County Clerk
2000 Lakeridge Drive SW
Olympia WA 98502

Dan Blasdel
Franklin County Coroner
1016 N 4th Ave.
Pasco, WA 99301

Jim Nagle
Walla Walla County Prosecutor
240 W. Alder Suite 201
Walla Walla, WA 99362

Craig Thayer
Stevens County Sheriff
P.O. Box 186
Colville, WA 99114

Debbie Wilke
WACO Executive Director
206 10th Ave SE
Olympia, WA 98501

***Two Men of Politics
~~This week in History***

Sixty-eight years ago this week, Seattle's flamboyant leftwing Congressman Marion Zioncheck leapt to his death from his Arctic Club office window. Crusading King County Prosecutor Warren G. Magnuson was elected to fill Zioncheck's seat that fall, and ascended in 1944 to the U.S. Senate, where for another 36 years he championed causes such as normalizing trade with China and urban mass transit. Today, Magnuson Park is named in his honor.

(From historylink.org)

WACO/WSAC Candidate Filings

WACO Members:

Island County Auditor Suzanne Sinclair (R) has filed for U.S. Representative #2 against incumbent Rick Larsen (D). Other candidates for that congressional race are Glenn E. Coggeshell, III (R), Larry Klepinger (R), and Bruce Guthrie (L).

Two current and two former WACO officials have filed for county commissioner positions. Kittitas County Auditor David Bowen (D) filed as a candidate for District #1 Commissioner against incumbent Max Golladay (R). Spokane County Treasurer Linda Wolverton (D) has filed for District #1 Commissioner, the seat being vacated by John Roskelley (D). And, former Franklin County Prosecuting Attorney C.J. "Jim" Rabideau (D) filed for the District #2 Commission seat, currently held by Sue Miller (R).

Pierce County Assessor/Treasurer Ken Madsen is

the only WACO member running for re-election this year within the five charter counties. Dale Washam (R) has filed against him.

Chet Lynn Smith, candidate for WACO assessor, once served as the county auditor.

Four WACO officials are running for unexpired terms. They are (*denotes incumbent):

Columbia County

Assessor:
*Chris Miller (R)

Skamania County

Treasurer:
*Cherie L. Flood (R)

Walla Walla County

Assessor:
*Karen Fields (D)
William C. "Bill" Vollendorff (R)
Chet Lynn Smith (R)
Debra Antes (R)

Treasurer:
*Gordon R. Heimbigner (R)

WSAC Members:

WSAC members running for statewide office include King County Executive Ron Sims for Governor as a Democrat, Rob McKenna, King County Councilmember, for Attorney General as a Republican, Pend Oreille County Commissioner Mike Hanson for State Representative 7th District Position 2 as a Republican and Clark County Commissioner Craig Pridemore, for State Senator 49th District as a Democrat.

Complete list of candidate filings attached to back of *Courthouse Journal*.

Budget, Finance, and Taxes

Sales Tax Streamlining Reaches Critical Threshold

At the most recent meeting of the national project group, Michigan joined the list of states that have adopted all the necessary statutory changes. This means that the project has met its minimum threshold of population and participating states. Once the threshold is reached the business community representatives on the project have agreed to begin voluntary implementation. At the meeting, the implementing states also discussed the option of moving up implementation to September 2005. This is possible because intermediaries that will provide the

necessary processing support have made rapid progress in developing systems. In addition, Microsoft and others expect to have small business systems available. Most of the states in the first group are already sourcing at the point of delivery. Retailers in this state would prefer that implementation occur in April of 2006, after the Christmas rush. WSAC has sent copies of the latest Department of Revenue Impact estimates to fiscal contacts in each county.

Pension Rate Stability Comes at Cost

The pension rates setting

committees have been reviewing the latest rate estimates by the State Actuary. These estimates would move the rates up substantially over the next four years. As counties plan their budgets, they should look at the State Actuary website to look at potential increases. The Actuary's proposal, as required by state law would raise the rates once every two years. Some of the local government representatives on the rate setting groups are wondering whether smaller annual increases would be easier for government budgets and local collective bargaining.

Preparing for “National Preparedness Month”

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has engaged more than 50 national organizations to launch National Preparedness Month September 9. Throughout September state and local governments, neighborhoods, private businesses and nonprofit organizations will host events and promote preparedness steps to encourage all Americans to prepare for emergencies in their homes, businesses and schools.

National Preparedness Month is intended to focus Americans on how they can prepare for all hazards, get an emergency kit, establish a family communications plan, and become better aware of various threats that may impact their communities. In August, DHS will distribute details about national and local events, according to a DHS press release.

County commissioners/councilmembers and their emergency management professionals are encouraged to partner with business and nonprofit leaders to distribute information and host events in their communities. For more information on activities within Washington State, contact public education manager Barbara Thurman at 243-512-7047 or b.thurman@emd.wa.gov.

Sign up now for all-hazards information sharing program

The NW Warning, Alert, and Response Network (NW-WARN) will soon be operational, and officials may now begin registering to participate, the state Emergency Management Division announced this week.

The NW-WARN system is part of a federal Department of

Homeland Security (DHS) pilot project designed to deliver emergency information to appropriate public safety, government and private sector personnel. The project is intended to maximize all-hazards information sharing and real-time distribution to persons with responsibility for protecting the critical infrastructure of the region.

County officials may apply for membership at the NW-WARN web site, www.nwwarn.gov. Applicants will be asked to select the types of information they want to receive. A Gatekeeper for each discipline and infrastructure category will review all applications and approve those for appropriate personnel.

The NW-WARN system is a secure web portal that allows DHS, the FBI, or sector specific "gatekeepers" to provide emergency flash messages to enrolled members. Once enrolled in NW-WARN, a member will receive electronic, emergency notifications regarding terrorism threats, natural and technological disasters and emergencies. As an example, if the FBI and DHS had specific information about a particular threat to our region, unclassified information associated with the threat would be "flashed" to enrolled members over their pagers, cell phones, Blackberrys, regular phone, and email.

Additional, non-emergency information is available to the public, via the public section of the NW-WARN web site. The web site also includes a member's page organized by infrastructure type that can function as a place where best practices or other information can be shared.

Sheriff Steve Whybark Appointed to Mapping Project

Washington Association of County Officials (WACO) President Mary E. Dodge has appointed Mason County Sheriff Steve Whybark to represent WACO on the Mapping Information System Committee of the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (WASPC).

The committee was created by **HB 1218**, passed in the 2003 Regular Session of the Legislature and charges its members with developing guidelines related to the system. **HB 1218** also directs that a statewide first responder mapping system of government buildings and schools be created to assist police and fire fighters in securing and evacuating buildings in the event of unintended disasters, criminal acts and acts of terrorism. Retired Clallam County Sheriff Joe Hawe is the program manager.

Mapping of schools is expected to be completed as early as January of 2005 and a Request for Proposals (RFP) may be out as soon as December of this year.

Environment, Land Use and Resources

Thurston & Whatcom Counties Awarded 2004 NACo Five Star Restoration Grants

Whatcom County and the Thurston County Conservation District were two of nine counties who were recipients of the 2004 NACo Restoration Challenge Grant Program. This year, as a part of the Five Star Partnership, NACo will award \$92,800 in grants that will fund projects in 9 counties across the country to help them implement locally-driven wetland and watershed restoration projects.

Five Star Restoration projects involve a high degree of cooperation with local government agencies, elected officials, community groups, businesses, schools, and environmental organizations all working together to improve local water quality and restore important fish and wildlife habitats.

The Five Star Restoration Grant Program Partnership (which includes NACo, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and the Wildlife Habitat Council) will provide \$5,000 - \$15,000 grants to 50 counties and community-based partnerships, totaling more than \$550,000 for support of wetland and streamside restoration projects. Major funding for this program comes from federal partners, including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Office of Wetlands, Oceans, and Watersheds of its Office of Water, as well as the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Additional funding also comes from EPA's Gulf of Mexico and Chesapeake Bay program offices. In addition to federal funds provided through the program, communities have

committed more than \$2.8 million to these programs.

"I'd like to offer my congratulations to the 2004 NACo Five Star grantees," said Angelo D. Kyle, NACo President and Lake County, Ill. Board Member. "Year after year, counties across the nation continue to demonstrate their commitment to restoring America's wetlands through their participation in the Five Star Restoration Challenge Grant Program. I have seen firsthand how community-based wetland restoration and education programs can foster the type of environmental stewardship that is vital to future of this country."

The Five Star funds act as seed money that leverage a larger amount of funds and services already in place and coordinated by the grantee. On average, for each dollar of Five Star-sponsored funds, five additional dollars in matching contributions will be provided by local restoration partners in the form of funding, labor, materials, equipment, or in-kind services.

Since 1997, NACo has reached out and helped fund projects in more than 85 counties across the country, providing a total of over a half a million dollars for community-based environmental restoration and education.

Other 2004 NACo awarded Five Star grantees include: Johnson County (Iowa) Soil and Water Conservation District, Clearwater County (Idaho), Southern Nye County (Nev.) Conservation District, and Ramsey County (Minn.) Parks and Recreation Department, DeKalb County (Ga.), Alachua County (Fla.) Board of Commissioners, and The Wind River Alliance (Fremont County, Wyo.).

State Rural Development Council Prepares to Close

The national USDA office has decided they cannot fund the National Rural Development Partnership and the state councils any more after 14 years. It still supports the concept and the program, but feels the congress needs to step up to the plate with an appropriation if they are serious about continuing this concept (this was originally a Presidential initiative).

The Washington Rural Development Council board last week decided that it would have to lay off Executive Director Jim Lowery as of the end of October or December depending on whether other federal monies are made available to continue until December. They will leave some money in the coffers for basic survival operation and continue to try and raise funds to put the organization back on its feet. The only way that could be avoided is if \$80,000 for gap funding is located.

Ecology Adopts New Wastewater Discharge Fees

The Department of Ecology has adopted new permit fees for wastewater and stormwater dischargers for fiscal years 2005 and 2006. The amended rule also adds new definitions for median household income, gross revenue for business, and disturbed acres. Most significant for counties, the rule establishes new fees for municipal separate stormsewer system permits (Phase 2 Stormwater) and restructures fee categories for industrial and construction stormwater general permits. For details <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/laws->

Environment, Land Use and Resources (continued)

rules/activity/wac173224.html

Wetland Mitigation Banking Pilot

The department of Ecology has begun a banking pilot project using the existing draft rule on wetland banks. The draft rule was negotiated with a team of stakeholders and published for public comment during January 2002. Although the banking program at Ecology was cut in June 2002 due to budget cuts, during this past legislative session, several banking stakeholders in Washington approached the state legislature to obtain funding for a pilot project to test the draft wetland banking rule. The legislature appropriated one year of funding (\$120,000) for Ecology to implement the pilot project. The funding for the pilot became available on July 1, 2004.

More information on the pilot project, what it is, how it works and status of the pilot can be found at: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/sea/wetmitig/index.html>

Get Ready for FY 2006 Water Quality Program Funding

The Department of Ecology is revising the guidelines and

application for FY 2006 Water Quality Program Funding. FY 2006 Supplemental Guidelines include such provisions as:

Negotiated Levels of Technical Assistance (based on State Auditor's recommendations to include:

- Payment Voucher Back Up Documentation
- Site Visit Frequency
- Systematic Approach for Developing Financial Assistance Agreements (Scheduled by Priority, i.e.):
- Public Health Emergency or Severe Public Health Hazard
- Regulatory compliance schedule
- Environmental window
- Financial needs
- Environmental watershed need(s)
- Readiness to proceed

Post Project Assessment Plan

- Included in grant/loan agreement
- Outlines how you will help track and monitor project effectiveness
- Survey and Interview 3 to 5 years after project completion

Ecology is substantially advancing its yearly Water Quality Program's funding cycle to provide

money to recipients as soon as money is appropriated, and to gather more timely information regarding the state's water quality management needs. The change is occurring over two funding cycles. The funding cycle that ended recently (FY 2005) began one month earlier than usual: December 1, 2003.

The upcoming funding cycle (FY 2006) will begin September 1, 2004, and thereafter will begin on, or near, September 1st each year. This year's application period will be September 1, to November 1, 2004. Ecology's goal is to have a "Preliminary Draft Priority List," based on the Governor's Budget to the Office of Financial Management by December 31, 2004. In this way, the Legislature can assess the latest documented financial needs for projects ready to proceed that are aimed at addressing water quality needs of the State, as it considers the FY 2005-07 Biennial Budget.

Application workshops are being held between September 1st and 9th. The workshop schedule, Guidelines and Application are available at: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/funding/2006/index.htm>

Courthouse Ramblings

Our congratulations go out to a valued WACO member and friend of many years! In a memo to WACO on August 10, Clallam County Treasurer **Ruth Gerdon** said after 25 years of public service she intends to retire as of December 31, 2004. Ruth has served as Treasurer in Clallam County since 1989.

While she is leaving her position to do some traveling, relaxing and those enjoyable things retired people do, she said she has thoroughly enjoyed her work for the County and will miss everyone. It goes without saying that we will miss you, too, Ruth!

The Washington Counties' family extends our heartfelt sympathies to Senator Mark Doumit and his family in the tragic loss of his brother Paul earlier this week. Paul Doumit drowned while saving his son and another young boy in the surf at Long Beach. He practiced law in Olympia.

Calendar of Events

Meeting	Location	Date	Information
Calendar of Events online – www.wacounties.org For your convenience training and workshops are bolded .			
<u>AUGUST 2004</u>			
WA Counties Insurance Pool Rate Setting	Wyndham Gardens, SeaTac	August 19	(360) 586-0466
<u>SEPTEMBER 2004</u>			
LABOR DAY	WA Counties Bldg CLOSED	Sept. 6	(360) 753-1886
CPO Training *	TBA	TBA	(360) 753-1886
EMC Task Force	WA Counties Bldg, Olympia	Sept. 9	(360) 753-1886
WA Association of Prosecuting Attorneys – Juvenile Training Program	Icicle Inn, Leavenworth	Sept. 12 – 14	(360) 753-2175
Washington State Association of County Assessors (WSACA) Fall Conference	Everett, Snohomish County	Sept. 13 - 16	(425) 388-3446
Washington STATE	Primary Election Day	Sept. 14	http://www.vote.wa.gov/calendar/
County & Regional Planning Directors/City Planning Directors Joint Conference	Campbell's Resort, Chelan	Sept. 14 – 17	www.geocities.com/wsacrpdc
WSAC Legislative Steering Committee	Tentative - TBD	Sept. 16	(360) 753-1886
WA Association of Prosecuting Attorneys – Drug Training Program	Icicle Inn, Leavenworth	Sept. 15 – 17	(360) 753-2175
Association of County Human Services	Shilo Inn, Ocean Shores	Sept. 15 - 17	(360) 753-1886
WA Counties Insurance Pool Board	Radisson Hotel, SeaTac	Sept. 16	(360) 586-0466
WA Counties Insurance Fund Board	Radisson Hotel, SeaTac	Sept. 16	(360) 586-0466
Insurance Advisory Committee – 2005 Renewal	Radisson Hotel, SeaTac	Sept. 16	(360) 586-0466
Washington STATE	Resolutions - Last day for filing of special election to be held in conjunction with the general election	Sept. 17	http://www.vote.wa.gov/calendar/
Washington STATE	Committee Week-end - House and Senate	Sept. 20 - 21	
<u>OCTOBER 2004</u>			
WACO/WSAC Joint Fall Conference	Red Lion Hotel at the Park, Spokane	October 4 – 8	(360) 753-7319
WSAC Rural Issues Sub-committee	Red Lion Hotel at the Park, Spokane	October 4 or 5	(360) 753-1886
WSAC Urban County Caucus	Red Lion Hotel at the Park, Spokane	October 4 or 5	(360) 753-1886

Calendar of Events (continued)

WACO Board of Trustees	Red Lion Hotel at the Park, Spokane	October 4	(360) 753-7319
Washington STATE	Election Results - Last day for SOS to certify	October 5	http://www.vote.wa.gov/calendar/
WACO Affiliate Meetings	Red Lion Hotel at the Park, Spokane	October 5	(360) 753-7319
WA State Association of Counties Board of Directors	Red Lion Hotel at the Park, Spokane	October 5	(360) 753-1886
WSAC Legislative Steering Committee	Red Lion Hotel at the Park, Spokane	October 5 or 6	(360) 753-1886
WACO Board of Trustees	Red Lion Hotel at the Park, Spokane	October 8	(360) 753-7319
ACE Committee (Payroll & HR)	Radisson Hotel, SeaTac	October 13	(360) 586-0466
EMC Task Force	WA Counties Bldg, Olympia	October 14	(360) 753-1886
Mass Fatalities Incident Response Planning**	Vancouver, Washington	October 18-22	(866) 623-6634
* Info and registration on all Certified Public Official (CPO) Training - http://www.wacounties.org/CPO/Course%20Calendar.htm			
** A special Tuition-Free Course offered by the National Mass Fatalities Institute in partnership with the Clark County Medical Examiner's Office			

Harvard University invites you to apply for an *Innovations in American Government Award*

Administered by the Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation at the John F. Kennedy School of Government in partnership with the Council for Excellence in Government, the Innovations Award is heralded as the premier public-sector award in the nation. It is given annually to programs that serve as examples of creative and effective government at its best.

All units of government--federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial--are eligible to apply.

Each of the five winners of the 2005 Innovations Award will receive a \$100,000 grant to support replication and dissemination activities.

Applications and additional information are available on our website:

www.ashinstitute.harvard.edu.

2005 DEADLINE HAS BEEN EXTENDED -- APPLICATIONS ARE DUE SEPTEMBER 15, 2004

Attachments

FOR YOUR BENEFIT

HEALTHY TIPS FROM WASHINGTON COUNTIES INSURANCE FUND

Recognizing Skin Cancer

Skin Cancer accounts for nearly half of all cancers in the United States. The American Cancer Society estimates that about 9,600 Americans die of the disease each year.

DETECTING SKIN CANCER

Early detection can make skin cancer more treatable.

To detect changes in your skin, perform a skin self-exam once a month. Examine your birthmarks, moles and blemishes. Be sure to check your entire body, including back, scalp, buttocks and genitals. Use a mirror to check hard-to-see areas.

Examining yourself once a month will help you notice changes that may signal the following skin cancers:

- Actinic keratosis – appears as scaly areas on sun exposed parts of the body. They may be precancerous and should be treated.
- Basal-cell cancer grows slowly but seldom spreads to other parts of the body. Basal-cell cancers may look like a pearly or waxy nodule, and some have depressions in the middle. As the cancer grows, the center becomes more ulcerated.
- Squamous-cell cancer is identified by raised or lumpy-looking bumps with a rough, scaly surface on a reddish base. Often the border is irregular. Squamous-cell cancers seldom spread to other parts of the body.
- Melanomas appear in moles with irregular borders and different colors – including blue and black. In the early stage, most resemble a dark and larger-than-normal freckle.

Some important signs of melanoma include changes in size, shape or color of a mole or the appearance of a new spot.

Other warning signs are:

- A sore that doesn't heal
- A new growth
- Spread of pigment from the border of a spot to surrounding skin
- Redness or a new swelling beyond the border
- Change in sensation – itchiness, tenderness or pain
- Change in the surface of a mole – scaliness, oozing, bleeding or the appearance of a bump or nodule

If you do self-exams regularly, you'll now know what's normal for you and can feel confident. Remember the warning signs and see your doctor if you find something unusual.