

P.S.

## POSTSCRIPT

NEWS FOR ACTIVE MEMBERS

MARCH 2019 • VOL. 30, NO. 1



## YOUR SECURITY, OUR CONCERN

### Safely Storing Hazardous Materials in Your Home

#### Part 3: Fuels and Flammable Substances

In the March and June 2018 issues of *PostScript*, we highlighted that many common household items are potentially hazardous if stored improperly. This time, we focus on fuels and flammable substances. Whether it's propane tanks for your barbecue, supplies for home repair or hobbies, or gasoline for maintenance equipment, there are many flammables in the home that pose a risk.

The danger of flammable liquids actually occurs when they vaporize into gas. It is these vapors that can ignite (the temperature at which this occurs is called the flash point) and burn in the presence of a spark or flame. As with other potentially hazardous materials, you should carefully follow all manufacturer's instructions regarding proper use and storage of flammable items to reduce the possibility of a fire or explosion. In addition to the reminders following, it's a good idea to check with your fire department regarding local fire code rules. For example, a typical limit on flammable liquids in a residence is 10 gallons.

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Assistant Executive Officer

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# CEO'S CORNER

LOU LAZATIN



## Resetting Our Path

Every spring at LACERA, two events dominate our day-to-day activities. The first is the annual retirement peak we call March Madness. As I write this article in January, March Madness is well underway, with our Member Service Center seeing a dramatic uptick in visitors and our retirement counseling and claims processing staff working hard to manage the increased workload. To accommodate demand and ensure members have the retirement information they need, the Member Service Center will be open every Saturday through March 16.

At the management level, spring is the time we develop our strategic plan, and lay out our goals and associated action items. Since I came on the job last November, I have been consulting with the Boards, management, and staff to

“One of my ongoing duties will be to ensure that our efforts toward achieving organizational goals are aligned.”

evaluate LACERA's success in achieving our goals as part of our larger mission of producing, protecting, and providing your promised benefits. Because one of the biggest responsibilities of any CEO is ensuring that organizational goals are met, one of my first tasks was taking that input to define and create five SMARTER (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound, ethical, and repeatable) goal categories

as follows: 1) fund sustainability, 2) transforming healthcare purchasing and delivery, 3) reducing complexity, 4) cultivating a risk-intelligent organization, and 5) promoting high performance and diversity in the workforce.

With our SMARTER goals identified, in December LACERA's executive, managerial, and supervisory staff revisited our mission, vision, and values statements, and had a candid, enlightening discussion about the SWOTs (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) in achieving our goals. At the January strategic planning meeting with the Boards of Retirement and Investments, we presented our findings and shared our progress in re-categorizing existing strategic goals in line with the five SMARTER classifications, as well as reprioritizing the existing goals based on effort, resources, and impact. For optimum engagement, working teams have been established to create project plans detailing how each goal will be accomplished and translated into the budget planning process for final Board approval.

One of my ongoing duties as CEO will be to ensure that our efforts toward achieving those goals are aligned. I'm encouraged by the amount of progress we've already made as an organization in such a short time. Refreshing our strategic plan, reexamining our goals, and streamlining our internal processes are the starting point for ultimately improving services and providing more benefits to our members, and we are well on our way.



## Innovative Spirit

Speaking of improving service, two LACERA divisions are raising the bar. I'm proud to recognize Chief Investment Officer Jonathan Grabel, who won a *Chief Investment Officer* Industry Innovation Award in December 2018, and our Quality Assurance and Metrics team, led by Derwin Brown, which was presented with an Innovating for Impact Award from the L.A. County Quality and Productivity Commission in October 2018. Read more in LACERA Accomplishments below.

## Speaking Up for You

An important part of protecting

members' benefits includes advocating on your behalf and maintaining constructive relationships with lawmakers. At the end of January, Trustees Alan Bernstein, Herman Santos, Gina Sanchez, and Wayne Moore, Legislative Affairs Officer Barry



Lew, and I met with our congressional representatives in Washington, D.C., as part of the NCPERS Legislative Conference. Our packed schedule included visits with Senators Dianne Feinstein and Kamala Harris, 12th District

Representative and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, and L.A. County representatives Judy Chu (27th District), Adam Schiff (28th District), Brad Sherman (30th District), Ted Lieu (33rd District), Jimmy Gomez (34th District), Linda Sánchez (38th District, pictured here with Herman Santos and yours truly), and Gilbert Cisneros (39th District).

In closing, it's an exciting time of evolution at LACERA, and I look forward to sharing our ongoing progress with you in future issues of *PostScript*. Stay tuned!



# LACERA ACCOMPLISHMENTS

## CIO JONATHAN GRABEL RECEIVES INDUSTRY INNOVATION AWARD

Last December 13, LACERA Chief Investment Officer Jonathan Grabel was honored at the 9th Annual *Chief Investment Officer* Industry Innovation Awards gala in New York City as the winner in the category of Public Defined Benefit Plan Between \$15 Billion and \$100 Billion. He was selected from a group of distinguished finalists from pension plans across the United States.



The annual awards ceremony is hosted by the *Chief Investment Officer* publication and communications firm with the goal of changing the way people think about the

investment business by highlighting the industry's most creative, inventive leaders. Winners are chosen by the *CIO* editorial team in conjunction with CIOs from some of the country's most influential companies and organizations. Grabel was chosen for his strategic, forward-thinking approach to investing for LACERA's long-term success and stability.

Visit [www.ai-cio.com/lists/2018-industry-innovation-awards/?pid=37592](http://www.ai-cio.com/lists/2018-industry-innovation-awards/?pid=37592) to read the feature article on Jonathan. Congratulations and well done, Jon!

## QA TEAM EARNS LACERA AN INNOVATION AWARD

LACERA recently won the L.A. County Quality and Productivity Commission's 2018 Innovating for Impact Award, which recognizes commendable achievements in public service. LACERA received the award during the All-Star portion of the 32nd Productivity and Quality Awards program on October 10, 2018. The award was given to LACERA for the innovative training developed by the Quality Assurance and Metrics team, under the leadership of Derwin Brown, to teach staff members how to perform an account analysis as part of the retirement process. Performing the analysis

during the retirement process allows LACERA to identify any problems and address them before the member is placed on payroll. Congratulations to the QA team members for their excellent work and this well-deserved public honor.



## Reminders

- Keep flammable substances in their original or approved containers. Make sure that lids and caps are securely fastened.
- Most fuel vapors (except natural gas) are heavier than air, and will travel along the ground to possible ignition sources. Keep flammables away from heat and any sources of flames, sparks, or static electricity, such as dryers, furnaces, water heaters, tools, etc.
- Of course, don't smoke around flammable materials.
- Check regularly for leaks from fuel tanks, engines, and storage containers.
- Buy only what you think you will use.
- Keep a fire extinguisher near anywhere you store flammables.
- As your safest option, consider a flammable chemical storage cabinet.



Additional reminders on some common household flammables are included below.

## Compressed Gases



Some fuels are gases stored under pressure as liquids. When pressure is released, the fuel boils and becomes gas that you can burn for energy. A very common liquefied gas that you can buy and transport yourself is propane, and while propane cylinders are fairly ubiquitous, they still pose a danger if handled improperly. Take special care when storing and transporting propane, including the following:

- Never store or place a propane cylinder indoors or in an enclosed area such as a basement, garage or shed. If there is a leak, the gas will settle in the lowest place possible, creating a hazard. Store tanks in a dry, open, ventilated area, where gas can easily dissipate.
- If you smell gas, do not operate lights, appliances, telephones, cell phones, or anything that might create a flame, spark, or static electricity.
- Never store or place a propane cylinder in an area of excessive heat (120 degrees or higher) or near a heat source. This includes not storing a spare cylinder under your barbecue. If heat builds up pressure inside the cylinder, the pressure relief valve will release gas, a potential hazard.

- Transport and store cylinders in a secure, upright position to prevent falling or rolling, and to allow pressure release. Place them in a well-ventilated area of your vehicle, proceed directly to your destination, and remove immediately. Never leave a filled cylinder inside a vehicle or transport it inside a closed trunk.
- If you live in a wildfire-prone area, keep a 10-foot clear area around tanks and grills, removing any debris and items that could ignite. Grills and cylinders should also be at least 10 feet from any structure. For safety tips specific to common weather events in your area, visit [www.propanesafetyfirst.com/weather-related-safety.html](http://www.propanesafetyfirst.com/weather-related-safety.html).
- Butane is similar to propane, but the small canisters used to fuel lighters and small stoves can be kept in the home. Canisters should be stored away from sunlight, heat, and flame sources in a well-ventilated location, and out of the reach of children.

## Liquid Fuels



Fuels such as gasoline, diesel, kerosene, and heating oil are highly volatile, and their misuse is a common cause of home fires. Therefore, precautions should be taken to regarding their storage as follows:

- Never store fuel in anything but an approved container or tank. Containers should not be filled more than 95 percent, to allow for expansion.
- Store fuels in properly labeled, colored containers: regular gas in red, diesel gas in yellow, kerosene in blue, and oils in green. It's a good idea to only keep enough fuel on hand that you will use in the short term.
- Keep containers tightly closed and handle them gently to prevent spills.
- Store at room temperature, away from potential heat and ignition sources, in a well-ventilated area away from your house, and out of the reach of children.
- Take special care when transporting liquid fuel containers. Be sure that the cap and vent are tightly closed; place the container only in your car trunk or truck bed—never the passenger area; make sure the container is securely fastened to stay upright and not slide or move; proceed directly to your destination; and remove the container as soon as possible.



- If you have plastic gas cans, consider replacing them with metal safety cans that are not only more durable, but have flame arrestors, self-closing lids, pressure relief, and other safety features. Although rare, flashback explosions—when gas vapor escapes the can, ignites, “flashes back,” and explodes inside the can—have injured and even killed people using plastic cans.

## Other Flammables



Other flammables and combustibles in the home include solvents, pesticides, oil, spray paint, turpentine, rubbing alcohol, and nail polish, among other items. Always check manufacturer labels for proper handling and storage.



## Handling Spills



If you do happen to have a flammable liquid spill, follow the cleanup tips below.

- First, track down and stop the source of the spill. If it is inside, ventilate the area to dissipate vapors, being careful not to walk through the spill. Extinguish all flames and turn off anything that could produce a spark.
- Wear a respirator mask, gloves and other protective gear to keep from inhaling fumes and getting liquid on your skin or clothes.
- Use rags or an absorbent like cat litter to soak up the liquid. You might also consider buying special absorbent socks to keep on hand in case of an emergency. Never use a vacuum cleaner or Shop-Vac to clean up flammable material spills or debris, because contact with the motor could start a fire.
- If you spill flammables on your clothes or use rags to clean the spill, let air dry before disposing or washing. Do not put items in the dryer, even after washing.
- Don't toss it! Never dispose of flammables in the garbage, or by pouring them out. L.A. County's Department of Public Works has an extensive program in place to help residents safely dispose of hazardous household wastes, with both mobile collection and permanent drop-off centers available. Visit [www.cleanLA.com](http://www.cleanLA.com) for more information.



*Sources: National Fire Protection Association, Western Propane Gas Association, Propane Education and Research Council, AmeriGas, ConsumerSafety.org, National Agricultural Safety Database, Pasadena Fire Department, Reference.com, University of Iowa Environmental Health and Safety, American Chemical Society, wikiHow, L.A. County Department of Public Works*

# 3 THINGS: ALASKA

Happy belated birthday to Alaska, which marked 60 years of statehood on January 3. Our 49th state was originally acquired from the Russian Empire on March 30, 1867, for \$7.2 million, in a treaty negotiated by Secretary of State William Seward, ratified by the U.S. Senate, and signed by President Andrew Johnson. Referred to by skeptics as Seward's Folly, the investment first paid off when gold was discovered in Sitka in 1872. Here are some other interesting facts about our second-to-youngest state.

- Two of Alaska's outer Aleutian Islands—Attu and Kiska—were invaded by 2,500 Japanese troops in World War II and occupied for nearly a year, the only part of the continental territory of the United States to be taken over during the war.
- Alaska averages 100 earthquakes a day. A 9.2 magnitude earthquake, the second strongest in recorded history, hit Alaska on March 27, 1964, causing massive destruction, tsunamis, and loss of life.
- Seventeen of the 20 highest peaks in the U.S. are located in Alaska. At 20,320 feet above sea level, Denali (meaning “the great one”), is the highest point in North America.

*Sources: Alaska Public Land Information Centers, Wikipedia, History.com*





## Your Retiree Healthcare Questions

ANSWERED

### Members' most frequently asked questions, answered by LACERA's Retiree Healthcare Division

#### Does the LACERA-administered Retiree Healthcare Benefits Program have an annual open enrollment period?

No, the LACERA-administered Retiree Healthcare Benefits Program does not have an annual open enrollment period.

**Medical Insurance:** In most cases, after completing a six-month waiting period from the date LACERA receives your form, you can change your LACERA-administered medical plan to another LACERA-administered plan. Coverage is continuous, and you do not need to provide evidence of insurability.

For more information, including exceptions to the six-month wait period, please visit [lacera.com](http://lacera.com) and click on the Retiree Healthcare tab, or contact the LACERA Retiree Healthcare Division.

**Dental/Vision Insurance:** In most cases, after completing a one-year waiting period from the date LACERA receives your form, you can change your LACERA-administered dental/vision plan to another LACERA-administered plan.

Coverage is continuous, and you do not need to provide evidence of insurability.

For more information, including exceptions to the one-year waiting period, please visit [lacera.com](http://lacera.com) and click on the Retiree Healthcare tab, or contact us at the phone numbers or email address below.

#### Does the LACERA-administered Retiree Healthcare Benefits Program offer Delta Dental insurance to retirees?

No, Delta Dental insurance is not offered under the LACERA-administered Retiree Healthcare Benefits Program. However, retired members and eligible dependents may enroll in the Cigna Indemnity Dental/Vision plan or Cigna Dental/Vision HMO plan.

For more information, please visit [lacera.com](http://lacera.com) and click on the Retiree Healthcare tab, or contact us.

To contact the Retiree Healthcare Division, call 800-786-6464 (press 1) or 626-564-9132, or email us at [heathcare@lacera.com](mailto:heathcare@lacera.com).

#### Important Announcement

The Retiree Healthcare Division will soon have a new toll-free telephone number—stay tuned for more information!

## FRAUD ALERT FROM THE D.A.'S OFFICE

### Scammers Try to Take Portion of Unclaimed Property

People with forgotten bank accounts or insurance policies should beware of fraudsters seeking to profit from their overlooked assets.

In the Unclaimed Property Scam, asset locators or investigators contact individuals and offer to track down long-lost money. They demand an up-front fee or a percentage of the collected cash. Such services are unnecessary and may be illegal.

Banks, insurance companies and other businesses are required to turn over inactive properties to the State Controller's Office, which provides the information to the public for free. Once an unclaimed property is reported, investigators are prohibited by law from contacting the owner to offer their services.

#### Tips:

- Avoid signing contracts with asset investigators.
- If entering such a contract, it is illegal for investigators to charge more than 10 percent of the value of the property.
- Search for unclaimed property for free at the California State Controller's Office website: <http://ucpi.sco.ca.gov>.
- If you live outside of California, access your state government's unclaimed property website at [www.unclaimed.org](http://www.unclaimed.org).

Visit [lacera.com/about\\_lacera/fraud\\_alerts.html](http://lacera.com/about_lacera/fraud_alerts.html) for a video link with more details.



## Public Service Announcement

# Volunteers Needed for Mediation Program

The Los Angeles County Department of Consumer and Business Affairs (DCBA) helps over 400,000 consumers each year. DCBA provides quality service to the public, thanks in large part to the dedicated people in our Volunteer and Internship Program. Our volunteers and interns are a valuable asset to DCBA, offering a wide range of talents and expertise. The mission of DCBA is to promote a fair and vibrant marketplace for consumers, businesses, and communities through education, advocacy, and complaint resolution. There are volunteer opportunities throughout the department in consumer counseling, mediation, small claims advisory, financial empowerment, small business services, and immigrant affairs. DCBA is currently accepting applications and asking volunteers for a commitment of twice per week during business hours, Monday through Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, please email your request to David Diaz at [Volunteer@dcba.lacounty.gov](mailto:Volunteer@dcba.lacounty.gov).

**"The longer I live, the more beautiful life becomes."**

**– Frank Lloyd Wright**

## Pre-Retirement Workshop Schedule

MARCH 2019						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	G&S*
3	4	S	6	7	8	G&S*
10	11	G	13	14	15	G&S*
17	18	G	20	21	22	23
24	H	G	27	28	29	30
31						

APRIL 2019						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	S	3	4	5	G&S*
7	8	G	10	11	12	13
14	15	G	17	18	19	20
21	22	G	24	25	26	27
28	29	G				

MAY 2019						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	G&S*
5	6	S	8	9	10	11
12	13	G	15	16	17	18
19	20	G	22	23	24	25
26	H	G	29	30	31	

**G** = General Members

**S** = Safety Members

**H** = Holiday

Unless otherwise indicated, workshops are held at LACERA from 8:30 a.m. to noon. Empower Retirement will offer a 45-minute overview of Horizons (457) and Savings (401k) plans; LACERA will provide a 2.5-hour presentation. **Reservations are required; access the Appointment System on [lacera.com](http://lacera.com) or call 800-786-6464 to reserve a seat.**

\*Held at LACERA from 8:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.



**CONNECT  
WITH US!**

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Call: 800-786-6464

Website: [Lacera.com](http://Lacera.com)

## Public Service Announcement

# Volunteer Opportunities at the Veterans Home of California

Do you want to make a difference in the lives of veterans? The Veterans Home of California is seeking volunteers at its West Los Angeles Campus. There are multiple ways to honor our veterans at this home, including companion care, escorting on outings, reading, writing letters, helping with special events, and maintaining a library for the residents. For more information about how you can make a difference, call Pamela White, Coordinator of Volunteer Services, at (424) 832-8554, or email her at [pamela.white@calvet.ca.gov](mailto:pamela.white@calvet.ca.gov).



## Upcoming Holidays

LACERA will be closed on:

- Monday, March 25  
to observe Cesar Chavez Day
- Monday, May 27  
to observe Memorial Day

## Editor's Note:

*PostScript* is published by the staff of LACERA. Consult with professional advisors regarding legal, tax, and/or medical matters; LACERA does not offer legal, tax, or medical advice.

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