



**Risk and  
Insurance  
Management  
Society, Inc.**

# L.A. RIMS NEWS

Los Angeles Chapter

The Newsletter for Risk and Insurance Management Professionals June 2003

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Recently I thought about how my job has changed since the advent of the internet. Many moons ago, I would handwrite my letters (writer's cramp versus carpal tunnel syndrome was popular then), give them to an office clerk to type (on a typewriter), and sometimes retype. It could take a whole day or more to get a letter in the mail. To send a fax, I would have to walk a block to the senior executive offices to use their fax machine. A highlight would be receiving the hard copy A.M. Best Guide in the mail, a reason to celebrate. Then when we finally got a computer in the office, five of us would be in line to use it each day.

Now everyone has a computer at their desk, sends emails and types their own letters, and hears the fax machine singing just steps away. The A.M. Best Guide is on the internet, so who needs books? We have [www.rims.org](http://www.rims.org), IRMI online, private website connections to the underwriter, access to almost any information we may need to do a better job. I still have a bookcase full of references but they are getting dusty. The internet is just so convenient...plus I don't have to leave my desk to find the answer. We often find ourselves multitasking: sending email, answering the phone, and reviewing documents simultaneously. The internet has streamlined our multitasking even more.

So why are we still stressing out? Because we need to stop the multitasking for a moment, get up from our desks, walk and breathe. Technology and the internet has made our jobs easier but it has also created a pressure we are expected to bear. In order to respond to this pressure, you have to maintain your sanity...remember the quote, "Active body, active mind." So do me a favor: give yourself a break, go outside, and take a deep breath. Your hamster wheel will be waiting for you when you get back to your desk.

Take care of yourself,

**Kathy Merkovsky**  
President, RIMS L.A. Chapter

## CHAPTER CLIPS

### *STUDENT INTERNSHIP PROGRAM*

Did you know that the Spencer Educational Foundation has a student internship program? How many of us wish we had an assistant to handle those small projects we eventually want to get to but haven't found the time? Or even some assistance in obtaining data for insurance applications at renewal time? Spencer can help your dream come true.

Maybe your company has an internship program already. If not, you can still participate. Just prepare a one or two page explanation regarding your company's current internship program or how your company would like to start one.

Spencer awards grants up to \$4,000. Priority is given to matching students with RIMS member company employers. Remember that the project or task assigned has to be meaningful to the intern. (i.e. Washing your car is not meaningful.) The intern will have a 2.7 GPA or greater and the internship will last eight weeks or more. At the end of the internship, the employer and the intern will have to submit a final report.

Internship success stories were shared at the RIMS National Conference in Chicago. The "intern-less" attendees at the meeting were jealous but it got their wheels turning, thinking about those tasks left behind at the office that could be handled by an intern.

If interested, please contact Angela Sabatino at 212.655.6223 or by email at [asabatino@rims.org](mailto:asabatino@rims.org).

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Don Mcdougall - **Marshall and Stevens**  
Carol Novoa - **Towers Perrin/Tillinghast**  
Andrew Starnes - **Allianz Global Risks US**  
Gregory K. Tuohy - **WorldWide Security Associates, Inc.**  
Randall Yang - **East West Insurance Services**

*All new members will receive  
their first lunch complimentary.  
Please make sure you pre-register.*

## LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

### **MAY IS... SARS AWARENESS MONTH**

What is SARS? There is a new disease called Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). It is a respiratory illness that has recently been reported in over 26 countries world wide. There have been over 5000 reported cases and almost 400 deaths. China, Viet Nam, Singapore, and Toronto have had the highest number of outbreaks. Anyone who has traveled to these areas since February 2002 may have been exposed to the disease. There have been 49 suspected cases in California, nine in Los Angeles County.

**What Are the Symptoms?** The illness usually begins with a fever greater than 100.4°F (>38.0°C). Sometimes there are chills and body aches or mild respiratory symptoms. After two to seven days there may be a nonproductive cough and difficulty in breathing or shortness of breath. The typical incubation period is two to seven days, but the person may not develop symptoms for ten days.

**How is SARS Spread?** The primary way that SARS appears to spread is by close person to person contact. Most cases of SARS have involved people who cared for or lived with someone with SARS, or had direct contact with infectious material (for example, respiratory secretions) from a person who has SARS. Potential ways in which SARS can be spread include touching of the skin or other people or objects that are contaminated with infectious material droplets and then touching your eye(s), nose or mouth. This can happen when someone who is sick with SARS coughs or sneezes droplets into themselves, other people, or nearby surfaces. It also is possible that SARS can be spread more broadly through the air or by other ways that are currently not known.

## LEGISLATIVE UPDATES CONTINUED

**What Treatment is Available?** Although most patients recover, there is no known cure or vaccine at this time. Antibiotics do not appear to be effective. Patients receive the same treatment that would be used to treat any patient with serious community-acquired atypical pneumonia. Patients are being quarantined when possible. Health care workers are urged to wear surgical masks, goggles, gloves and head covers in treating these patients.

**Can You Protect Yourself?** The best protection is prevention. Good personal hygiene and frequently washing your hands with soap and hot water is highly recommended.

Anyone who has traveled to one of the areas designated by the Centers for Disease Control(CDC) or who has a household member suspected of having SARS should seek medical care as soon as possible. With summer vacations scheduled over the next several months, employers might want to establish health screening or informational programs for employees traveling to one of the designated areas with the highest outbreaks of SARS. Outlining procedures on who to contact and where to call prior to returning to work as a preventive measure to help reduce the spread of SARS is recommended.

Ideas you may want to consider might be 1) to have a special phone number set up for employees to call for information, possibly to speak to a medical staff person if your company has one; 2) If the employee believes that he or she has been exposed to SARS to receive a medical clearance before returning to work; 3) provide a disinfectant spray (such as Lysol) in employee restrooms and lounge areas and; 4) continuously provide information on SARS and other communicable diseases to employees and encourage them to share the information with family and friends.

For more information: Call the L.A. County SARS 24-Hour Information Hotline - 1.800.989.5255; or the CDC public response hotline at 888.246.2675 (English), 888.246.2857 (Español), or 866.874.2646 (TTY) or the City of Los Angeles, Emergency Preparedness Department at:

200 N. Spring St. , Room 1533

Los Angeles CA 90012

[www.lacity.org/epd](http://www.lacity.org/epd)

213.978.2222

Information Help Line: 888.356.4661

TTY Services: 213.473.6296

## LEGISLATIVE UPDATES CONTINUED

### **CDC ISSUES GUIDANCE FOR HEALTHCARE RESPONSE TO SARS OUTBREAK**

The Centers for Disease Control and prevention (CDC) has developed a website (<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/index.htm>) to provide information about Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). Among resources on the site are various guidance documents, including one for management of SARS exposure in healthcare and other institutional settings. CDC suggests that the healthcare workers who have unprotected exposure to SARS should be vigilant for fever or respiratory symptoms during the 10 days following exposure. Those who develop such symptoms should not go to work, school, or other public places. Healthcare personnel with symptoms should use infection control procedures and should seek a medical evaluation. Those providing the assessment should be informed that the worker has been exposed to SARS.

Also, CDC suggests that in a facility with a SARS patient, all healthcare employees should be educated about the symptoms, and a review of all occupational health records should be conducted.

### **PROGRAM ANNOUNCED FOR ERGONOMICS CONFERENCE IN NYC**

The second annual Eastern Ergonomics Conference and Exposition will be held July 8-10 in New York City. Organizers say the conference will bring together "ergonomics executives from across the country to focus on ergonomics as a critical business element."

This year's event will feature course offerings that address recently announced OSHA guidelines for nursing homes, and those yet to be published for the retail grocery industry. The conference will feature full-day workshops, as well as 90 minute sessions and a large exposition with the latest ergonomics-related products and services. At "ErgoSchool Luncheons," ergonomics professionals will join industry leaders in an informal setting to explore topics of common interest.

Program and registration details are available at <http://www.ergoexpo.com>

### **RIMS ON THE HILL MEETINGS**

The Fifth Annual RIMS on the Hill Meetings will be held on June 10th and 11th in Washington, D.C. The meetings are coordinated by RIMS National Government Affairs Officer, Joanne Waldman and are designed to provide RIMS members the opportunity to meet with key members of Congress or their staff and influence legislation affecting the risk management community. The lobbying agenda will address the following issues:

- Class Action Tort Reform Legislation
- Asbestos Litigation Reform
- Medical Malpractice Reform

## ARM DESIGNEES

### **CONGRATULATIONS TO THE FOLLOWING ARM RECIPIENTS:**

Zernan Abad, **City of Los Angeles**  
David Jones, **Pinkertons, Inc.**  
Greg Melton, **Nissan North American**

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

*All monthly meetings are held at the New Otani Hotel,  
unless otherwise noted*

June 2, 2003  
RIMS L.A. Annual Golf Tournament  
Brookside Golf Course, Pasadena, CA

July 16, 2003  
Monthly Luncheon

August 20, 2003  
Monthly Luncheon

September 14-17, 2003  
RIMS Western Regional Conference  
Oregon

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**News articles must be received by the 15th of each month.**