

Cities and Towns RoundTable Meeting Minutes

April 7, 2026

Hosts: SMCs Tawni Aguirre Butte and Kellie Trudgeon Columbia Falls

The meeting was attended by:

- Belgrade – Becky Wilbert (Director of HR/Internal Services)
- Billings – JoLynn Yerger (Risk Officer), Jennifer McCollum (HR Assistant), Bryan Francis (Fire Training Chief)
- Bozeman – James Short (Deputy Chief), Jamie Norby (Sr. HR Generalist)
- Butte/Silver Bow – Lauri Johns-Andersch (Risk Services)
- Great Falls – Angela Swingley (Risk Mgt),
- Helena – Angie Benedetti (HR Generalist)
- Kalispell – Bre Hanson (HR Assistant), Jay Hagen (Fire Chief)
- Missoula – John Petroff (Assistant Chief), Lonnie Rash (Fire Dept. Chief)
- Whitefish – Sherri Baccaro (HR Director), Janelle McKay (HR Generalist)

Follow-up Items from January 6th Meeting

- **Indemnity Report:** Your claim's examiner will continue to send them directly to you via e-mail, and if you have online access through the portal, you should be able to review them in your account. Kristy will continue to work on the report, and we will hopefully see something at July's meeting.
- **Making Them Whole Discussion:** Discussion was held March 3rd. The discussion went well, and the participants were able to ask questions and provide each other feedback freely, in addition to the information provided by MSF to the group.
 - Additional question: if there is a retroactive increase in wages, how does that impact the wage loss benefits? Response provided: If a retroactive increase in wages affects the time frame used to calculate wage loss benefits, MSF will use the new information to recalculate benefits, and if there is an underpayment, it would be addressed at that time.

Announcements

- **“Seamless Transition” Webinars** - MSF is hosting two upcoming webinars to support cities and towns who are considering transitioning to a new workers' compensation carrier. These webinars will provide an overview of MSF resources, coverage, payroll reporting and claim filing. If you have a new employee or know an employee from another city or town that is looking to transition to a new workers' compensation carrier, please feel free to share this with them. It's a great

opportunity to learn more about workers' compensation and have your questions answered. **** Link to register will be in the newsletter!**

"Supporting a Seamless Transition" webinar will be held on:

- May 20, 2026, from 9- 10 a.m.
- June 9, 2026, from 9-10 a.m.
- **Connection Lounge** – Extra 30 minutes added to each quarterly meeting! This is an opportunity to have open discussion. Connection Lounge will not be recorded.
- **Survey:** will be sent out June 2026. Please give us your honest feedback on what's going well with this group and how we can make it better! *We will conduct this an anonymous survey.* Your responses and input gauge our future going forward!
- **Jot Form Results:** The results are in. The following topics will be added to the 2027 Calendar. Ergonomics and Workers Comp, Incentive Programs, Department Code Auditing, Respiratory Protection Program (note: Hearing Conservation will be added to Respiratory Protection).
- **STFCATCOLAB email:** The two email questions and feedback will be in the newsletter.

Q&A with Claims Examiner: Kristy Wilson and James Casada (Claims Examiners, Montana State Fund) were available for Q&A. There were a few questions about hearing loss claims frequency. Currently there has not been a trend with municipalities. Members are encouraged to contact Kristy directly with questions: **Kristy.Wilson@mt.gov**.

New Items and Suggestions

- **“Making Them Whole Discussion”:** There seems to be an appetite for more conversation around this topic. We will offer another one-off session. Vote for either May 5th or June 2nd 11:00am-12:00pm. Please look for the JotForm.

Presentation: Bozeman Fire Department Project

- **Topic:** Deputy Chief of Operations James Short (City of Bozeman Fire Department) shared how they utilized risk assessment to prevent recruit injuries from the Fire Academy.
 - JotForm will ask fire departments if there is an appetite for further discussion. Tawni and Kellie are willing to host a one-off session just for conversation amongst fire departments.

Special Acknowledgements and City Brags

- **Special Thanks** were extended to:
 - Deputy Chief James Short (City of Fire Department Bozeman)
- **City Brags:** We did not have any City Brags turned in for this meeting, however the “Making Them Whole” discussion was a win for this collaborative group

Music Request: Sherri Buccaro City of Whitefish will share a playlist. All music requests are welcome.

Next Meeting Date: July 7, 2026

Topic: Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work

If you have an active Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work program that you are willing to share please let us know.