

## WORKING TOGETHER FOR MONTANA'S MUNICIPALITIES.

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*Photo Courtesy of Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development*



### WELCOME LISA LeDOUX

Lisa is the newest Workers' Compensation Claims examiner at MMIA. Before joining MMIA Lisa worked as a System Support Specialist for the State of Montana in the State Procurement Bureau. She has over thirteen years of experience with the State, ranging from customer service, claims examination, and most recently technical support. In her spare time, her and her husband completed building their first home together. When not working on a project, she loves to relax and enjoys being outdoors with her husband and pup.

# MONTANA LEAGUE OF CITIES AND TOWNS 2023 LEGISLATIVE SESSION PRIORITIES

Local governments are closest to the people, and as such, deserve respect and support from both the state and federal levels of government for local processes, authority, and decision-making. That is why Montana League of Cities and Towns is committed to preserving and promoting Montana municipalities, the services they provide, and the economies they support.

The League's Board of Directors have approved eleven Legislative Resolutions to guide its legislative goals and positions throughout the 2023 Legislative Session ranging from generally preserving fair, affordable, and effective local government to municipality-specific issues such as investing in local infrastructure and protecting local military operations. The League's resolutions may be found at [www.mtleague.org/2022-resolutions](http://www.mtleague.org/2022-resolutions).

## PRIORITIES

Each of the eleven Resolutions approved by the League's Board of Directors is listed below with a brief description. Please review each resolution in full for more details and information.

### Resolution 1 - General

Preserve fair, affordable, and effective local government.

### Resolution 2 - Property Taxes

Support legislation that ensures local decision-making and policymaking in relation to property taxes.

### Resolution 3 - Housing

Encourage bills that protect local government's ability to enact local housing solutions.

### Resolution 4 - Land Use Environment

Protect and expand the authority of cities and towns to manage local land use.

### Resolution 5 - Infrastructure

Promote investment in local government infrastructure and streamline process for obtaining state infrastructure dollars.

### Resolution 6 - Retirement Benefits

Oppose legislation that increases the local government contribution to any public employee retirement system and strategically support legislation needed to ensure actuarial soundness.

### Resolution 7 - Support Natural Resource Communities

Create and maintain legislation that provides financial and other resources to cities and towns impacted by the growth or decline of natural resource development.

### Resolution 8 - Support Public Safety

Support legislation and policies that ensure public safety programs are funded and assist and strengthen transparency, accessibility, and accountability in local communities.

### Resolution 9 - Support Military Operations

Encourage legislation that protects existing military assets in Montana.

### Resolution 10 - Building Code Reserve

Sponsor legislation to allow municipalities certified to enforce building codes to accumulate fees and charges needed to enforce building codes.

### Resolution 11 - Coronavirus

Support legislation that assists local governments in continuing to provide critical public safety services and provide maximum local authority and flexibility to make emergency decisions to protect public health and safety.



**Cities and towns are encouraged to pass their own resolution in support of these positions.**

You may find a template resolution to stand with the League during the 2023 Legislative Session at [www.mtleague.org/2022-resolutions](http://www.mtleague.org/2022-resolutions).



**YOU KNOW THE FEELING  
WHEN YOU WAKE UP**

# PANICKED

**YOUR ALARM DIDN'T GO OFF  
AND YOU'RE ALREADY LATE TO**

# WORK

Only to realize it's Saturday  
and you can get up  
whenever you want and  
watch Netflix in your PJ's?

**That's the relieved and reassured mood you should have when reading over the complexities of the federal Consolidated Appropriations Act (CAA) compliance requirements.**

Yes, they're demanding and scary, but not to worry! MMIA and our awesome vendors have your back.

As of this moment, new requirements like the Price Comparison Tool, Pharmacy/Medical Benefits Reporting and Advanced Explanation of Benefits (EOBs) are being handled by the helpful folks at Allegiance and ProAct. We're lucky to have such great partners since vendors for other groups are throwing up their hands saying, 'good luck to ya' and leaving them on their own to navigate these complex reporting requirements.

That said, there may be additional requirements to report how much the employer and employee pay toward premiums. We are still waiting for clarification from the federal government on how this is supposed to be done for multi-employer groups such as MMIA. Currently, that reporting is supposed to be due in June 2023. We may need to collect that information from city/town benefit contacts or have you report amounts on your own. No matter what, the MMIA EB crew will be here to help guide and direct whatever action needs to be taken.

But for now, chill in your PJ's and watch some classic Arrested Development – it's a Saturday and we've got this covered.

- Price Comparison Tool
- Pharmacy/Medical Benefits
- Advanced Explanation of Benefits (EOBs)

**ARE HANDLED BY:**





# OUR COMMITMENT TO PROTECTING LOCAL DECISION-MAKING

Montana's cities and towns are strongest when elected local leaders have the power to work with their community members to enact policies that reflect local values and strengthen local economies. The League understands that every Montana community is different with its own history, economy, and needs. We know that what may work for one community may not work for another. That's why we firmly trust local elected officials to make the right decisions for their communities – because we believe that local leaders know the unique needs of their communities.

Disturbingly, over the last few years, we have seen powerful special interests outside of Montana work to pass one-size-fits-all policies that take decision-making away from local leaders. In fact, our local communities have lost power over their own money, personnel and budgets, and authority to act across a widening range of issues in every single state legislative session since 2011. This type of state interference is short-sighted and not only runs contrary to Montana values but sets a dangerous precedent where decisions best left to local governments are decided, instead, by the State.

Here at the League, we have a duty to protect local decision-making from State government and powerful special interests. We know that locals are best equipped to make decisions related to their own lives, families, and communities and we are committed to ensuring local governments have the power to make local decisions.

**We will bring you up-to-date news, resources, and information throughout the 2023 Legislative Session and encourage you to use the League's 2023 Legislative Session Tracker found on our website under the Legislature menu.**

**IN THE 2021**  
MONTANA LEGISLATIVE SESSION,



**19 BILLS**  
WERE PASSED

**that imposed top-down rules limiting local lawmaking and decision-making. We are facing similar bills this legislative session.**

That's why we are diligently monitoring every bill that is introduced and will work with you and others that share our commitment to local government so that, together, we uphold local solutions and local decision-making in Montana. Your voice as a local leader and member of the League will be vitally important to the success of this effort.

**Learn more and get connected to our efforts to support local governments at [www.supportlocal.network](http://www.supportlocal.network).**







# NEW SUMMIT CODE ENFORCEMENT: IMPROVE YOUR EFFICIENCY AND STREAMLINE WORKFLOW

By Jake Holley, Contributing Writer, Black Mountain Software

Small town government offices are full of unsung heroes. From the utility clerk that doubles as a receptionist to the planning tech researching variance applications, everyone plays an integral role in providing services that keep our communities functioning safely and effectively. But perhaps the most overlooked role belongs to code enforcement officers, who straddle an inspirational balance between enforcement and empathy as they take the time to educate property owners while resolving reported violations.

So whether you need documented evidence of an old pickup blocking the public right-of-way or are educating a property owner about the environmental impact of dumping engine oil down the storm drain, Summit Code Enforcement is there for you every step of the way.

Violations can be logged when and how they are received and are organized according to whether they require action or not. Actions, such as communications sent and received, inspections scheduled, or fees assigned, can be viewed from within the violation record and updated throughout the enforcement process. Photos and documents can also be attached to violation records as needed.

Existing BMS clients with Permitting and Cash Receipting will also experience the added benefit of Summit Code Enforcement integration. Property records created in Summit Code Enforcement can be viewed in Permitting and permits created there will display on property records in Summit Code Enforcement. Moreover, fees issued through Summit Code Enforcement will be logged in the violation's Receipt History and can be receipted through Cash Receipting.

Best of all, Summit Code Enforcement is an entirely web-based application that allows you to go mobile with laptop, smartphone, and tablet compatibility. So, while you're talking with residents and gathering information, you can also warn inspectors to be wary of large dogs on premises or to watch their step when navigating suburban junkyards in real-time.

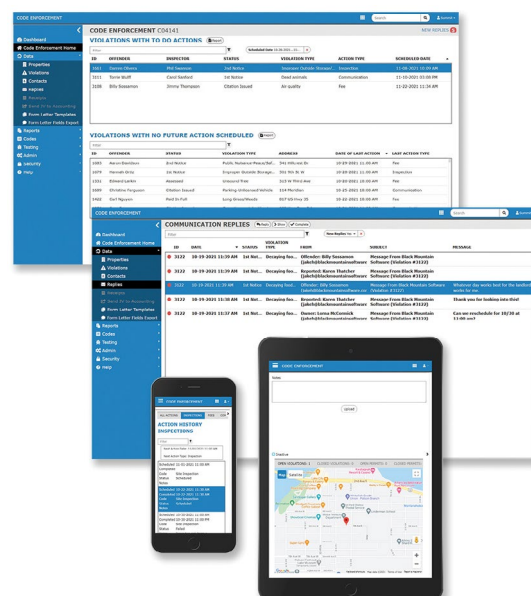
Whether on patrol or fielding complaints from the public, code enforcement officers are valuable assets for any municipal organization. And we decided it was time they had a 21st Century software solution designed to streamline workflows, simplify communication, create transparency, and do it all while on the go. It's our ode to all the code compliance officers out there. We see you and thank you for your service.

For more information, click [here](#) or contact [sales@blackmountainsoftware.com](mailto:sales@blackmountainsoftware.com)



**Our latest product, Summit Code Enforcement, is an all-in-one application that combines the following new features:**

- Seamless Record Management
- Time-Saving Integration
- Comprehensive Inspection Information
- Communications Portal
- Go Mobile Compatibility
- Google Maps Integration
- Robust, Dynamic Reporting



# NAVIGATING COMMUNITY INTERACTIONS – MUNICIPAL STAFF



Montana Municipal Interlocal Authority (MMIA) recognizes that as a municipal employee there is a wide variety of information and responsibilities that you may encounter in your career. One such area is the self-funded coverages your municipality participates in as a member-owner of MMIA.

MMIA created this resource to assist you in instances when you're approached by the general public with issues that intersect with the municipality's self-funded coverage so you can avoid causing or exasperating a claim. MMIA recommends that you learn your city or town's claim filing process for the public, and the policies/processes for how hazards reported by the public are documented and followed up on. For more information on MMIA and self-funded coverages visit [mmia.net](http://mmia.net).

## YOU'RE AN EMPLOYEE OF ANYTOWN, MONTANA:

### ➤ SCENARIO 1:

**You're approached by a citizen while responding to a call of a lift pump that has failed. The citizen is upset about a sewer backup that occurred in their residence.**

#### **WHEN RESPONDING:**

##### **DO'S:**

- Remain calm, receptive, and neutral while conversing.
- Be empathetic.
- Let them know who to contact at the city/town to report the occurrence as a claim.
- Let them know the occurrence will be investigated.
  - Use phrases like "We'll look into this to identify what happened" or "We'll get to the bottom of it" or "We'll investigate to determine the cause."
- Let the designated city/town contact know the citizen may contact them to file a claim for the occurrence.

##### **DON'TS:**

- Don't accept liability or admit fault for the occurrence.
  - Don't use phrases that could be interpreted as admitting fault such as "We'll take care of that" or "We'll handle it" or "We'll fix the problem."
- Don't say the occurrence isn't the city/town's fault.
- Don't be evasive.
- Don't invalidate their concern.

Resources:

*MMIA Liability Memorandum of Coverage, Section 17.3*

### **WHY**

Just because an occurrence happened, doesn't mean the municipality will be liable or responsible for paying for the remedy. Liability for the occurrence can't be determined until a claim has been filed by the citizen with the city/town, and MMIA completes an investigation.

If you were to communicate liability would be accepted or could be interpreted as communicating liability would

be accepted prior to MMIA's investigation; you'd place your city/town at risk to be financially responsible for the occurrence without the coverage from MMIA, which could result in your city/town paying thousands of dollars in unbudgeted costs!



## ➤ SCENARIO 2

You receive a report from a citizen complaining about potholes on their street.

### WHEN RESPONDING:

#### DO'S:

- Remain calm, receptive, and neutral while conversing.
- Be empathetic.
- Let them know the conditions will be investigated.
  - Use phrases like "We'll look into it" or "We'll review the situation" or "We'll see what's going on."
- Document the report.
- Investigate the reported conditions and document the findings.
- Implement appropriate actions to address conditions in accordance with your city/town's policies.
- Document the actions taken.

#### Resources:

- *MMIA Liability Program Agreement, Section 2.1*
- *Municipal Ordinances*

#### DON'TS:

- Don't make promises about when or how the conditions will be addressed.
  - Don't use phrases that could be interpreted as admitting fault or making promises such as "We'll take care of that" or "We'll handle it".
- Don't invalidate their concern.

### WHY

It's critical to follow your city/town's process for investigating reported hazardous conditions and documenting the findings and actions taken. Prompt investigation and implementation of appropriate remedial actions in accordance with your city/town's policies helps prevent claims, and thorough documentation is key in defending the city/town should a claim arise in the future.

## ➤ SCENARIO 3

You are working at the municipal pool when a child nearly drowns and is transported by an ambulance to the local hospital.

### WHEN RESPONDING:

#### DO'S:

- Remain calm, receptive, and neutral while conversing.
- Be empathetic.
- Request all individuals involved to stay until their contact information is documented.
- Document the date, time, names and contact information for people involved, names and contact information for witnesses, and a description of what happened as soon as possible.
- Report the occurrence to your city/town's designated contact as soon as possible.
- Provide the documentation to your city/town's designated contact as soon as possible.
- If asked, let the individual(s) know the occurrence will be investigated.
- Use your city/town's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for self-care after the occurrence.

#### Resources:

- *MMIA Liability Memorandum of Coverage, Section 17.3*

#### DON'TS:

- Don't accept liability or admit fault for the occurrence.
  - Don't use phrases that could be interpreted as admitting fault such as "I'm sorry" or "If I'd only got to them sooner" or "I should have been paying more attention".
- Don't say it isn't the city/town's fault.
- Don't be evasive.
- Don't invalidate any concerns.

### WHY

Liability for the occurrence can't be determined until a claim has been filed by the citizen with the city/town, and MMIA completes an investigation. If you were to communicate liability would be accepted or could be interpreted as communicating liability would be accepted prior to MMIA's investigation; you'd place your city/town at risk to be financially responsible for the occurrence without the coverage from MMIA, which could result in your city/town paying thousands of dollars in unbudgeted costs!



**WORKING TOGETHER  
FOR MONTANA'S MUNICIPALITIES.**

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# SAVE **THE** DATE

**EXECUTIVE  
FORUM**

**2023**

**March 1st - 3rd | Helena, MT**

**Don't miss this opportunity to learn,  
and network with fellow municipal leaders.**

With the session in full swing this will also be a great opportunity to network with legislators. This event is structured to benefit those who are new to their position as well as the most experienced municipal leaders. The League, MMIA, and LGC look forward to this event and expect the 2023 forum to be as impactful as ever. **For more information visit [mmia.net](http://mmia.net).**



## **Topics Include:**

- Municipal Finance
- Clerks and Mayors Panel
- Safety & Risk Management
- And more!

