

2024-2025 Q4 Newsletter



MAY 9, 2025

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members of International Right of Way Association Chapter 1,

As we find ourselves in the midst of another dynamic year, I want to take a moment to reflect on our progress and express my gratitude to each of you for your dedication to our profession and our association. Your commitment to excellence in the right of way industry continues to inspire me, and I am excited to continue working alongside you to advance our shared goals.

Our chapter remains dedicated to leadership, education, and collaboration. Over the past months, we have achieved significant milestones, and we are eager to build on this momentum. We will continue providing top-tier educational opportunities, professional networking events, and valuable industry resources to support your career growth. If you haven't yet had the chance to participate in our events, I encourage you to engage and connect with your fellow members.

I also want to take a moment to acknowledge those affected by the Palisades and Eaton fires. Our thoughts are with you, your families, and your communities during this difficult time. As an organization rooted in support and collaboration, we stand ready to assist in any way we can. If there are resources or initiatives that we can help facilitate, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Looking ahead, we have several exciting events on the horizon. Our Annual Valuation Seminar will be held on May 15, 2025 at the Quiet Cannon, offering valuable insights and continuing education for professionals across the industry. We will also be holding elections for our incoming Board, an important opportunity for members to shape the leadership and future direction of our chapter. Finally, we look forward to celebrating the achievements of our peers at the upcoming Awards Luncheon—more details to come soon!

We remain focused on making a meaningful impact in our industry and community. If you have ideas or suggestions for upcoming initiatives, events, or areas of improvement, please don't hesitate to reach out. Your input is invaluable in shaping the direction of our chapter.

Thank you for your continued support and involvement. I look forward to the opportunities that lie ahead and to a successful second half of the year filled with learning, collaboration, and progress.

Thank you,

Janelle Adeloga A. Parra, SR/WA, R/W-AMC
Chapter 1 President
International Right of Way Association
janelleparra.irwa1@gmail.com
(626) 347-7202

WHAT YOU DO AT OFFICE ...DOESN'T ALWAYS STAY AT THE OFFICE

By Michael Yoshiba, Esq.

Richards Watson & Gershon APC

The information gathered by right of way agents through the course of their work is necessary for supporting and defending condemnation lawsuits, project audits, public records requests, and occasionally employee performance or disciplinary reviews. Right of way agents use public agency-provided equipment to generate and retain various forms of information throughout the course of their work assignments. It is not unusual for right of way agents to use their own personal communication devices to further their work assignments or for right of way agents to use the public agency's business equipment for personal reasons. There are adverse consequences, however, when mixing business and personal information. Vigilance and discipline minimizes adverse consequences and potential embarrassment.

THINK TWICE

Upon returning to work from his wedding and honeymoon vacation and celebration, Right of Way agent Rick was served with a Disciplinary Action notice by his employer Agency. The notice stated that the Agency was going to reduce his pay for 18 months, he would be demoted from his current job classification, and an adverse action letter was to be placed in his permanent employment file. Welcome home Rick.

Several months before Rick's vacation, the Agency's computer network technicians discovered that the response time for employees using the internet through the Agency's computer system was exceedingly slow, despite the addition of greater internet bandwidth. Upon further investigation, the technicians learned that the computer system was being slowed by employees accessing inappropriate "adult-related" internet sites. In response to this problem, the Agency has computer monitoring software to identify and track employees accessing inappropriate internet sites.

The Agency soon learned that the inappropriate internet usage was so prevalent among employees that the Agency could only bring disciplinary action against the most egregious offenders. Rick was one of those persons. Records tied to Rick documented hundreds of hours of inappropriate internet usage. The Agency expanded their investigation and collected Rick's building entry card usage, computer log-in records, phone records, computer use and timesheets.

Rick denied the charges of inappropriate computer usage and claimed that someone else must have stolen his password and log-in information. But the disciplinary review panel hearing officer was not convinced that someone had stolen Rick's password. Not coincidentally, the inappropriate internet usage ceased only while Rick was on vacation.

But even more alarming was the unintended result of the investigation where it was found that Rick had used his assigned work computer and Agency cell phone for lengthy calls to family members during work hours, shopping online, paying personal bills, and executing transactions with his stock market "day trading" account. The Agency-owned devices and the Agency's backup data system had stored much of Rick's personal information; credit cards, pin numbers, bank account information and his family's social security numbers. Rick escaped further discipline by accepting a settlement offer in compromise.

DATA

Computers store passwords and logon data, e-mail, contact information, photographs, videos, audio, correspondence, internet search histories, spreadsheets, calendars and appointment logs. This information is stored in the internal hard-drives and in remote, off-site back-up systems.

Cell phones send all of your information to the virtual storage "cloud". Cloud information includes e-mails, photographs, video, call logs, internet searches, global tracking information and time records. This information is also stored in a removable card called a Subscriber Identity Module, "SIM card", in a non-removable internal memory and some data is kept by the cell phone carrier.

Portable computers and cell phones are business tools but don't filter out use for personal entertainment. Agencies provide these items for employees so they can work remotely, but this also creates the temptation for mixing business and personal use.

PUBLIC vs. PERSONAL

Public records are generally classified as those records that are generated, kept and maintained within the normal course of conducting public agency business. The commingling of personal communications with public agency business information can result in the unintended disclosure of personal information as a public record.

The most common examples of commingling personal and public records are the usage of personal e-mail accounts to respond to or receive public agency e-mail messages and using personal smart cell phones to respond to public agency e-mails messages. The commingling of personal information with business records leads to unintended consequences and costs.

CONSEQUENCES AND COSTS

There is the potential waiver of public agency privileges against disclosure. Each jurisdiction has different laws concerning disclosure of business information. In one jurisdiction, disclosing information that might otherwise be confidential with members of the public can result in a waiver of a public agency's disclosure exemption privileges. (cf. Cal. Gov't. Code § 6254.5) The information released can be embarrassing at best, and at worst, grounds for disciplinary action or termination of employment.

Rick's story highlights the fact that many employee disciplinary actions have been supported by citing to the history of an employee's inappropriate use of business computers and phones for chat rooms, non-business social networking and inappropriate internet searches. Personal information, when discovered, can be used to discredit an individual. Inconsistencies between personal and business records can lead to unflattering contradictions and discredit the strength of facts being attested.

Finally, the time and money spent reviewing and redacting records containing personal and public information is a difficult and time-consuming task for both individuals and attorney.

KEEP THEM SEPARATED

The information generated by cases being handled by right of way agents requires a significant measure of planning. It is critically important that the information generated by right of way agents is appropriately maintained and disposed of pursuant to a thoughtful records management plan. Ask for, review, and be familiar with your own company's document handling plan. Be aware of how your company performs information gathering and storage. Make it the exceptional instance where you reply to an e-mail and start the "chain e-mail" back to the sender.

And finally, it is a good exercise to occasionally remind ourselves that information in an agency's right of way files can be used for audits, litigation, depositions, public records requests, and even employment performance or disciplinary reviews. Make it your unwavering practice to avoid the use of personal cell phones, tablets and personal computers when responding to business related emails, text messaging and phone calls.

FROM THE RELOCATION CORNER

By Dionisio Marquz
Paragon Partners

This year the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) published updated regulations to implement the Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 (Uniform Act) on Federally-funded programs or projects.

Recently I received requests to compare current relocation limits with the previous limits. The following table is provided to serve as quick reference guide. Those working with planning and implementing

acquisition and relocation programs must have full knowledge of all the recent changes to the regulations.

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	Current Limits	Previous Limits
Non-Residential		
Searching	§24.301(g)(18)	§24.301(g)(17)
	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 2,500.00
Reestablishment	§24.304	§24.304 Under MAP-21
	\$ 33,200.00	\$ 25,000.00
Fixed Move Payment	§24.305	§24.305 Under MAP-21
	\$ 53,200.00	\$ 40,000.00
Residential		
Replacement Housing Payment for Homeowner	§24.401(b)	§24.401(b) Under MAP-21
	\$ 41,200.00	\$31,000.00
Replacement Housing Payment for Tenant	§24.402(a)	§24.402(a) Under MAP-21
	\$ 9,570.00	\$7,200.00

The Chapter 1 Relocation Chair encourages and welcomes any suggestions or comments. Please emailed them to dmarquez@paragon-partners.com.

DEDICATION, OPTIMISM, ENERGY

Dear Hometown Members of Chapter 1,

I joined the right of way industry and IRWA almost 20 years ago. Epic Land Solutions hired me and immediately put me into relocation class 501 to prepare for the work I'd be doing for LA Unified School District. That course got me off to a great start.

Then I saw something I'd never seen in my previous professional life: Epic's owners were very involved in IRWA and they approached it with...love. There was business activity, but there was no mistaking the personal relationships each owner had with IRWA members. Chapter 1, 57 and 67 luncheons showed that this was common among members!

So, I jumped into the fray to cultivate the business/personal relationships that are the best part of IRWA. Over time, that led to chapter leadership, then region leadership, then international leadership. Now, I'm running for election to become Secretary to the International Executive Committee.

Over my leadership years, I have realized my three pillars of commitment to the IRWA – Dedication, Optimism and Energy.

I am dedicated to IRWA’s mission and you. I am optimistic about our future – IRWA has an amazing 90-year history, and we build on that history each day. I will bring my energy to everything I do as an IRWA leader to bring our vision to life.

My vision is to advance our world-class education, grow our membership and marketing and increase our networking and connectedness.

To advance education, I will ensure the International Professional Education Committee (IPEC) has the resources and support it needs to implement updates to our existing courses and develop new ones that respond to our evolving market for infrastructure real estate services.

To grow our membership and marketing, I will see that the International Marketing and Membership Committee has the resources and support required to ensure that new and prospective members are aware of all that IRWA has to offer and that the transportation, electric and utility, oil and gas, and public agency sectors know that our Association sets the standards of practice in infrastructure real estate, offering unequalled education and credentialing.

To increase our IRWA networking and connectedness, I will work with our Chapters and Regions to provide resources and support for more networking events and opportunities for current members and prospective ones to build connections with each other, share information and come together to serve our industry and world.

I am dedicated to a vision of advancing our education, growing our marketing and membership and increasing our networking and connectedness; and I am optimistic for the IRWA of the future, an Association filled with positive energy, which continues to put you first!

I look forward to serving you and our great Association! My fellow Chapter 1 members, please vote Ray Mehler, SR/WA, R/W-RAC, on June 4, 2025 in Virginia Beach!

EDUCATION

By Jonathan Quan – Education Chair
City of Los Angeles

I’m excited to fill the role as the Education Chair for 2024-2025. I’ve served the City of Los Angeles for over 5 years while practicing right-of-way appraisal, acquisition, and relocation with the Department of Public Works, Bureau of Engineering over the past 2 years. Prior to my employment with the City, my experience includes property management for multi-tenant retail properties across the United States as well as managing high-rise office and datacenter space in Downtown Los Angeles. As an advocate of continuous learning, I look forward to implementing the Chapter’s Education Plan by scheduling and promoting courses to help members elevate their right-of-way knowledge and achieve IRWA designation goals.

Date	Type	Course #	Course Name	Instructor	For Designation
6/10/2025-6/11/2025	Virtual	C-801	U.S./Canadian Land Titles	Darryl Root R/W-RAC	RWP

Please contact me at jonathan.ch1irwa@gmail.com to request any classes to be added to the curriculum.

HONORING TAMMY RENNE PRICE, RWA



Tammy Renne Price of Culver City
July 23, 1963 - March 12, 2025

It is with deep sadness that we announce the passing of Ms. Tammy Renne Price on Wednesday, March 12, 2025. Tammy worked for Los Angeles County for eight successful years in the Survey/Mapping and Property Management Division of the Real Estate Services Section. She was a dedicated member of the IRWA Chapter 1, where she served as a Course Coordinator for educational courses over her 6 years of membership.

Tammy touched countless lives with her warmth and kindness, leaving behind cherished memories that will forever resonate in the hearts of her family and friends. She was laid to rest on April 14, 2025, at the Hanford Cemetery District in Hanford, CA.

Tammy Renne Price will be missed. But not forgotten.