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Cover photo credit Jennifer Schilling
As I wrote this month’s President’s Message, I searched to find the proper phrasing and terminology to use to convey the insights I have gained personally as I reflect on all that has occurred since that day in February when Bill Fulginiti passed from this earthly realm. As I read today’s (9 July 2020) Santa Fe Reporter’s Morning Word email, there was an article on one of my favorite authors, Rudolfo Anaya, and some of the last sentences he wrote that were published prior to his death on June 28—Querencia is love of home, love of place.

The word querencia struck me deep in my heart and my soul because the word embodied everything I wanted to convey in this message. I hope you will think that I have done justice to Rudolfo Anaya’s explanation of querencia, and to his quote from his essay Querencia, Mi patria chica provided at the end.

Those of us who seek elected municipal office do so for querencia of our patria chica and all that entails. It is the same for those of us who announce our candidacy for New Mexico Municipal League officer positions, Director-at-Large positions, District Director positions, and Subsection President positions. In seeking these elective offices and NMML Board and subsection positions we rely heavily on the staff in our municipalities and the League, and on each other to work for the greater good and to secure the future of our municipalities and the League.

In the last three months I have come to realize that when I did seek these elective positions I did not, and I think most of us do not, stop to consider that I might face an event or series of events that would significantly impact and change the way my part of the world, our larger society, and the world as a whole function. I never stopped to think that we would be faced with three events—Bill’s death, a pandemic named coronavirus, and a steep economic downturn—that individually would be impactful, but collectively shook us to our core and caused us to rise to the occasion and adapt.

Working in our municipalities and with each other we have pushed forward to create adaptive strategies to secure the health and welfare of our residents, and the future of our communities. The New Mexico Municipal League Officers and Board of Directors has done the same for the League. To that end, for the first time in 42 years, the New Mexico Municipal League Board of Directors undertook one of its most important duties—appointing an Executive Director—at its regularly scheduled Board Meeting via Zoom on Saturday, June 12, 2020.

In reflecting upon that Board meeting, the weight, and emotion of the decision we were to undertake was palpable—it emanated from the computer screen to envelop all of us via Zoom and the officers that were present in-person in the NMML Board Room in Santa Fe. I thank the Board of Directors and Officers for their attendance at the meeting and their decisions.

My congratulations to AJ Forte on his unanimous appointment by the NMML Board of Directors and Officers as its Executive Director. AJ has demonstrated his considerable aptitude, capacity, and ability to work with the NMML Officers and Board of Directors, League and Fund staff, member municipalities, the Governor, State and Federal Legislators, State and Federal agencies, and the NLC to continue to strengthen the New Mexico Municipal League and the New Mexico Self Insurers Fund in a manner consistent with Bill’s values, teachings, and legacy. I am confident in the knowledge that the League is in excellent hands and the future success of the League is ensured.

In times like these we need special people, like all of you, to step forward for querencia of our patria chica. I ask each one of you to consider the words of Rudolfo Anaya as you serve your communities and consider extending that service to the NMML by running for one of the Officer positions or Director-at-Large positions, your District Director position, or for Subsection President, and participating in our policies and resolutions process and our annual conference. I hope this President’s Message will encourage one or more of the elected officials in the NMML to step forward and submit a letter of interest to the Nominating Committee to be considered as a candidate for the undeclared Director-at-Large position on the NMML Board of Directors. Please send your letter of interest to Anita Tafoya at atafoya@nmml.org by 27 July, 2020.

As always, thank you for your service to your municipality.

We live in a big country, but we also live in the smaller patria chica that contains the villages of the vicinity, los vecinos. Every village or town is a city-state, a patria chica. Love for our querencia spreads out to the larger country. Our love is strong because it has its center at home, in our casita, en los solares, our neighbors, the land, the river, and the llano.

MICHAEL ANNE ANTONUCCI
HONORED AS
2020 CLERK OF THE YEAR

Michael Anne Antonucci started with the City of Raton in 2003 as the City Clerk/Treasurer. She has held that position until 2010 when she left to pursue other opportunities. Michael Anne returned as the City Treasurer in 2013 and resumed the duties of City Clerk in 2017. Michael Anne has provided exceptional professionalism and positive results to the City of Raton during her years of service. In addition to capably performing the duties of City Clerk and Treasurer, Michael Anne has committed additional effort to support the success of the Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee (JJAC) in Raton. JJAC provides critical services to at-risk youth, including Girls Circle, Boys Council, Restorative Justice, and Continuum Funds. While programs like JJAC are not normally a part of the mission of small municipal agencies in New Mexico, the program has thrived in Raton in part because of Michael Anne’s extraordinary support.

Michael Anne has been active in the New Mexico Municipal Clerks and Finance Officers Association and actively participates in and supports the professional training and continuing education opportunities provided by the Association. She is also is active with the Professional Business Women of New Mexico. She has served numerous terms as state president and local president of the organization. She has organized and moderated the Raton/Colfax County Election Candidate Forum for many years to ensure that voters have the opportunity to meet candidates, obtain factual information on ballot measures, and make informed decisions. She has coordinated community initiatives such as the Young Professional Competition and the Business Woman of the Year. Michael Anne has been a leader in organizing annual local events including Colfax County Relay for Life and the Walk Against Domestic Violence.

Michael Anne is one of the most reliable, consistent, accurate, and professional persons that I have ever worked with. She is hard-working, goal oriented, patient and an effective mentor to other staff members. She is the exemplar of the effective and responsible public employee.

Scott Berry, P.E.
City Manager
"Michael Anne's professionalism is beyond repairach. I have consistently observed her working late into the night and on weekend, with never a complaint"

"Michael Anne is truly the gold standard of a City Clerk She goes above and beyond on a daily basis to manage the finances of the City of Raton"

"She set an amazing example of integrity and professionalism for me and the rest of the staff"

"I have known Ms. Antonucci for over 30 years. Through all of these years I have found her to be one of the most dependable and conscientious human beings that I have ever known"
Time is an elusive concept. It is a concept that we all struggle with understanding and consequently we struggle with the necessity of managing time. One classical definition of time is that periodic events serve as a measure of elapsed time. Thus we measure time based upon what happens to us; it becomes an intellectual perception of the spacing of periodic events. If we use this as a working definition of time (there are many other concepts) we come to the inescapable conclusion that if we can somehow control or corral the events in our lives, can somehow manage the time in our lives. If we look at time as a series of connected events, then control over those events leads to control over our time. I think control is a harsh way of looking at this issue, so I would rather describe this as management of the events in our lives, which will lead to the ability to effectively manage time.

So it seems that the ability to effectively manage the events in our lives leads directly to the ability to effectively manage time. I took a class in time management a few years ago and looking back on the materials, I came across a very compelling statement: “The key is to establish selective control: refocus and harness the time you can control, and institute . . . measures to minimize the impact of the demands that you can’t control.” 1 This makes perfect sense. There are clearly events in our lives over which we have no control. One of the exercises in this program was to list out those events in your life over which you have no control.

1 Stephanie Winston, The Organized Executive
and those events over which you have total control. Next to each event I was to write how I felt about that circumstance. It was a very good lesson in finally discovering that there are events over which we have no control, yet we persist in trying to do so. At the same time, there are many events over which we have total control. We as individuals need to focus on the latter in order to achieve a balanced and peaceful life. Kenneth Blanchard is an American author. His most famous book is The One Minute Manager. I think he was spot on when he said “The objective of time management is inner peace.”

We must at the same time be conscious of the fact that time is finite. Until we devise the ability to go back in time, there are no “do overs”. We have to get it right the first time. We must be mindful of how precious time is and how the wasting of time becomes the wasting of one’s life. Every minute becomes precious. I know for me, when I conclude a day that was well planned and objectives were achieved and events were managed, I feel much better at the end of the day. That becomes the goal; a day well planned.

A day well planned starts at the beginning. I start every morning with a view towards planning my day. I try to do this before I begin to undertake any of the daily events with which I have to deal. This period of time allows me to clear my mind and identify those events that will need attention. By taking the time to reflect and identify events that will need attention, I have taken the first step towards a day well planned. A day well planned begins with a list of what you want to accomplish or a list of events with which you must deal. Lists have been criticized as contributing to stress and that feeling of being overwhelmed. But a properly constructed “to do” list also serves as a “got done list.” There is no better feeling than that of being able to check off or strike through something that is on a “to do” list, because that act creates a “got done list.” Better yet, create a separate “got done” list in addition to the “to do” list. For me, physically moving an event from one list to another is very empowering. Look at you list as an opportunity to get something done, not as a series of obligations that are piling up.

One way to reduce the stress associated with a daily event list is to assign each event or project a priority. I do this by assigning a letter value to each event or project I have identified as an event that needs my attention. I assign a value of “A” to those projects that are of the highest priority. A value of “B” represents those events or tasks that are important, but not of the highest priority, and a value of “C” represents those tasks that I would ultimately like to find the time to undertake. Here is a hint—proper planning will enable me to create the time to address even the tasks that have a “C” value. Further prioritization may also result in assigning a numerical value to tasks or events that rate the same value. Once this planning process is completed, you have a roadmap for success. You have identified those events that are of the highest value, those events that are important but not critical, and you have identified events that you would simply like to get off your plate.

Some people may look at this as the dreaded “to do” list, a smothering list of projects that closes in on us and controls all our daily activities. I look at my event list as an opportunity to move events to the “got done” list. There may be detours along the way. I mark every action on my calendar. I may delegate an activity to another. If I do delegate, I annotate the list accordingly. I may decide to attack the event at a later time. I call this planning forward, and I indicate on the calendar that I have planned it forward, and ideally the date to which I have planned it forward. If dealing with an event is begun but not finished, a notation will indicate that the event is proceeding. I must say that there is no greater joy that to look at a daily list and see a bunch of check marks indicating additions to the “got done” list. For those procrastinators in the group, if you find that your calendar has many events that have been planned forward, maybe it is time to re-evaluate the ranking of the event, or even consider dropping the event altogether. This is another way of adding events to the “got done” list. The more you grow your “got done” list, the better you will feel at the end of the day.

2 Ken Blanchard
OUR TOWN:
LOS RANCHOS DE ALBUQUERQUE
As a life-long North Valley resident, Village Trustee for 26 years, and now Mayor of Los Ranchos, I am proud to highlight our village, which is a jewel in the heart of New Mexico.

Los Ranchos sits in the middle of Bernalillo County’s North Valley, among the Rio Grande bosque and a laced network of acequias irrigating fields, vineyards, small farms, and gardens. This green space is an oasis in the urban Albuquerque metro area.

The Village of Los Ranchos is home to about 6,000 residents who chose Los Ranchos for its rural character. Our community is also home to the historic Los Poblanos Inn and Organic Farm, Casa Rodeña winery, and the Unser Racing Museum. Our agricultural heritage presents itself through miles of scenic views along Rio Grande Boulevard. With a climate like that found in the south of France, sunflowers and lavender are plentiful in summer. In fact, Los Ranchos hosts a lavender festival each year celebrating that fragrant and versatile plant.
It is not unusual to see a pair of horseback riders trotting down Guadalupe Trail, bird enthusiasts heading into the bosque shaded with Cottonwoods, or families on bicycles heading to the Saturday Growers’ Market. This is what makes our village special and a perfect mix of rural and urban life.

Los Ranchos began as an agricultural community, and we strive to continue that character today with continued agricultural practices like wide open fields and flood irrigation. Irrigation, vital to agriculture, was first seen in the area with a system developed by Native American pueblos. Later, Hispanic settlers expanded upon the existing infrastructure and developed their own system for irrigation, acequias. However, the area was consistently flooded by the meandering Rio Grande and there was a lack of drainage until modern flood control measures took hold. The shape and character of the Village is largely defined by these irrigation channels, including long, narrow tripa lots, tree-lined ditches, and abundant agricultural activities.

Our community showcases our agricultural heritage at the Larry P. Abraham Agri-Nature Center, where this season we are experimenting with crops like hops, wine grapes, and different varieties of lavender. The Center is home to our small-scale agricultural programs and partnerships, namely New Mexico State University’s Cooperative Extension Program and Rio Grande Community Farm. To fully realize the potential of this site and support agriculture education, we are preparing to renovate the main building and parts of the site to add features that support value-added processing, such as cold storage, essential kitchen equipment, and a washing station for harvests. We are excited to see the center become a hub for agriculture education and world class center of excellence.

On the east side of our community sits our main street, Fourth Street, home to part of Old Route 66 and the historic trading route El Camino Real. The Fourth Street Revitalization Project is underway to transform Fourth Street from a former auto-centric highway into
a pedestrian-oriented main street. We recently completed Phase I, which included installation of sidewalks made possible through a lane reduction, street lighting, a green infrastructure/low-impact development (GI/LID) stormwater system, agriculture-rooted edible landscaping, and a public parking lot. Phase II will take the project improvements to the end of our boundary. We have secured funding for preliminary engineering and are eager to keep moving forward. Stroll down our newly refurbished business corridor to find antique stores, salons and spas, artist studios, farm and feed stores, and world class dining.

Our focus on Fourth Street doesn’t stop with the Revitalization Project. A years-in-the-making project, Village Center, begins as we finalize an agreement with a developer for a mixed-use residential and commercial development on Fourth Street. The goal is to create a pedestrian-oriented destination for those in and around our community. The plans include multi-family residential, micro-retail, and senior housing, all which will grow and support our community. Senior housing is a crucial piece of this project, as it is a way to help our older population age in place instead of leaving our community when they downsize.

For a small municipality, we have a lot going on. Our projects range from large infrastructure improvements, including a complete redesign of Fourth Street and Village Center development, to small scale agriculture, highlighted by test beds for hops and lavender at the Agri-Nature Center. Surrounded by the urban Albuquerque metro area, our charm is in our distinct brand: a quiet, semi-rural, agricultural community. We are committed to preserving our centuries-old traditional land uses and maintaining our rural character, while providing new opportunities for economic advancement. Come see us and why so many call Los Ranchos home.
Rather than cancel the annual New Mexico Economic Development Course in the face of COVID-19, organizers are pleased to announce the “Basic Course,” as it’s colloquially known, will be delivered online in 2020.

Students will begin the six-week course in mid-July via Zoom. Lectures, discussions and case studies will be conducted remotely and over a longer time frame than in previous years, allowing people who couldn’t attend in person in the past to participate from their office or home.

Like many conferences and other congregate events scheduled this year, basic economic development courses have been canceled across the country due to the pandemic. New Mexico’s economic development course organizers believe teaching the course is as important as ever, particularly in light of the economic devastation caused by COVID-19.

“We wish we were convening the course at Western New Mexico University this year, as we’ve done for decades,” course director Noreen Scott said. “With COVID-19 still such a looming threat, that’s just not possible; but we’re as resolved as ever to teach community leaders how to marshal their economies to recovery.”

Starting with an afternoon orientation on July 19, students will attend lectures and discussions led by nationally known economic developers every Friday for six weeks. Course curriculum covers the core components of economic development, including business retention and expansion, recruitment, workforce development, real estate, finance, marketing and ethics.

Students will also break into groups for a couple of hours each week to apply themselves to job creation case studies that explore real communities facing real challenges. Students are exposed to a powerful and
much-needed framework and methodology for planning and managing the complexity of an economic development program, Scott said.

Sanctioned by the International Economic Development Council (IEDC), the course covers the fundamental building blocks of an economic development strategy. The basic course is the first step in becoming a credentialed economic development professional, but it is not just for economic development practitioners.

Scott said the course is ideal for current or aspiring economic development practitioners, local- and tribal-government officials, financial institutions, chambers of commerce, public utility professionals, workforce developers, and a variety of professionals interested in promoting the economic prosperity of their communities.

“With not only struggling community economies, organizations and local governments are facing budget shortfalls, we’re sensitive to needed belt-tightening,” she said. “This year’s online Basic Course allows many professionals to attend without incurring additional costs of travel and lodging.”

The $495 fee ($595 for out-of-state attendees) covers registration, books and course materials. Rural scholarships are available by calling Noreen Scott at (505) 710-7172. Participants should register by July 10. Visit www.iaecondev.org/registration, or email basicecondevcourse@gmail.com.

Grow It! is an economic development initiative of the New Mexico Municipal League, which partners with the Finance New Mexico project to deliver business-building information and resources to every community in the state. Learn more at www.GrowItNM.org.

Grant Taylor is executive director of the Community Economics Laboratory, an economic development think tank based in Albuquerque.
ANATOMY OF A COLLABORATIVE

The New Mexico COVID-19 Emergency Supply Collaborative’s success in delivering much-needed supplies to medical facilities is a story worth sharing.

During the collaborative’s inception, our office was closed but NM MEP’s work kept going. MEP’s Innovation Directors (IDs) met weekly with businesses or regional partners. For example, Denise Williams was part of the Farmington group, which included the City of Farmington, 4-Corners Economic Development, Farmington Chamber of Commerce, SBDC, WESST and other service providers at San Juan College — and more. The meetings focused on what could be done for local businesses.

“First projections indicated there would be a shortage of 3,000 ventilators in New Mexico,” said Jennifer Sinsabaugh, NM MEP chief executive officer. “Our team tore apart the blueprint of ventilators to figure out how they could be made locally. We looked for alternative materials — would metal work if we couldn’t reproduce a plastic part? We identified clean rooms at manufacturing facilities in preparation for assembly. We inventoried local capabilities and pressed people into worst-case scenario preparation. Fortunately, the curve flattened and the worst case didn’t occur, but people were working in the background throughout. The human-to-human collaboration ensured that supplies were delivered when and where they were needed. And that ‘human touch’ of people working together saved lives.”

What began as a collaborative trio of AFRL, New Mexico Tech and MEP quickly grew to include the many companies that have made a difference. (https://newmexicomep.org/heartfelt-gratitude/)

IDs were and still are available for consultations, advice, connections and projects, and are providing guidelines for how to ramp back up safely. Most IDs are still working from home, but the NM MEP Albuquerque office is open for appointments, using social distancing and other gating criteria.
All of us at New Mexico MEP want to acknowledge the nimble and innovative contributions the following companies have made in the fight against COVID-19.

The manufacturers that have uploaded their capabilities to the NM Emergency Supply Sourcing and Manufacturing website https://www.nmcovid19.org/. That information has resulted in PPE and other needed supplies being made available to health and emergency responders and community members. The directory demonstrates businesses stepping up, as well as needs still unmet.

Rescue TnT of Bernalillo, which is making containment masks: https://www.rescuetnt.com/

Marpac of Albuquerque, producing alternatives to the N-95 mask needed to protect healthcare workers on the frontlines: https://www.marpacmedical.com/

Rhino Health of Church Rock, which has increased production and distribution to local hospitals of Nitrile gloves: https://rhinohealthgloves.com/

Mezel Mods of Rio Rancho (https://mezelmods.com/) using its 3D-printing capabilities to produce face shields that are provided to local first responders through the New Mexico Makers United collaborative (https://nmmakersunited.com/). Kristin Mezel, co-owner of pinball company Mezel Mods, started the 3-D printing collaborative with Andrew Woodward of Process Art Studios in March to respond to the needs of medical workers. Other companies with 3D capabilities are now participating.

Exhib-it!, of Albuquerque, which has pivoted to produce the Bannitizer sanitizing station that encourages disinfectant practices for patrons, employees and guests: www.exhib-it.com

ABC Canvas of Farmington now making face masks for the local community. www.abccanvasinc.com

Navajo Spirit of Gallup now making face masks for the Navajo Nation. https://navajospirit.com/

Three Rivers Brewery of Farmington making and donating hand sanitizer to first responders. The brewery has also shared its process with other distilleries. www.threeeiversbrewery.com


Humble Brands of Taos now making hand sanitizers. https://humblebrands.com/

Rolling Still Distillery of Taos now making hand sanitizers. https://www.rollingstill.com/

Just Click Printing of Farmington now making masks. https://socialmasks.com/

HEARTFELT GRATITUDE
HOW RESILIENT ARE COMMUNITIES TO DISASTERS?

CENSUS BUREAU’S NEW EXPERIMENTAL CRE TOOL SHOW HOW VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES ARE TO DISASTERS, INCLUDING COVID-19

By Gabriel Amaro and Kate Willyard

For the first time, using newly developed experimental estimates, the U.S. Census Bureau has created a tool to help measure the degree of a community’s resilience in the face of disasters and other emergencies.

The Community Resilience Estimates (CRE) is a resilience measure that identifies a community’s ability to endure, respond and recover from the impact of disasters.

The Community Resilience Estimates can be used for any purpose where specific risk factors are useful at low levels of geography.

Individuals with three or more risk factors – from health and income to age and living conditions – are considered high risk. Likewise, communities are high risk if at least 30% of their population has three or more risk factors.

The estimates combine 2018 American Community Survey 1-year microdata and data from Population Estimates with publicly available data from the 2018 National Center for Health Statistics National Health Interview Survey to identify the population most at risk of not being able to endure the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic.

The risk factors include: aged 65 and above; low-income household; single or no caregiver household; household communication barrier; employment status; disability status; physical crowding; lack of health insurance; respiratory disease; heart disease; and diabetes.

Geography

Preliminary results show that 34% of counties in the South, particularly in Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, and Arkansas, have at least 30% of their population high risk.

We also see higher numbers of high-risk counties...
in Mississippi, Georgia, and further along the coast in Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia. Rural counties are far more likely to have greater proportions of high-risk populations. Thirty percent of all rural counties are high-risk compared to 14% of all urban counties.

Sociodemographic

Some of the factors that are associated with more high-risk communities include:
- Low income, especially in rural communities.
- Greater proportion of single mothers.
- Majority Black and Hispanic population.
- Greater proportion of residents 65 and older, a population at significant risk for infection and developing severe illness.

Disaster Preparedness Tool

According to the CDC, as of today, there are 2.5 million confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the United States and 125,000 deaths.

Stakeholders can use CRE in addition to other tools to help combat the current crisis and plan for future health and weather-related disasters.

Improved readiness can mitigate the impact of disasters on at-risk populations as well as the economic burden on individuals, households, and governments.

With the release of CRE, the Census Bureau is becoming a leading provider of accurate data valuable to emergency responders and disaster recovery stakeholders.

In response to COVID-19, the Census Bureau has released several tools in recent weeks to help monitor the economic and demographic health of the nation: Small Business Pulse Survey; Household Pulse Survey; and the COVID-19 Hub.

Gabriel Amaro and Kate Willyard are survey statisticians in the Social, Economic, and Housing Statistics Division.
MORE STATES PUSH COVID-19 CLAIMS TO WORK COMP; POTENTIAL COST ANYONE’S GUESS

By Jim Sams

Regulators and lawmakers in more states are demanding that workers who claim they were sickened by COVID-19 get a fair hearing, if not an outright presumption in their favor.

The Wyoming House of Representatives and Senate both passed a bill on Friday that creates a presumption that any workers’ covered by the state’s monopoly workers’ comp system had an increased risk of contracting COVID-19. Claimants will still be required to prove the disease was contracted from work.

Also last week, the Arizona Industrial Commission issued a “substantive policy statement” that workers’ compensation insurers cannot categorically deny COVID-19 claims.

“All claims must be reviewed and investigated in good faith,” the statement says. “Claim denials related to COVID-19, like any claim denial, must be ‘well-grounded in fact’ and ‘warranted by existing law’ (or based upon a good faith argument for the extension, modification, or reversal of existing law).

The commission said the statement is advisory only. It cites to several commission decisions that establish insurers may not unreasonably issue a notice of claim status without adequate supporting information.

Several states have gone much further. California Gov. Gavin Newsom issued an executive order creating a presumption that COVID-19 contracted by any employee who had to work from home was the result of on-the-job exposure. Employers are required to decide whether to accept or deny those claims within 30 days, but workers must submit medical confirmation that they were infected by the novel coronavirus within 14 days.

Administrative orders or legislation requiring coverage for first responders, health care workers or other essential workers have been issued by at least 11 other states so far. (That doesn’t include an emergency order by the Illinois Workers’ Compensation Commission that was rescinded after a court challenge.)

The Wyoming House File 1002—which now moves to Gov. Mark Gordon’s desk—falls far short of creating a presumption that would ensure infected workers get benefits, said Michael C. Duff, a University of Wyoming law professor who wrote a treatise on the state’s workers’ compensation law.

Duff said in an email that the change in statute does not ease the claimant’s burden to prove medical causation.

“A presumption that the disease ‘arises out of and in the course of employment’ is a complete presumption of causation, not a partial one,” he said. “And I think—knowing the culture as I do—that the hearing officers are very likely to deny the claims.”

The bill also requires the state Workers’ Compensation Division to issue employers an 8.33% premium refund at a cost of $16.5 million. It includes no estimate for an increase in claims cost.

So far, actuarial estimates about the potential cost of COVID-19 claims have been all over the map.

Two of the nation’s largest rating agencies aren’t
even guessing how much COVID-19 might cost in permanent disability benefits, despite evidence that the virus causes long-lasting ill health effects.

The National Council on Compensation Insurance did not factor any PD awards into its projection of potential workers’ compensation costs, which ranged from $2.2 billion best case to $81 billion worst case. NCCI released the projections along with a tool that one can use to change assumptions about the share of workers get infected, but none of those assumptions include any PD costs.

The New York Compensation Insurance Rating Bureau estimated that a creating a statutory presumption that COVID-19 is an occupational disease would cost $31 billion — more than three times the current total system costs of $8.7 billion. That estimate included $13.6 billion in death claims and $7.4 billion in temporary disability benefits, but no permanent disability.

“The long-term health impact of the COVID-19 virus is presently unknown,” the NYCIRB report says.

NCCI declined to projected any PD costs for the same reason.

A report by Bloomberg News last week suggests that there is reason to suspect COVID-19 will cause at least some permanent disability. Bloomberg reported that 14 recovered patients in Wuhan, China had not fully recovered normal functioning regardless of the severity of their symptoms. Another study of CT scans taken of 90 Wuhan coronavirus patients found that of the 70 discharged from the hospital, 66 had mild to substantial residual lung abnormalities.

Actuaries for the California Workers’ Compensation Insurance Rating bureau, unlike their colleagues at NCCI and NYCIRB, did venture an estimate on permanent disability claims.

**WCIRB’s mid-range projection** says 20,300 out of a total of 472,900 COVID-19 claims will result in permanent disability. The WCIRB assumed that 20 percent of the critical COVID-19 claims will have some form of PD, resulting in an average rating of 20% with an average cost of $22,000 in indemnity costs.

The total costs are projected at $100 million for permanent disability payouts and $100 million for temporary estimate.

On the scale of California’s system, PD appears to be a small impact. The big money goes to hospitalization costs.

The bureau projected 70,900 cases will result in hospitalization but not admission to an intensive care unit, costing $53,400 per claim. Another 20,300 cases will require intensive care, at a cost of $137,800 for each claim. However, 3,300 cases would result in death, costing $1.5 billion.

WCIRB projects total costs of $11.2 billion under its mid-range estimate.

Alex Swedlow, president of the California Workers’ Compensation Institute, said the WCIRB estimate looks reasonable to him. Swedlow said 80 percent of COVID-19 cases do not require hospitalization. Of the 20 percent who do need to be hospitalized, about a third will require admission to an intensive care unit.

He said actuaries have no real data on which to base any solid estimates on the percentage of cases that will result in permanent disability.

“The industry is trying to get hands around basic issues of compensability,” Swedlow said. “The data will tell us the degree that PD will become a real issue in this.”

*Sams is editor of the Claims Journal, a part of the Wells Media Group.*
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LOCAL GOVERNMENTS ARE CENTRAL TO CLEAN ENERGY TRANSITION

By Matthew Mercure

As of March, local governments have signed 335 deals to procure a total of 8.28 GW of renewable energy over the last five years – more than the total energy generation capacity of Alaska, Hawaii, Rhode Island and Vermont combined.

This data was compiled by the Local Government Renewables Action Tracker, a new resource launched by the American Cities Climate Challenge Renewables Accelerator that documents renewable energy deals executed by U.S. city, county and tribal governments.

“Cities are a great catalyst for advancing renewable energy because people pay more attention to what’s happening in their own communities,” says Christine Knapp, sustainability director for Philadelphia.

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“Our deal with a developer to provide 22% of the city’s electricity from a 70 MW solar facility generated so much interest from local institutions on how they could follow suit that we formed the Climate Collaborative of Greater Philadelphia to share knowledge among all these groups. Now, members of the collaborative are announcing their own clean energy deals,” she adds.

Some of the largest deals from the last five years include a 50 MW solar deal by the small city of Sanford, Maine, and a 100 MW deal signed by Cincinnati, one of the biggest municipal solar projects in the country and one that helps the city meet its goal to reduce citywide carbon emissions 80% by 2050.

More cities and counties are setting climate and clean energy goals while the cost of renewable energy continues to decrease, in many cases making renewables a cheaper option than fossil fuels. For many cities, a clean energy transition also means the creation of jobs, economic development and public health improvements – like cleaner air.

The Local Government Renewables Action Tracker was created by the Renewables Accelerator, an initiative of Bloomberg Philanthropies’ American Cities Climate Challenge, to show and support the growing shift by local governments toward clean energy. By documenting the actions that local governments can take to advance renewables and showing the collective impact these actions can have, more cities and counties should feel empowered to do the same.

The tracker consists of two components: a transaction map that shows renewable energy deals that U.S. local governments have executed since 2015 and an engagement map, which highlights examples of efforts by local governments to advance their renewable energy goals by working with local utilities, regulators and legislators.

The Renewables Action Tracker is a resource that will continue to be updated as more renewable energy deals are signed and local governments take action to advance their renewable energy options.

For more information on the Renewables Accelerator and the Renewables Action Tracker, click here.

NMML CLASSIFIEDS (CLICK HERE)
2020 CENSUS DEADLINE EXTENDED TO OCTOBER 31

The final deadline to complete the 2020 Census has been extended to **October 31** amid the COVID-19 pandemic. You can respond online, over the phone, by mail, or in person. Door-to-door operations that were temporarily suspended in March have now resumed across the state.

Help us get the Census completed The decennial census is a simple 10-question form whose results determine how more than $800 billion in federal funds will be distributed in communities across the nation, including over $7 billion per year in New Mexico. The funding supports roads, schools, healthcare, public safety, and essential service programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and National School Lunch Program.

Research suggests that for every New Mexico citizen not counted in the census accounts for a loss of approximately $3,745 every year!

Learn More
[Complete the Census Online](#)