

## **What Cost's the Same Today as it Did 15 Years Ago?**

**By David Schliek, Chairman**

As you purchase supplies for fire department operations or shop for everyday items, can you find or think of anything that cost's the same as it did fifteen years ago? A ridiculous question you might ask? Nothing has the same cost now as it did in 1994. Not so quick. The cost of many of the certification exams being administered today cost the same as they did in the mid 90's.

You say I can go to the Certification Board's website ([www.mnfirecert.org](http://www.mnfirecert.org)) and see that test registrations start at \$70. That is correct. The reason the cost of the exam to you is only \$35 is the reimbursement the Minnesota Board of Firefighter Training and Education provides. As many of you know, the MBFTE reimburses 50% of the cost of certification examinations. I hope as this latest round of reimbursement requests was applied for this cost saving measure was taken advantage of. Again, **EVERY** examination the Board offers is reimbursable at 50% of its cost.

As stated in earlier reports and articles, certification activity was up over thirty percent compared to last year. The 50% reimbursement feature that is offered by the MBFTE has allowed you to use your certification dollars to go twice as far. Not only do dollars stretch farther for certification, but your entire training budget has been greatly enhanced. It is vital that support for the MBFTE is continued and increased. I urge each of you to look at the benefits provided by this reimbursement money, and lobby your local legislators for its increase.

As the first round of the fall season's firefighter classes comes to a close, the use of online testing has begun in many technical colleges across the state. Exams have been conducted at St. Cloud Technical College, Lake Superior College, and soon at Mesabi Range Community and Technical College. I am thinking that is the beginning of a long list of institutions that will soon be offering this convenience to their students. Feedback from program managers as well as students has been very positive. Every written test the Board offers can be delivered in this format. Does your local technical college offer this feature? I would ask the question.

A new marketing/communication tool the Board is beginning is the announcement of a "Facebook" page. This social networking opportunity allows the Board to reach out to individuals that may not be familiar with its traditional ways of disseminating information. We look for this new communication tool to attract many new users to the certification process as well as keep existing users better informed. A better informed fire service makes better decisions.

You may have heard of the "Rescue" certifications the Board has been working on. The ProBoard has reviewed and approved the examination process and we are waiting for the same from IFSAC. From IFSAC administration, this review process will be completed by the end of the year. Early in 2010 these certifications should be available for examination by Minnesota's fire service. Watch the website for this announcement. In the mean time, start practicing those ropes and knots.