

# **Berks County Fire Service Working Group Meeting Minutes**

**March 25, 2010**

## **ATTENDANCE**

---

ZONE 1	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bob Schlegan (46)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Scott Yenser (21)
ZONE 2	<input type="checkbox"/> Scott Reeser (82)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Eric Schrack (41)
ZONE 3	<input type="checkbox"/> Lester Feick (27)	<input type="checkbox"/> Bob Martin (47)
ZONE 4	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Scot Landis (67)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bruce Longenecker (79)
ZONE 5/6	<input type="checkbox"/> Matt Gehman (22) <input type="checkbox"/> Mike DeTurck (25)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chris Schaeffer (20) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Vice-Chairman, Chris Stevens (17)
ZONE 7	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Michael Moyer (RFD)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ron Wentzel (RFD)
BERKS COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY SERVICES	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Brian Gottschall	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Craig Wanner
BERKS COUNTY FIREMAN'S ASSOCIATION	<input type="checkbox"/> Dick Trostle	
BERKS COUNTY FIRE CHIEF'S ASSOCIATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Leon Grim	
BERKS COUNTY FIRE POLICE ASSOCIATION	<input type="checkbox"/> Bob Englebach	
OTHERS:	<u>Woody Neiswender (DES) &amp; Ashton (DES)</u>	

---

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Chris Stevens at 1825 hours in the Berks County Department of Emergency Services Conference room, located in the Direct Link Building, Bernville Road, Leesport, PA.

## **DISCUSSION**

Brian Gottschall reported on the following:

- 1) The final designator system for the Berks County police departments was approved by the Police Chiefs' Association and will be deployed on April 12, 2010. A copy of the designators with explanations was provided to those in attendance. Brian states that these designators will be for the police frequencies only; for any multi-discipline incident the police departments have been ordered to use plain-speak i.e. "Western Berks Patrol 5" or "Exeter K-9 1".
- 2) The East-Central Counter-Terrorism Task Force has secured funding for a public alert system. There are two components to this system:
  - o PUBLIC NOTIFICATION: This system will be available via e-mail and wireless devices in the form of text and will alert the general public to regional information that

## ***Berks County Fire Service Working Group Meeting Minutes***

is appropriate (weather, major incidents impacting large areas, etc). There is no cost to register.

- EMERGENCY SERVICES: This system will also serve as our new text paging provider. There is unlimited character space available, so the standard 160-character SMS texting will be no more. Additionally, specific fire and EMS agencies will be able to manage their own volunteers and/or staff; each agency will need an administrator who can access any computer with web access and the proper credentials.

The implementation of this new system is 90-120 days as of March 25, 2010. There was some discussion on this topic (mostly in the form of explanatory questioning) but no concerns from the group.

- 3) Computer Aided Dispatch: While the demonstrations are complete for the New World Systems "Aegis" Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD), little feedback has been provided from anyone. Brian urges anyone who was able to attend one of the three informational sessions to provide feedback as soon as possible. It is important to note that this proposed CAD system does NOT include field use for fire and EMS agencies (the costs for licensing and infrastructure). DES is going to propose to the Berks County Commissioners that any fire or EMS agencies wishing to be a part of the system bear the costs for compatible hardware and licensing (\$1500-1700 per unit), as well as 16% annually for a service contract (approximately \$300 per unit). Connectivity would also need to be provided by the fire or EMS agency via an air card.
- 4) High-Band Paging SOG (SOP?): A few clarifications were made regarding this document, and a few questions were answered (mostly regarding wording). All zones voted unanimously to approve the document as written, and DES will implement the policy immediately.
- 5) Hamburg tower site: The 'order to proceed' was received by DES today (3/25/2010). On Thursday 4/1/2010 the necessary equipment will be installed on the tower. On Monday 4/5/2010 the high-band paging system will go into backup status so that re-timing and re-configuring can be allowed to tie the Hamburg tower into the existing system, thus completing the project. If all goes well on 4/5, the 11th and final tower will be operational.
- 6) Operation Lifesaver: The Berks County Sheriff's Department is implementing this program which involves tracking wristbands for targeted citizens of Berks County (senior citizens with dementia, handicapped citizens, children, etc.) and tracking units for emergency services. Originally it was planned to deploy these tracking units to the county EMS agencies, however it was felt that the system would be better utilized (from a search and rescue standpoint) by the county fire agencies. Brian asked that each zone representative take this information back to their respective zones and solicit input for any fire company/department that would be interested in obtaining a tracking unit at no cost. At this point in time there are no limits to the number of tracking units.
- 7) New countywide radio system: The Kimball Phase I report will go to public consumption (in pdf format) without appendices on the Berks DES website in the very near future. Hard copies of this report were given to each zone representative in attendance. The Kimball report is an extension of the CTA report and also recommends a trunked

# ***Berks County Fire Service Working Group Meeting Minutes***

700MHz simulcast radio system with 13 tower sites and 10 channels. It is the general opinion that the towers and channels are estimated low and will most likely need to be increased to meet the overall demands within Berks County. By the time of deployment, this system will be Phase II compliant and essentially double the number of available channels (TDA compression from 12.5 to 6.25). This system will also be P25 compliant. DES understands the feelings of the Berks fire services and agrees that this system must also have analog channels available for fireground operations. Originally Brian reported that the City of Reading was not going to be a part of this system, however Chief Moyer stated that this may not be the case but was unable to comment further. Should the City "buy-in" to the new radio system, those 800MHz frequencies would be integrated into the overall project and re-licensed county-wide, thereby expanding the channel capabilities even further.

DES is also considering dual-band radios and allowing end-users to tie in their cross-band repeaters, however this will be an uphill battle since it will effectively increase the overall cost of the project. Brian added that the County Commissioners are looking at the possibility of a lease-purchase program which would stretch out the end-user's payments and possibly eliminate the need for dual-band radios and integration of the cross-band repeaters. Brian made a point to mention that - at this time - Berks County is NOT interested in owning field-user equipment.

OPTION #1: Berks County purchases everything and end-users pay the debt back to the county

OPTION #2: Berks County uses purchasing leverage to get the best bulk pricing available.

Given that the City of Reading may now be part of this project, Brian envisions three possible models:

MODEL #1: Only Police, EMS, and Fire countywide and Reading

MODEL #2: Police, EMS, Fire, Public Works countywide and Reading

MODEL #3: Only Police, EMS, and Fire countywide; all public safety and public works for Reading

The Berks County Fire Police Association has already made it clear that they do not intend to phase out their existing system.

## **ADDITIONAL TOPICS OF DISCUSSION:**

**Zone 2 Tactical Frequency:** Zone 2 has requested 33.80 as the official tactical frequency for working incidents within the zone. Brian responded that should Zone 2 make this a practice they are licensed to use the frequency.

**Chimney Fire Addition to Run Cards:** It was posed to DES as to whether the run card templates are "set in stone"; DES replied affirmatively. DES further stated that they will NOT support the addition of a chimney fire category because that will involve the call taker asking a more specific set of questions ("Is the fire in the house or just in the chimney, or has it extended beyond the chimney?"). This could effectively delay fire department response and potentially create victims. A chimney fire is a fire within a structure and will be treated as such from DES.

# ***Berks County Fire Service Working Group Meeting Minutes***

Chris suggested that companies could possibly design their first alarm structure fire light and second alarm heavy to accommodate for the lack of this category.

Box Numbering: There was some brief discussion on a county-wide box numbering system. From the field user perspective this is not a critical piece of information, however it could be from an administrative standpoint. It was agreed that 100-999 box numbers would be for area boxes, and 1000-9999 for targeted hazard boxes.

ECCTTF: Ron Wentzel reports progress in the past year. The decon strike team has developed an SOG, and there is a decon unit at Company 25 available countywide. There are also two atmospheric monitoring strike teams available in the region - one unit in Schuylkill County and one in Northumberland County. The CART team has also developed an SOG, and this team can be deployed, upon request, for both small and large incidents.

Chris reminded the group that there are two items on the table that need to be discussed at future meetings:

- 1) The field user portion of the radio SOG's needs to be completed. Chuck Neubauer had started this project several months ago and since his departure from the Working Group it seems as if this project has lost some momentum. Chris asked all of the reps to think about this and plan on a request for a few volunteers to work on this as a sub-committee.
- 2) Chris also asked everyone to think about the overall concept of task forces and how they are created and deployed. There have been a few in the works within the past six months, and while none seem to be unnecessary, the Working Group may want to work on some type of implementation guidelines. There are several in the county involving tankers, brush, water rescue, RIT, technical rescue, etc. and it's important to recognize legitimate task forces while taking a closer look at task forces that are created by a few entities that are not zone-regulated. There was some discussion on this topic and this will be looked at in future meetings

The next meeting will be held on Thursday April 29, 2010 at 1815 hours in the conference room of the Berks DES at Direct Link.

The meeting was adjourned at 2050 hours.