Berks County Fire Service Working Group
Meeting Minutes

December 8, 2011

<u>ATTENDANCE</u>

ZONE 1		
X Bob Schegan (46)	**X** Bill Battista (33)	Mark George (11)

ZONE 2		
X Chuck Snyder (50)	**X** Eric Schrack (41)	Ken Quell (37)

ZONE 3	
Lester Feick (27)	Bob Martin (47)

ZONE 4		
Scot Landis (67)	Bruce Longenecker (79)	**X** Mark Hostetter

ZONE 5/6	
Matt Gehman (22)	**X** Chris Schaeffer (20)
X Eric Fox (34)	**X** Chris Stevens (17)

ZONE 7	
Kevin Kulp (RFD)	Ron Wentzel (RFD)

BERKS COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY SERVICES
X Brian Gottschall	**X** Craig Wanner	**X** Tony Flores

BERKS COUNTY FIREMAN'S ASSOCIATION
X Roger Weidenhammer

BERKS COUNTY FIRE CHIEF'S ASSOCIATION
Leon Grim

BERKS COUNTY FIRE POLICE ASSOCIATION
X Bob Englebach

OTHERS:

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Chris Stevens at 1818 hours in the Berks County Department of Emergency Services Conference room, located in the Direct Link Building, Bernville Road, Leesport, PA.

The minutes from the October 28th meeting were approved.

<u>DISCUSSION</u>

Collapse Task Force: Mark Hostetter reported the task force has standardization of equipment report and was seeking grant monies.

Box Alarms: Craig W provided an updated list on box alarm implementation. There are still 4 municipal box alarms not complete which includes Pike Township, Ruscombmanor Township, Earl Township and North Heidelberg Township. If those 4 box alarms are not completed by the time DES is finished inputting the remainder of box alarms into CAD, DES will complete those box alarms at their own discretion. A letter from Cumru Twp was discussed regarding re-defining some call response types. WG was asked to go back to each respective zone for discussion and report. The Cumru Twp letter will be added as an attachment at the end of the minutes.

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Eric Schrack communicated concerns regarding failed responses of multi-purpose units (ex, Rescue-Engine, Engine-Tanker) and how they are to be replaced. Example, a Rescue-Engine fails to respond, is it replaced with another Rescue-Engine, an Engine or a Tanker?? Working Group was asked to approach their respective zone for discussions to report at the January 2012 Working Group meeting.

New World CAD: Craig Wanner reported there were some complications entering EMS run cards which have since been resolved. Run card data entry continues with a target of completion in the 1st quarter of 2012.

RCC: No report. Since the meeting the emergency service entities under the Womelsdorf regional grant received notification of award for mobile radios.

P25: Brian Gottschall reported that fleet mapping is currently underway and tower sites are on-going. Brian stated the Appalachian Trail Conservancy has challenged the right to build a tower site at Pulpit Rock which could potentially affect the tower sites at both Blue Mountain (Strausstown) and Bethel Tower sites. County attorneys are presently reviewing the challenge.
Brian Gottschall also communicated the first radio subscriber sale order meeting has been completed by Motorola for Central Berks of Laureldale. Brian G stated at this time Fire/EMS need to work on their municipalities regarding municipal promissory notes. The Regional Planning Committee gave authority to Berks to acquire additional radio frequencies. By January 2013 Berks County will receive additional 8 frequencies to bring the total available frequencies for the P25 system to 28.

Training: Roger Weidenhammer reported the training committee sent an email survey out to all fire company's regarding training needs and is asking for all fire company's to fill it out and return to the training committee. The training committee is exploring the possibility of a limited training schedule by early 2013.

Pre-Alerts: Zone 1 voted 8 for, 4 against and 1 no vote to bring back pre-alerts on 151.220. Zone 2 voted unanimously against pre-alerts on 151.220.
The remaining zones had no report to give on the issue.

Meeting adjourned at 2107.

The next meeting will be held January 26 2013 at 1815 hours in the conference room of Berks DES at Direct Link.

Respectfully Submitted,
Chuck Snyder, BFSWG Secretary

Cumru Township

FIRE DEPARTMENT

BERKS COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA
1775 WELSH ROAD
MOHNTON, PA. 19540
610-777-1343
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Station 1	Station 2	Station 3
475 Mohns Hill Rd.	453 Church Rd.	743 Mountain View Rd.
Sinking Spring, PA 19608	Mohnton, PA 19540	Reading, PA 19607

TO: Berks County Fire Service Working Group

FROM: Bob Snyder, Assistant Fire Chief

DATE: August 24, 2011

RE: Box Card Proposal: Structure Local assignment

Over the past several months since our jurisdiction migrated to the new Berks County unit-level Box Card system from the old company-level Run Card system, we have been generally pleased with the operational advantages it provides. As we learn more about how the system works in practical applications, we anticipate making further adjustments to our own Box Cards to take better advantage of the efficiencies and advantages afforded by this new system. However, we have noted issues which we believe to be systemic and feel may warrant an adjustment in both the structure of the Box Cards and the associated dispatching procedures to better deliver services to the residents and businesses of Berks County.

Specifically, we have noted the following:

1. The "Hazmat" assignment on the new Box Cards is utilized for a variety of situations involving hazardous materials, including spill control on highways, natural gas leaks in structures, product releases from containers outdoors, and others. On the surface, this process is logically consistent. However, product releases and spills outdoors involve fundamentally different threats to life and property than those occurring indoors and, as such, also require different resources to be deployed.

2. Certain potentially hazardous conditions within structures are not dealt with consistently by dispatchers, presumably because the level of risk they entail is not readily apparent at the time a call is placed and there is no "hard and fast" rule in Comm Center procedures covering how they should be resourced. These include odor investigations inside structures, appliance malfunctions, and similar situations. Calls for service such as these are apparently resourced as "1st alarm" structure assignments or as "miscellaneous fire" resource assignments based on information given by callers. This poses the very real risk of under- or over-resourcing assignments based on imperfect information provided by callers. In turn, this puts dispatchers in an unfair position of having to make determinations on resource needs they should not rightfully have to make and puts responders and citizens at risk due to the potential for sending insufficient resources to safely mitigate the hazards at hand.

We believe both of these problems in the application of the new Box Cards can be rectified with the following simple adjustments to the Box Cards and Comm Center procedure:

1. Redefine the resource assignment block on the Box Cards currently designated as "AFA" to become a "Structure Local Alarm" assignment.

2. Change dispatching procedure to assign the "Structure Local Alarm" resources to calls for service of the following types:
    *   Automatic fire alarms with no additional report of smoke condition or fire evident
    *   Odor investigations with no additional report of smoke condition or fire evident
    *   Appliance malfunctions apparently contained to the appliance itself, with no report of fire evident
    *   Spills or releases of hazardous materials reported inside a structure, including reports of natural gas leaks, heating oil spills, and similar product releases

3. Any report of fire or smoke evident in a structure combined with the situations above would be resourced with the 1st alarm structure assignment and all other calls for service currently dispatched using the 1st alarm structure, hazmat, or miscellaneous fire resource assignments on the Box Cards would continue to be dispatched as they are today.

Based on our own resource assignments and what we have observed about those used by other departments since the inception of the new Box Card system, this would ensure calls for service which could potentially develop into structure fires would be assigned resources appropriate to initiate structural firefighting operations if needed, while hazardous materials releases inside and outside of structures would each be assigned resources more appropriate to the hazards involved.

While we concede this proposal may require further refinement, we believe involving the Fire Service Working Group and the broader fire service in Berks County at this time will lead to the refinements needed to better serve the residents and businesses we are charged with protecting.

We thank you in advance for your consideration, and I would be happy to discuss this further with the Working Group or others as you deem appropriate.