

Berks County Fire Service Working Group Meeting Minutes

May 31, 2012

ATTENDANCE

ZONE 1:	X Bob Schegan (46)	Mark George (11)	
ZONE 2:	Chuck Snyder (50)	X Eric Schrack (41)	X Ken Quell (37)
ZONE 3:	Lester Feick (27)	X Bob Martin (47)	
ZONE 4:	X Scot Landis (67)	X Bruce Longenecker (79)	
ZONE 5/6:	Matt Gehman (97)	X Chris Schaeffer (97)	
	X Eric Fox (34)	X Chris Stevens (17)	
ZONE 7:	X Stephen Serba (RFD)	Thomas Rehr (RFD)	Ron Wentzel (RFD)
BERKS DES:	X Brian Gottschall	X Tony Flores	X Craig Wanner
BCFA:	X Roger Weidenhammer	X Leon Grim	
BCFPA:	X Bob Englebach		
OTHERS:	Fire Chief David Hollinger, Reading Fire Department		

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Chris Stevens at 1820 hours in the Berks County Department of Emergency Services conference room, located in the Direct Link building, Bernville Road, Leesport, PA.

The minutes of the April 26, 2012 meeting was approved as written.

DISCUSSION

ECTTF:

1. Scot Landis relayed that the task force was successful in procuring \$13,000 worth of additional trench/structure collapse equipment.
2. PEMA is making positive movement towards clarifying the USAR program for the Commonwealth; the curriculum is under review so that DHS can approve it.
3. The unspent training monies for the task force region will likely go towards purchasing books for courses, however they are reviewing which books would be an acceptable expenditure.
4. Six members of the regional Incident Management Team were involved in exercises in the Southwest United States recently.

Training Committee: Roger Weidenhammer reports that the Fall 2012 slate of classes has been scheduled by the committee with firm dates set as instructors are acquired. The committee is looking at avenues other than postcards and the website as a means to spread the word throughout the county's fire services regarding training and classes.

CAD Update: Tony Flores reports that the "go live" date for the New World CAD is the week of July 9th. Law enforcement will be trained in mid-June for MCTs, and DES Telecommunicators will be trained from mid to late June.

A brief discussion occurred following Tony's report in regards to Fire and EMS entities changing their run cards. A letter from Cumru Township Fire Department regarding a change to the card structure was also discussed. All items will be reviewed and discussed at a later date, at which time each zone will have an opportunity to provide input and support.

P25 Project:

1. Tower site progress:
 - A. Hamburg, Mt. Penn II, Earl, North Campus, City Hall, Courthouse, BCCC – in-progress or nearing completion.
 - B. Bally, Robeson, North Heidelberg, Centre – to begin soon.
 - C. Ontelaunee, Cumru, Union, Kutztown (zoning), Turnpike, West Penn, Alsace – somewhat behind schedule.
 - D. Bethel, Blue Mountain, Albany, Longswamp – behind schedule.
2. A second version of the Promissory Note has been sent out to the solicitors. At issue is 5 versus 7 years. This is still under debate.
3. The Region 2 (Womelsdorf) grant is almost complete from the radio needs assessment end, and the available residual monies will go towards extending the factory warranty on all dual-band mobiles within this grant, pending Federal approval.
4. The Region 1 (Reading Fire) grant is underway with assessments occurring in a relatively timely fashion.
5. Fleet-mapping of the new radio system is still being tweaked.

Zone 1: A question was raised as to whether the apparatus due on a fire call could be added to the end of the text page; this will be investigated by DES (formatting text capabilities with the new CAD)

Zone 2: Nothing to report.

Zone 3: Nothing to report.

Zone 4: Nothing to report.

Zone 5/6: Suggestion to post out-of-service apparatus on the future WebCAD.

Zone 7: Deputy Chief Serba introduced new Fire Chief David Hollinger to the Working Group. The next Probationary class begins Monday, June 25th.

Fireman's Association: Nothing to report.

Fire Police Association: The radio on the 19th floor of the Courthouse is the last one to be narrowbanded.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2000 hours. The next meeting will be Thursday, June 28, 2012 at the Direct Link building beginning at 1815 hours.

Respectfully Submitted,

Chris Stevens, Chairman



Cumru Township

FIRE DEPARTMENT

BERKS COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA
1775 WELSH ROAD
MOHNTON, PA. 19540
610-777-1343
www.cumrutowhsip.org

Station 1
475 Mohns Hill Rd.
Sinking Spring, PA 19608

Station 2
453 Church Rd.
Mohnton, PA 19540

Station 3
743 Mountain View Rd.
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.