

BERKS COUNTY FIRE SERVICES WORKING GROUP
Meeting Minutes – January 29, 2015

ATTENDANCE:

Zone 1		Matt Brett		Ethan Kunkel		Scott Yenser (alt)
Zone 2		Ken Quell	x	Dean Dalious		
Zone 3		Bob Martin		Corey Houser		Lester Feick
Zone 4	x	Bruce Longenecker		Bob Snyder		
Zones 5/6	x	Chris Stevens	x	Chris Schaeffer	x	Eric Fox
	x	Chris Bickings				
Zone 7		Stephen Serba		Tom Rehr		
BCFA	x	Roger Weidenhammer		Leon Grim		
BCFPA	x	Bob Englebach		J. David Bossard (alt)		
Task Force		Scot Landis	x	Michael Lessar		
Berks DES	x	Brian Gottschall	x	Tony Flores		Matt Stairiker
	x	Todd Boughter	x	Christina Wood		
Forestry 17		Joe Sherman				

*Ron Wentzel, Vice Chair Emeritus

Other attendees: None.

The meeting was called to order at 1825 hours in the Berks County Department of Emergency Services conference room, located in the Direct Link building, Bernville Road, Reading, PA.

The December 11, 2014 meeting minutes were approved with the following corrections:

- Under "Taskforce" change Chief Lassard to Chief Lessar.
- Under "Zone 2" spelling correction for "consensus".
- Under "Zone 5/6" change Chris Bickens to Chris Bickings.

The first order of business for the Working Group is selection of a Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary. This is an annual re-organization task of the Group.

A motion was made and seconded to re-appoint Chris Stevens as Chair. There were no other nominations. Nominations closed.

A motion was made and seconded to appoint Matt Brett as Vice Chair. There were no other nominations. Nominations closed.

There was no nomination for the position of Secretary. This will be tabled until the February meeting. If no Zone representative is willing to fill this position the likely outcome will be a "rotating Secretary" position where each Zone will take turns keeping minutes.

DISCUSSION

East-Central Task Force (Michael): The Fire/Rescue/Haz-Mat committee met recently in Frackville. Several counties are seeking funding for equipment totaling in excess of \$104,000.

BCFA (Roger): General meeting Saturday, January 31, 2015 at the Berks FTC beginning at 1400 hours.

BCFPA (Bob E.): The Zone representatives asked that the Association remind fire police users to conduct traffic control communications on the designated fire police radio talkgroups.

Forestry: There is an upcoming PA 130 and S-190 course being held at Shartlesville Fire Company. The PA 130 dates are Tuesday March 3rd, and Wednesday March 4th, with Field/Skills testing on Sunday March 8th at a location to be determined. S-190 will be held on Tuesday March 10th and Wednesday March 11th. If interested please contact Dean Dalious at 610-488-6620. Class size is limited to 35 students.

Training (Bob Snyder): No report.

Zone 1: Matt Brett (via e-mail) expressed concerns that companies with incidents that require an extra amount of communications aren't being switched over to an Ops talkgroup. Matt was advised that the IC of an incident can request an Ops talkgroup, and dispatch can also assign a talkgroup based on countywide call load and/or information coming in to dispatch that leads to believe the incident could escalate.

Zone 2: Dean Dalious inquired as to whether DES could provide his zone with a list of Chiefs from Zone 2. DES is unable to do so due to privacy reasons. Dean also reported there currently is no alternate for their Zone.

Zone 3: Bob Martin (via phone call prior to the meeting) requested that Zone 4 reps be polled as to whether anyone geographically close to Zone 3 was re-broadcasting Fire A on a VHF high-band frequency. Bruce Longenecker advised that Shillington was doing this. Bob also wanted to advise DES that dispatchers aren't acknowledging and/or monitoring Lebanon County mutual aid resources on U Call.

Zone 4: Nothing official to report, however Bruce Longenecker voiced concerns with the APX 4000 speaker/microphones getting bumped while inside PPE. Discussion. Consensus of the members in attendance was that placement was key to avoiding the accidental "key ups". Bruce went on to explain that they were trying out an XE speaker-microphone. Brian Gottschall retrieved one of these XE speaker-mics to show the group. The PTT button is more recessed as is the emergency button. The speaker-mic is more resistant to flame impingement, however there is no display and no channel select knob. There IS an LED light built in, however it only works in tandem with the APX XE line of radios. These radios are newer releases from Motorola and were not available while agencies were placing their initial radio orders. The APX XE radios cost approximately \$6,000 each.

Zone 5/6: Eric Fox mentioned that there were issues with mutual-aid companies recalling the home company assets without any type of notification to the home company IC; DES' position is that this issue should be resolved between the affected agencies.

Zone 7: Nothing to report.

CAD: Tony Flores reported that there were new identified issues after the infrastructure update on December 2, 2014. A version update was performed the week prior to tonight's meeting with some service interruptions since that update. New World CAD is going to apply some new fixes to the test CAD before releasing them to the main CAD.

DES:

- Todd Boughter reminded Zone reps to take back to their Zones that mutual aid officers should NOT go responding to Berks. If these officers want to announce that they are responding so the home company IC is aware they should simply say "Assistant 200 responding" instead of hailing Berks.
- Brian Gottschall once again reminded everyone that the official process for fielding complaints is as follows: the IC is to call the on-duty Watch Officer in the comm center and file an Incident History Audit (IHA) request. The follow-up will be provided to the IC by DES. The official policy is outlined in the radio SOGs; please refer to them. The Berks Fire Services Working Group is NOT the carrier of individual complaints from the Zones to DES.
- Brian addressed some findings to the audio quality issues. Motorola engineers have looked at everything internal with the radio system and have no definitive answers. That said, two things were identified: 1) Each dispatcher needs to be at a different distance from their microphone for optimum voice quality; this differs from dispatcher to dispatcher, and 2) field users need to be re-trained to talk into the microphone as opposed to talking across the microphone, and to turn into extraneous noise, as the microphones are noise-canceling. Additionally, it was found that field users should have their volume at approximately 2/3 of full volume (APX 6000 and 7000 users) or at volume level 13 on the APX 4000. Anything above these levels will result in audio distortion through the radio speaker.
- In regards to pre-planned events, DES requests that – at a minimum – an agency should be either calling or e-mailing the Watch Officer with the nature, date, and time of the event, and what radio resources are being requested. Ideally, agencies should be submitting an ICS 205 form along with their agency's IAP requesting the radio resources.
- A new form will be posted on the DES website: Radio Subscriber Change Control Form. This form must be completed by field agencies whenever they are 1) adding or removing a radio from their fleet, 2) reassigning a radio within their agency, or 3) the sale or reassignment of a radio from one agency to another. Moving forward this is the only approved method.
- Bill Hein has tendered his resignation from the position of Superintendent of the Fire Training Site. The position will be advertised through Human Resources in the beginning of February.

There was some discussion on whether the Fire Services Working Group needs to continue meeting on a monthly basis now that the new radio system project is complete. It was decided that, rather than the FSWG being the "radio working group" that the body determines other areas of need within the county's fire services. Chris will look through past minutes to see if there were any items or topics that were placed on the back burner and forgotten about (i.e. RIT consortium, countywide SOGs, etc.). Zone reps are tasked with going back to the agencies they represent to solicit input on other ways the FSWG can continue to advance the county's fire services.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2025 hours. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 26 at 1815 hours in the Direct Link conference room.

Respectfully Submitted,
Chris Stevens, Chair