

BERKS COUNTY FIRE SERVICES WORKING GROUP
Meeting Minutes – February 25, 2016

ATTENDANCE:

Zone 1		Matt Brett		Ethan Kunkel		
Zone 2	X	Ken Quell	X	Dean Dalious	X	Cody Rahn
Zone 3		Bob Martin		Lester Feick		Corey Hauser (alt)
Zone 4	X	Bob Snyder	X	Josh Keller		
Zones 5/6	X	Chris Stevens	X	Chris Schaeffer	X	Eric Fox
		Chris Bickings				
Zone 7	X	Tom Kemery		Tom Rehr		Brian Thorpe
BCFA	X	Roger Weidenhammer		Leon Grim		
BCFPA	X	Randy Minninger				
Task Force	X	Scot Landis		Michael Lessar		
Berks DES	X	Brian Gottschall	X	Tony Flores		Matt Stairiker
	X	Todd Boughter	X	Christina Wood	X	Jon Fritz
Forestry 17	X	Rich Deppen				

*Ron Wentzel, Vice Chair Emeritus

Other attendees: None

The meeting was called to order at 1818 hours in the Berks County Department of Emergency Services conference room, located in the Direct Link building, Bernville Road, Reading, PA.

The October 29, 2015 minutes were approved as written.

This is the annual re-organization meeting where a Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary are elected.

Nominations opened for Chair. A motion was made and seconded to re-appoint Chris Stevens as Chair. No other nominations were made. A motion was made and seconded to close nominations. All approved. Chris Stevens is re-appointed as Chair for 2016.

Nominations opened for Vice-Chair. A motion was made and seconded to re-appoint Matt Brett as Vice Chair. No other nominations were made. A motion was made and seconded to close nominations. All approved. Matt Brett is re-appointed as Vice Chair for 2016.

Nominations opened for Secretary. No motions were made. Position will remain vacant for the current time.

DISCUSSION

Forestry: (Rich Deppen):

- Joe Sherman has retired, and Rich is serving in an interim position and has applied to permanently fill the position. Rich and Jim Stiteler will be covering Lehigh, Northampton, and Berks Counties.
- Forestry has jurisdiction over all forest fires in PA. That said, Forestry will come to an incident and meet with the IC, and if Forestry has enough staff they will release volunteer agencies as soon as feasible. If structures are threatened fire agencies will be retained. Fire agencies have to be dispatched by Forestry and in-service (with appropriate apparatus i.e. brush vehicles, engines, tankers) to be reimbursed. Firefighters must be trained to the 130 and 190 levels and on the agencies' crew list to be reimbursed. That list must be supplied to Forestry annually by the local warden.
- Air drops require Forestry to be on location first.
- Training in Northampton County in March. Class is full.
- Looking to do some training in Berks at the FTC but will likely occur after Spring brush fire season.
- Volunteer Fire Assistance Grant period will be open from 3/7/16-5/19/16. Go to DCNR website to apply.

East-Central Task Force (Landis): Moving forward with different levels of tech training. Trench I & II for this fall in the Boyertown area. Testing for those classes may be at a different location due to potential logistics.

BCFA (Weidenhammer): Nothing to report.

BCFPA (Minninger): Nothing to report.

Training (Bob S.):

- Running parallel sections of the mods.
- VRT has the minimum required to run.
- Most everything scheduled for the immediate future is looking positive to run with registrations currently coming in. Officer II is questionable due to low interest.

Zone 1: Scott Yenser has stepped down as the alternate representative.

Zone 2: Nothing to report.

Zone 3: Nothing to report.

Zone 4: Nothing to report.

Zones 5/6: Nothing to report.

Zone 7: New recruit class begins in March.

DES:

From Todd Boughter:

- Accidental EBAs are still happening fairly regularly and this is across all disciplines and not any specific agencies. A reminder that the ONLY acceptable answer is the unit number and the word "ACCIDENTAL". Any other answer means that the dispatcher believes you to be under duress and law enforcement resources will be promptly dispatched. The dispatcher will then ask for your location.

- 2-part messages vs. 4-part messages: 2-part messages are for status changes only (i.e. responding, on location, available). 4-part messages are for anything beyond a simple status change (i.e. anything you want the dispatcher's attention for such as giving on-scene reports, asking for additional resources, etc.).
- Group discussion about Plan Charlie and the impression that agencies are not knowledgeable about it.

From Brian Gottschall:

- Burn building: Some significant damage to the burn building during Fall of 2015. It's understood that there will be some damage each year and that reflects why it was constructed the way it was. However this season there was an inappropriate amount of damage. This could potentially delay the opening of the building in 2016, as Winter is not conducive to making repairs. The burn facilitators will be strongly urged to not make the fires bigger and hotter moving forward. Scott Landis (a burn facilitator) commented that some agencies coming to use the burn building are not properly prepared when the fire is lit.
- Motorola end-of-life: The APX4000 with the multi-function knob is end-of-life. It is expected that the APX7000 and 7000 Extreme Environment will also go end-of-life, as the APX8000 is now available which offers 700/800/VHF/UHF.....however you only pay to activate two of the bands. Some questions arose as to how this will impact the Berks contract with Motorola, as Motorola is obligated to offer a comparable model even if it's a higher grade radio.
- Radio batteries: Berks has negotiated the best warranty in the country for batteries. 18 months from the manufacture date is the warranty length for everyone else; for Berks it's 18 months AFTER final system acceptance. ***If agencies have batteries that are failing please first run a recondition cycle. If the battery(ies) still shows poor life please call RMI and schedule an appointment to take any and all batteries there. RMI has a device that will analyze the battery life and replace it if it's less than 80% of the rated milliamp power capacity. IT IS IMPERATIVE TO CALL FIRST (ESPECIALLY WITH MULTIPLE BATTERIES) BECAUSE RMI MAY NOT HAVE ENOUGH REPLACEMENT BATTERIES IN-STOCK.***
- Motorola Final System Acceptance (FSA): Brian has a spreadsheet created so when FSA occurs users will be able to go to the DES website and see where your radios stand from a warranty perspective. FSA will likely be back-dated to 1/1/2016 even though FSA is not complete.
- Service Upgrade Agreement 2 (SUA2): Every 2 years the radio platform is upgraded to the newest version. Berks County purchased this so that Motorola cannot "end of life" our radio system. At every platform upgrade/uplift there are new capabilities/features for existing radios. These upgrades – while useful – have financial impacts. One specific upgrade is called "group alias transmission" and will populate every radio with everyone else's aliases when that person transmits on a specific talk group.

UNFINISHED/ONGOING BUSINESS:

Fire marshal numbering:

Z1: use fire company numbering, also liked idea of FM having an individual pager tone

Z2: didn't poll their agencies yet

Z3: not present

Z4: use fire company numbering, also liked idea of FM using fire company tone

Z5/6: didn't poll their agencies yet.

Working Group reps are tasked with re-polling their agencies and ask them how they contact their FMs, and to advise agencies that FMs are SUPPOSED to be municipally-appointed.

Ops channels:

Z1: wants ops channels assigned to EVERY fire incident by DES, not by the IC

Z2: wants to continue following the current radio SOP (ops channels assigned by DES if they sound like there is the possibility of the incident escalating).

Z3: not present

Z4: didn't poll their agencies yet

Z5/6: didn't poll their agencies yet

2nd dispatches and covers:

Z1: 2nd dispatch at 5 minutes, covers at 8 minutes

Z2: "needs to be lengthened" but did not formally discuss at their zone meeting

Z3: not present

Z4: didn't poll their agencies yet

Z5/6: 2nd dispatch at 6 minutes, covers at 7 minutes

Having to switch back to Fire A/B from an ops channel to call Berks:

Z1: didn't poll their agencies yet

Z2: call Berks on the assigned Ops channel and be acknowledged

Z3: not present

Z4: didn't poll their agencies yet

Z5/6: didn't poll their agencies yet

IC's should be contacted by Berks before covering apparatus:

Z1: didn't poll their agencies yet

Z2: didn't poll their agencies yet

Z3: not present

Z4: didn't poll their agencies yet

Z5/6: yes, however will re-poll agencies at next zone meeting

Recommended radio ergonomics changes:

Z1: add 2 additional ops groups, take flight ops talk groups out of Fire A/B. Radio buttons good

Z2: no recommendations

Z3: not present

Z4: move flight ops talkgroups down the list and move med and admin up the list. Swap EMS and Reading Fire zones.

Z5/6: radio buttons good, will discuss fleet map changes at next meeting

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2040 hours. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 31, 2016 at 1815 hours in the Direct Link conference room.

Respectfully Submitted,
Chris Stevens, Chair