

**FINAL**

**FIREFIGHTER AND FIRE SAFETY INSPECTOR TRAINING COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES  
March 11, 2008**

Chaired by: Phil McLean

Meeting Date and Location: March 11, 2008, Ohio Department of Public Safety, 1970 West Broad Street, Columbus, Ohio 43223

Committee Members Present: Bob Babb, Brent Gates, Terry Gill, Mark Lundy, Mark Mankins, Richard Sacco and Jim Steele

Committee Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Aleta Dodson, Heather Frient, John Kennington, Lorrie Laing, Thomas Macklin, Doug Orahood, Robert Ruetenik, Richard Rucker, Yvonne Tertel, and Melissa Vermillion

Guests: Tom Beatty, Ohio Society of Fire Service Instructors (OSFSI); Charlie Dixon, State Fire Marshal/Ohio Fire Academy (SFM/OFA); James Holcomb, Violet Township Fire Department/EMS Board; Ed Emley, Working Fire; Bill Kramer, Working Fire/University of Cincinnati; Michael Phares, Working Fire; and Michael Vedra, Columbus Fire Division

The meeting was called to order at 10:01 AM

**REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF THE FEBRUARY 12, 2008 FIREFIGHTER AND FIRE SAFETY INSPECTOR TRAINING COMMITTEE MINUTES**

**ACTION: Motion to approve the February 12, 2008, Committee minutes.** Steele first. Mankins second. None opposed. Motion approved.

**OPEN FORUM**

Doug Orahood introduced Ed Emley, Mike Phares, and Bill Kramer from Working Fire and the University of Cincinnati. Mr. Emley is also the lead instructor at Butler Tech. A brief presentation was given on their online training, which is DVD/video based. Working Fire Training is in the process of becoming a CEU provider from an authorized agency. Since 1994, they have provided in-service training online. They have developed a training called "Chalkboard 9-1-1" where an entire department can log onto one site and receive training. A broadband connection is needed for this to work. Mr. Phares said they would be glad to demo their product in the future, but attended today to see what the needs of the Ohio fire community are.

Mr. McLean explained the Fire Committee is comprised of representatives from all Ohio fire alliances. The legislation passed last year deals with continuing education requirements for firefighters, fire inspectors and fire instructors. The authority for training is with the local Fire Chief. The Ohio Fire Alliance came to the committee asking for a solution even though a lot of

people believe the changes were driven by the State of Ohio and the Division of EMS. The Ohio fire service created these rules for the betterment of the Ohio fire service. Eighteen hours of continuing education training is required in a year, with fifty-four hours required over a three year period for a basic firefighter. If the fire chief deems watching a video on ladders with a practical exercise is pertinent, they can sign off on it. The Fire Committee is here for guidance, not to put together a program.

Mr. Phare believes their training can provide continuity with across the board training. Mr. McLean said the charter program directors training conference scheduled in October might be a good time for Working Fire to give a presentation. Doug Orahod will provide them with the meeting details.

**\*\*\* Brent Gates arrived at 10:09 AM \*\*\***

Mr. Orahod asked whether their “Chalkboard 9-1-1” program issues certificates at completion, which might be useful for firefighters who are not affiliated with a department, but want to maintain their certification. Mr. Phare said this is provided, but the “Chalkboard 9-1-1” needs a site set up at a specific department or a county association. Specific programs can be developed. There is a new breed of firefighters out there who are used to video games, and they are trying to make their training interesting to hold their attention.

Mr. Gill said he is part of a small department, and they are looking into doing their fire training online, which is how they have been doing their EMS training. They are tying in their training to “Back to Basics”, fifth edition, which is what New York City went to after 9/11. Some of their men felt they already knew it and didn’t need to review it, so he had them take the FF1 & FF2 tests. When some of them failed, they then agreed with him they might need to relook at the basics.

**STAFF REPORTS**

**Assistant Attorney General Report, Yvonne Tertel**

No report.

**EMS Staff Legal Counsel, Heather Frient**

Ms. Frient is waiting to hear back from the Ethics Commission about a presentation for the committee as opposed to members attending various meetings across the state.

Mr. Gates asked Mr. Orahod whether he had discussed the question brought up at the Ohio township association meeting regarding township fire prevention officers with Ms. Frient. Ms. Frient said it was discussed during last month’s meeting. Mr. Orahod said the fire official is basically the same as a fire chief as stated in the Ohio Revised Code. Mr. Gates said after he reviewed the township rules, he came to the same conclusion. Mr. Gates said by statute, the township must appoint a person to that position if there is no fire department. The question posed was regarding if he can sign off on his own card for his continuing education. Mr. Mankins said by the rules in place, the fire inspector can sign off on his card for his continuing education, since he is considered a fire chief. Mr. Gates said he has had other inquires about this

same issue from several other townships and suggested the next time the rules are visited, this issue needs looked at. Mr. McLean sees a lot of loopholes.

#### INVESTIGATION PROCESS, Melissa Vermillion

Melissa Vermillion distributed a flowchart showing the investigative process the Fire Committee Case Review Team (CRT) will use when a complaint is received, which is consistent with what has been done for years on the EMS side. She asked members to look over the flow charts, which will be gone over in more detail at the next committee meeting. She said the CRT will consist of one EMS board member, one Fire Committee member, the Assistant Attorney General and members of the Division's investigative staff. The discipline will come from the Fire Committee and be consistent with the EMS side. If a person is a certified EMT and a certified Firefighter, the Investigations Section will try to run the cases concurrently. However, this might not occur often as EMT and Fire cards are not usually renewed at the same time. If a person marks a conviction on the Declaration of Criminal History (DCH) form that is not moral turpitude or was an underage conviction that the Board has not taken action on in the past, they are being processed immediately.

Mr. Sacco asked what would happen if on the EMS side, the Board had not taken action, but on the Fire side, the Fire Committee wants to take action - will there be an issue? Ms. Vermillion said they are trying to be consistent so someone is not revoked on one side for something, but is revoked on the other side. Past practices on the EMS side will be used in determining disciplinary recommendations. Ms. Frient said there could be a situation where the EMS Board is more lenient on a particular crime, where on the Fire side, a more severe discipline might be warranted. There could be times where there are inconsistent holdings, but to the extent possible, it would be good to have consistency so there is not complete disparate treatment between the EMT and Fire disciplines. Depending on whoever goes first in the discipline process, the other side will be notified. Ms. Vermillion said part of the reason an EMS Board member will be on the Fire case review team is because they have the background and past practice knowledge of EMS disciplines.

Mr. Mankins wanted to clarify that if firefighters have a conviction prior to the effective date of the new rules, no disciplinary action can be done, but if it occurred after that date, a case will be opened. Ms. Vermillion said if a firefighter applicant started the training before the rules went into effect, no action will be taken. If it's a felony, however, that is different due to the ambiguity of moral turpitude.

Mr. McLean asked what happens after the complaint is received. Ms. Vermillion said the complainant would be interviewed and then determines what needs to be done, whether it is interviewing others as necessary or obtain documentation such as court records or police reports. The Division does have subpoena power and Ms. Tertel said it is usually used for obtaining documents, but can also be used to subpoena witnesses. Once the case has been completed, it would be presented to the Fire Committee's CRT for a recommendation. They would then present the case and their recommendation to the Fire Committee, who would then determine whether they agree with the recommendation or want to make changes to it. Mr. Rucker will issue the discipline.

Mr. Mankins said if there is no rule in place for that particular issue, it would be turned over to the local jurisdiction to handle. Ms. Vermillion said sometimes local departments wait on disciplining the employee until they see what action the state has taken. Mr. Steele asked that if he as a Fire Chief receives a letter from EMS regarding a discipline issue that he has already handled, might that be sufficient? Ms. Vermillion said it can be.

Ms. Vermillion will give a presentation to the committee on the fire investigative policy/process at next month's meeting. She will bring a list of consents, how they are used on the EMS side and what types of terms are being used. Ms. Tertel will also discuss the philosophy of the disciplinary actions.

#### FIRE CHARTER REPORT, Doug Orahood

Mr. Orahood handed out a certification report and said web testing is still going well. John Kennington said almost 12,000 firefighters have used the system, which represents 15% of the anticipated total. Level II's are leading all certifications with about 25%. Volunteers are only around 7%, so the word needs to get out to the associations and volunteers that they need to get online and renew their cards. Since the exact figure of volunteers is not known, this figure could be doing well. Mr. Steele thinks the total number of certified firefighters in the state is going to be around 35,000 to 45,000. There are people who do not have a card from EMS who are still carrying the old Ohio Department of Education card as well as the old T&I guys.

Mr. Orahood said the Division was contacted by the State Fire Marshal's office to take part in an ad hoc committee for a proposed Fire Plan Examiner certification level. He and Mr. Kennington will be part of this committee, as well as EMS Board member Jim Holcomb. Individuals from the Board of Building Standards and the State Organization of Fire Inspectors (SOFFI) are represented on the committee as well. Mr. Orahood stressed the certification is optional, not mandatory, and is to assist the chief building officials and their planning committee. A lot of communities are already getting a set of the plans and are offering their input that way. Mr. Holcomb said the "plans reviewer" for the city or township is still the person who legally signs off on the plans.

Mr. Steele asked whether this group would eventually come before the Fire Committee. Mr. Orahood said his understanding is this committee would have to write the rules, so they would have to come before the Fire Committee at some point in time. Mr. Steele wanted to know which door this is coming through, front or back. Mr. Orahood said the Division was notified late last week that staff had been appointed to this ad hoc committee. Mr. Steele wanted to know if the Fire Marshal appointed someone from this committee to be on it. Mr. McLean said he was notified Friday when he was told John Kennington and Doug Orahood would be on the committee. Mr. Steele said that's back door. Mr. Orahood said Richard Rucker is also on the committee. Mr. McLean said he got a phone call and was told what was going on. Is that front door or back door? Mr. Steele said its back door. Mr. McLean said thank you. Mr. Gates said he had received several e-mails regarding this ad hoc committee weeks ago and would talk to him later about it. Mr. Steele said he had received zero notification until today. Mr. Holcomb said he was appointed to this since he is involved on the EMS Board and fell into it through a survey question he was asked.

Mr. Holcomb said whether you call it front door or back door, the bottom line is the Fire Committee is now at the table, which wasn't the case in the past. The most important thing is at least there are discussions with the building standards which there never had been before, which Mr. McLean can attest to. Mr. McLean said the inspector course revision was driven by the Fire Alliance who came before the group, then the Fire Committee put the together a group, revamped the inspector course, raised the bar and got it done. Mr. Holcomb said there is a representative of the Fire Chief's Association on this committee, Chief George Brown. Mr. McLean said perhaps the strategic plan should have come to this group and informed us on what was going to happen.

Ms. Frient said whether it's a finalized product or in the beginning stages, the issue at some point will have to come before the Fire Committee as this committee and Mr. Rucker are the only ones who can decide whether or not the rules need changed. There can never be a back door around that issue.

Mr. Orahod gave an update on the fire roll out meetings. There were a lot of questions at the Cuyahoga Community College meeting. Mr. McLean said an instructor asked if he could count the class he taught as him also taking the course. Mr. McLean said there is nothing in the rule that says you can't, but ethically would you feel good about doing that. Mr. Kennington said that the EMS side does allow an instructor to credit themselves once during their certification period for a class they teach.

Mr. McLean said another question was from a Fire Chief who is not a fire inspector, but has fire inspectors working for him, and he would like to bring them in for continuing education training. Mr. Orahod said some of the instructors who taught a continuing education course want to receive credit for teaching it, credit for their fire safety inspector card and credit for their firefighting continuing education hours.

Mr. Sacco was answering a similar question with a Fire Chief and told him you can't train above the level you are capable of, but the Fire Chief said since he's a Fire Chief, he can train them because he approves all training. Mr. Sacco thinks this issue should be addressed. Mr. Steele said they talked about that issue at last month's meeting and he was the lone dissenter and thinks inspectors should be firemen. Mr. Mankins said the Fire Chief can approve any training he feels is appropriate, including if he feels he's capable of training them. As long as they are not teaching in a certification course, it is outside the committee's jurisdiction. Mr. Steele said you should be either combat or command. You can only do one, you can't do both. If you are going to teach the class, then teach the class. If you're going to take the class, take the class. He did not think someone can do both. You can only wear one hat when on the ground, pick the hat.

Mr. Steele received a question at a rollout meeting from an inspector who wanted to count his inspections he does on the job as in service training. On the job training is not in service training. Mr. Baab said if by law, a Fire Chief says the guy doing the inspection gets credit for it, then he gets credit for it because the Fire Chief can sign off on any education. Mr. Mankins said in the long term, he would like for all continuing education be taught by certified instructors, but this is how it was sold to get the rules passed.

Tom Beatty, Ohio Society of Fire Service Instructors (OSFSI), said if he is teaching a three hour course on ladders, he already has more hours than that just in preparing to teach the class. He said the bottom line is the committee cannot watch what every fire chief does, there has to be a certain amount of trust. When it comes to investigations or a court case, that is where you would find out if it was a gross violation of the intent of what we are doing, where something bad has happened and the Fire Chief has to explain the validation or lack of validation of his training and certification. He thinks the committee has done a great job on the concept of what rules have been put together. If you had waited to do it until nobody could improve on the rules, nothing would have gotten done. When someone comments to you about the rules and what the state has done, let him know that the Ohio Fire Alliance did it. The state was no part of it. Mr. Beatty said the federal government by proxy is coming in and taking over and applying the NFPA standards no matter where you are at.

Charlie Dixon, State Fire Marshal/Ohio Fire Academy (SFM/OFA) said as a program coordinator, a lot of their staff teaches hundreds of hours per year. They allow them to count two or three hours, but will certainly not allow them to count fifty-four hours of ladders. We will give them some continuing hours because with the intent of this rule, we were told we could do that. Maybe at the program coordinators event you should share this with them. It is a disservice to yourself if you don't take continuing education on other items to expand your horizons. Mr. Orahood wanted to clarify that Mr. Dixon will allow his instructors to count some of their hours toward their firefighting renewal, not their instructor card. Mr. Dixon said a lot of his instructors work for other agencies and can use some of those hours toward their card, as the rules say, as long as the Fire Chief or program coordinator approves it.

Mr. Mankins said one of the other issues brought up at a lot of the meetings has been regarding the lack of access to computers and emails. He has been referring them to their local OSFA.

Mr. Orahood reported that by the end of this month, the Fire Safety Inspector test (open and closed book) should be online. After the student completes the fifty question closed book portion of the test, a message will pop up with a statement that they are now going to the open book test. Once you close out of the closed book, you can't go back. This will still be a three hour exam.

Mr. Orahood will be at the Ohio Fire Academy Friday and Saturday for their conference with the fire training book publishing companies. All the latest books will be there and he had some of the books with him today for review. Jones and Bartlett have come out with the second edition and there is a brand new book published by McGraw-Hill called Firefighter I and II, which was written by some Florida firefighters.

Mr. Orahood distributed a handout of draft objectives for the Firefighter I where he has added the driving training based on the NFPA standards. Mr. Steele pointed out that there are nine pages regarding driving, and nine pages for the entire remainder of the 120 hours. Mr. Steele suggested it be pared down. Mr. Orahood said the schools are asking for guidance on following 1451 and 1002. 1451 does require drive time, but the Fire Committee has said not every school can provide that. Students are not allowed to test until they have met all the requirements for certification. Mr. Steele asked if Mr. Orahood is trying to make a teaching outline. Mr. Steele said this should be looked at along with the checklist. Mr. Orahood needs the course objectives

updated for Firefighter I and II, as well as for the website concurrent with what is now required in rules. Mr. Steele asked if Mr. Orahood was trying to make this document be a model teaching outline for the joint vocational schools, where we would pare this down and just have the requirements. Mr. Orahood said this is an objective check-off list for them to refer to in regard to the new driver training. Mr. Gill proposed this be given to Jeff Cotner and put in the form but not use nine pages. Mr. Gill said George Brown is still involved. Doug will send this document to Mr. Cotner and he will update the Firefighter I objective. Mr. Orahood said the old objectives are online, but the new version is still smaller than those. Mr. Orahood's goal is to get the objectives revised so anyone can use them regardless of the book they are teaching from. Some of the institutions will do all sixteen hours because they can do the drive time. Mr. Orahood said one of the questions he has received is if a student takes and completes the FF1 course and does the driving school, then enrolls immediately in FF2, do they have to retake the driving portion again. Mr. Lundy said his understanding is that you take the 240 hour class, then take the sixteen hour driving class separately, then you can get certified. If the school did not provide the driving training, the student simply went somewhere else to take the course. Mr. Steele said the program coordinator needs to be clear on this. If a student completed the sixteen hour driver training course five months ago, then the program coordinator would probably waive them having to take it again. However, if someone took this course ten years ago, the program director is going to require they take the sixteen hours of training again. Mr. Orahood will draft a clarification regarding driving training for review and to post on the website. The driver training was made to be somewhat flexible for the schools that do not have the facilities to provide the course. At some institutions where the facilities are available, the student pays for the entire "block" of courses and will need to take the course again or the coordinator might give them credit for it.

Mr. Orahood clarified that the question on grant application for NFPA 1001 which asks "does the firefighter training in your state meet NFPA 1001" and he has been telling them no because we do not meet it to the letter of the law because a few of the standards aren't required to be met. Tom Beatty said the intent of our training is to meet 1001, Firefighter I & II, and we do. In the grant workshops he has been telling them to mark that question yes. The thirty-six hour class meets the state requirement for volunteer firefighter and does cover certain sections of 1001. There is no point credit for this question, it is simply a fact finding question. Departments can apply for grant money for a regional class to bring their thirty-six hour people up to the next level. The money can cover instructor time, classroom, and training materials. The thirty-six hour does meet the state of Ohio requirement and we are ahead of the game because a lot of states don't even have a training requirement.

#### CHAIR'S REPORT, Phil McLean

Terry Gill gave an update on the volunteer firefighter workgroup. The last meeting was March 7, 2008, and he provided the committee with the minutes from that meeting. Most of the meeting was going over what this committee has already discussed. The NIMS course is not to be part of the thirty-six hours, but must be completed before they can test.

The next issue discussed was what should a new graduate from the thirty-six hour course do the next day. They can serve in a supportive role or be in the jump seat of the truck. This is up to the individual department. The thirty-six hour group wants to emphasize that this is the beginning of training, and they should continue on into the Firefighter I & II training.

The committee recommends to leave the hours stand as is, revise the objective check offs when new manuals come out to ensure they mesh together, and look into inconsistencies around the state in teaching (Example: The term “rescue” means different things to firefighters across the state--it could mean ‘rescue your buddy’ or ‘extrication’). Another recommendation is to ask Mr. Beatty form a committee of instructors across the state that teach the thirty-six hour class and develop a recommended model/lesson plan so everyone is teaching from the same book. The goal of this committee is to take the Firefighter I & II classes and develop into modules of continuing education that can be taken over a three year period. The objective check off sheets and recommended hours will remain the same, but the course curriculum will be updated by writing the curriculum and lesson plan to match these objectives. Mr. Holcomb suggested taking the huge thirty-six hour class book and make a booklet with the information that is meaningful to the thirty-six hour objectives (ladders, ropes, etc.). He pointed out that the problem is different teachers interpret the book curriculum in different ways due to the sheer volume of information it contains. The other recommendation is that the test questions should be equivalent to the hours being taught. If there are 6 hours of ladders, the number of test questions should correspond accordingly.

Mr. Gill discussed bad test questions, which are defined as questions that are marked wrong 50% of the time. He said out of the seventy-five questions, there are fourteen “bad” questions. Even if someone got every one of the “bad” questions wrong, they still received a 93% score, which is above what is needed to pass the course.

NEW BUSINESS:

None brought forward.

OLD BUSINESS

None brought forward.

ADJOURNMENT

**ACTION:** **Motion to adjourn.** Steele first. Mankins second. None opposed. Motion approved.

**Meeting adjourned at 12:27 p.m.**