

FINAL

**FIREFIGHTER AND FIRE SAFETY INSPECTOR TRAINING COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
July 8, 2008**

Chaired by: Phil McLean

Meeting Date and Location: July 8, 2008, Ohio Department of Public Safety (ODPS), 1970 West Broad Street, Columbus, Ohio 43223

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

Committee Members Absent: Brent Gates

Staff Present: Summer Boyer, Aleta Dodson, John Kennington, Lorrie Laing, Tom Macklin, Doug Orahoad, Richard Rucker, Yvonne Tertel,

Guests: Tom Beatty, OSFSI; K. Edmond, Lakeland; James Davis, Columbus Fire Department/EMS Board Member); Michael Bell, State Fire Marshal/Ohio Fire Academy; James Holcomb, Violet Township/EMS Board Member; Michael Vedra, Columbus Fire Department; Scott Walker, State Fire Marshal/Ohio Fire Academy

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 AM.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF THE JUNE 10, 2008 FIREFIGHTER AND FIRE SAFETY INSPECTOR TRAINING COMMITTEE MINUTES

ACTION: Motion to approve the June 10, 2008, Committee minutes. Steele first. Sacco second. None opposed. Motion approved.

STAFF REPORTS

DIRECTOR'S REPORT, Richard Rucker

Mr. Rucker reported Mr. Heinzman contract was not being renewed. Mr. Calco is being retained and Mr. Rucker is attempting to receive approval to increase his hours.

ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL REPORT, Yvonne Tertel

No report was given.

STAFF LEGAL COUNSEL, Heather Frient

No report was given.

FIRE CHARTER REPORT, Doug Orahood

Mr. Orahood distributed the June fire training report.

Mr. Kennington distributed a report committee members requested last month showing how many firefighters have renewed at each level broken down by county. The top page of the report shows the exact number of firefighters who have an expiration date past January 24, 2009, who have renewed online. To date, the number is 23,225. Mr. Orahood's report has a total of 29,846, but it included Fire Safety Inspectors (FSI). The report will assist the Division in targeting counties with low renewal rates for additional news releases.

Mr. Orahood reported that five site visits were conducted and nine fire departments were visited. Four fire related meetings around the state were attended by staff members.

Mr. Orahood is on the college credit transfer committee (CT2) being spearheaded by the Board of Regents. He is also working on the Firefighter I (FFI) and Firefighter II (FFII) objectives and began creating college credit transfer (CT2) documents. Mr. Orahood hopes to present both of these to the fire committee in August. The CT2 program will allow the transfer of high school, adult education, vocational schools, and community college credits to all state funded universities.

Mr. Holcomb, Fire Marshal Bell and Mr. Orahood attended the Fire Plan Examiner committee meeting discussing the Board and Building Standards proposal of creating a fire plan examiner certification level. After a brief discussion, it was recommended that the group that developed the fire safety inspector course curriculum regroup to work on developing the 24 hour course through and up to the fire plan examiner level. This will compare our training with the Board and Building Standards in order to get equivalency and cross-over training. Mr. Holcomb said either we get involved in this or we will have a Board and Building standard certification that we will have to match on the fire side. Mr. McLean said that group had discussed the plans examiner, hazard recognition hours (24 hours), and the International Code Council (ICC) standards when they had met several years ago. The 24 hour program is almost complete. Mr. Orahood has started pulling documents to determine whether our standards need to come up to theirs, or theirs need to meet ours and vice versa. Mr. Orahood recommended the committee bring in Mike Dutton of the Ohio Fire Officials Association (OFOA) to help guide and lead us on this project.

ACTION: Motion to contact members of the Fire Inspector workgroup and reestablish the group to work on the Fire Plans Examiner certification and complete the 24 hour Hazard Recognition class. Mankins first. Babb second. None opposed. Motion approved.

Mr. Orahood will contact the Fire Marshal's Office and the Ohio Fire Officials Association (OFOA) regarding this issue.

Mr. Orahood distributed the flyer for the next town meeting to be held in Findlay, Ohio, at the Owens Community College on Tuesday, August 5th. He encouraged committee members to attend. Mr. McLean suggested that these meetings be held in the evenings to try and reach more firefighters to ensure the word to renew is gotten out. Mr. Orahood said the regional coordinators have attended the county fire chief meetings and discussed this issue. Mr. Steele

said not in the northwest. Mr. Orahod said that will be changing with the redistricting of the regional coordinators. Mr. Rucker said a town meeting could not be held in the evening with the staff members due to costs. He said perhaps a scaled down version could be done to get the word out. Mr. McLean requested some meetings be held at chartered institutions so two things are accomplished: inviting the firefighters to the education institution and educating the training institution. Mr. Steele said the northwest and southeast are prominently volunteer areas and believes that is the group missing in the online registration. Mr. Rucker said they will look at this.

Mr. Gill provided the 36 hour report from Mr. Cotner, President of the Ohio Society of Fire Service Instructors (OSFSI) with issues regarding the 36 hour class. This prompted a discussion regarding creating a standardized test, the assertion that the current test has “bad” questions, and reading comprehension issues. Mr. Sacco said if they can’t read and are the first unit responding to a hazardous material event, they need to be able to read. If they don’t, they could start a whole cycle down a bad road. Mr. Orahod has updated the test and is in the process of reviewing it and getting it online. Mr. Steele asked if members of the committee could take the test since they receive so many complaints and questions about it. Mr. Rucker said committee members were specifically asked to be involved in this project from the start, specifically Mr. Gates. He did not see a problem for committee members to take the test, but wanted to ensure it would not compromise the test. Mr. Babb believes taking the test will help committee members because they can say to those complaining that they have taken the test themselves and didn’t find any problem with it. Mr. McLean believes it would solve the discussion regarding “bad questions” and stop all the time wasted on this issue. A firefighter flipped a truck and was killed last night, but this 36 hour test keeps being discussed. Perhaps if the driver had more driver training, he might still be alive today. It was agreed that the committee members would take the test after the meeting today. Those members who are also teachers will focus on matching skill sheets to hours. Mr. Steele said this will also be a building block to go to Firefighter I. Mr. McLean said Mr. Gates should be involved and meet with Mr. Orahod to review it.

CHAIR’S REPORT, Phil McLean

Mr. McLean reported he and Fire Marshal Bell attended the Water TAC training in January. He did not know how the swift water grant money became available through the Ohio EMA for responders, but wondered if the Ohio EMA would be able to spend that money for driver training next year. Fire Marshal Bell said he believes that money was from Homeland Security (HLS) grant, which is drying out, but perhaps fire grant funding could be found.

Last month Mr. McLean again met at Antrim Fire Department and gave a fire rollout with updated numbers. He discussed the 36 hour class and the members of Antrim felt there should be a written final test.

OPEN FORUM

Fire Marshal Bell was in attendance and said Mr. McLean hit the nail on the head when he talked about the fireman who died last night. He believes at some point in time there are probably going to be some hard issues that will need to be tackled. The issue of firefighters dying is extremely real in Ohio. So far this year, Ohio has already had five deaths, which is the average for the year, and it is only July. Fire Marshal Bell said the reason he is in attendance today is because he believes training is the key to everyone going home at night. Whether the issue is

addressed through the Fire Marshal Office or this committee, it does not make a difference. It's not about egos or who gets credit, it's about saving lives. He will assist in whatever way he can to make sure everyone goes home safe every night. Even though discussing the 36 hour course can be touchy, a way has to be developed to get more education for firefighters to feel comfortable about what they are doing. Less education equates to life threatening situations for firefighters.

OLD BUSINESS

Mr. McLean brought up the fire training modules for Option II in continuing education (CE). He said this was sold that modules would be available for people to go from Firefighter Level I (FFI) to Firefighter Level II (FFII). Mr. McLean said he thought modules would be available that people could go to the chartered institution and get upgraded. The committee must make good on what was promised. Mr. Steele said they did sell the module program, but did not think it was sold as a standardized program. Mr. Orahod said modules can be standardized and recommended putting a group together to break down the objectives for the FFI and FFII courses. He recommended including program directors that have vested interests in these objectives to this group. Mr. Gill said he would have a problem with that because most program directors do not have a fire background. What is needed are the guys on the street and those teaching. Mr. Orahod suggested utilizing the Board of Regents group to look at this. Mr. Gill says it needs done fast since this has already been sold. Mr. Orahod will ask if the group will be willing to do this.

Other suggestions included the course be developed to be taught from somewhere between a 13 month period and less than a 36 month period. If it is a 36 month period, some review might be appropriate before the exam. With the addition of the driving training, the FFI will average 33 hours per year and the FFII average 45 hours per year. Suggestions made were to break the courses into three or four modules, be able to take them out of sequence, break modules to fit into three year cycle.

Mr. Walker brought up the issue of reimbursements for courses, but the current rules in place for firefighter training grants do not allow individuals to receive reimbursement for classes until they are completed. With the modules, a certificate of completion would be needed to allow reimbursement. This could potentially require a legislative update to ensure that funding source is not taken away from the volunteers. Mr. Steele said they did not sell this program to get individuals reimbursed for courses. They knew if the course got done in a certain period of time, they could turn in for reimbursement. Mr. Steele said it is his understanding that until all coursework is done, then and only then would the exam be taken. This committee is not concerned about the JVS getting reimbursed by the local municipality. Mr. Walker will forward Mr. Orahod information on how many FFI transition grants were applied for and break it down each year and how much money is affected. This might put a little more perspective on exactly the impact this has.

Mr. McLean presented a recap of the 1403 course that was started over a year ago. At the last discussion with the Fire Alliance, the Florida group was here in beginning of 2008 and twenty plus individuals attended and comments were taken from them. Mr. Steele gathered data indicating 32 pre-engineered burn facilities are available throughout the state, through 2007 the committee continued to hear reports of near misses with 1403/live burns and created discussion

points. A lengthy discussion occurred regarding 1403, the course of action to take and how to implement it.

NEW BUSINESS

Fire Marshal Bell brought up the concept of determining the top ten initiatives that need developed, put into a prioritized list, and then attack accomplishing them through grant and government funding.

Mr. Gill said energies should be directed at driver training. Too much emphasis has been put on 1403. Mr. Rucker said 1403 is a priority because we do not want any injuries or fatalities. Mr. McLean is surprised the priority level has dropped on 1403. Mr. McLean said safety is the issue and we need to provide educational opportunities. Mr. Beatty said if an optional certification is required and a fire accident in training occurs, what is the liability if the instructor hasn't taken this optional training. Fire Marshal Bell said non-certified versus certified is not the issue, rather it should be the highest standard irregardless. There isn't intent here to keep instructors from teaching. Mr. Steele said it will be difficult to get to technician level. What happens the day after two people die in a live fire? Marshall Bell said this is what we would be doing, going over how to prevent and fix such things from happening.

Fire Marshal Bell said there are many areas which need support. Closer trauma locations are needed versus transporting to Columbus, colleges need to team up and work together, if lacking funds we need to get the money, and get additional financial aid for firefighter training. The chancellor needs to appeal to get firefighters interested in increasing education level. Mr. Orahoad said ODE funds plumbers and welders at higher amount than fire service.

Fire Marshal Bell said the fire service needs raised to a higher level in a funded mandate. If there is a lack on our side to get resources closer to them, we need to work the system to better serve them.

Mr. McLean would like to schedule one of the regular monthly committee meetings prior to the grand opening of the Columbus Fire Academy. Mr. Babb said the September or October meetings might work.

Mr. Steele asked whether there were any disciplinary actions this month. There were none to be presented.

ADJOURNMENT

ACTION: **Motion to adjourn.** Lundy first. Sacco second. None opposed. Motion approved.

Meeting adjourned at 12:12 PM