

**FINAL**

**FIREFIGHTER AND FIRE SAFETY INSPECTOR TRAINING COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES  
August 12, 2008**

Chaired by: Phil McLean

Meeting Date and Location: August 12, 2008, Ohio Department of Public Safety (ODPS), 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: Summer Boyer, Aleta Dodson, Heather Frient, John Kennington, Lorrie Laing, Doug Orahood, Richard Rucker

Guests: Gayle Ashbridge, Ohio Board of Regents; Bob Casto, Ohio Board of Regents; Don Cooper, Ohio Division of State Fire Marshal; Jeff Cotner, Ohio Society of Fire Service Instructors (OSFSI); Mary Beth Freeman, Delaware Area Career Center; William Grubb, Delaware Area Career Center; James Holcomb, Violet Township/EMS Board Member; Jay Louks, Columbus State Community College; Thomas Pack, Owens Community College; Michael Vedra, Columbus Fire Department

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

**REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF THE JULY 8, 2008 FIREFIGHTER AND FIRE SAFETY INSPECTOR TRAINING COMMITTEE MINUTES**

**ACTION:** Motion to approve the July 8, 2008, committee minutes with amendment to insert *“Mr. Steele inquired whether there were any disciplinary actions this month. There were none to be presented.”* before the adjournment notation. Steele first. Lundy second. None opposed. Motion approved.

**OPEN FORUM**

Bill Grubb of the Delaware Area Career Center introduced Mary Beth Freeman, their new superintendent. He gave an update on progress in their fire program and distributed copies of the school’s revised burn plan. Mr. McLean recommended Mr. Grubb send the burn plan to the surrounding fire departments. Mr. Grubb reported they just graduated a fire instructor class.

Deputy Marshal Scott of the Ohio Fire Academy said they are scheduling a “train the trainer” class for driver training on October 9 and 10, 2008. They will include a towing capacity component in the course. A new arson course is to be offered in September, 2008.

## STAFF REPORTS

### FIRE CHARTER REPORT, Doug Orahood

Mr. Kennington distributed a report showing how many firefighters have renewed at each level broken down by county. Approximately 25,000 firefighters have renewed as follows: 8,147 volunteers, 2,380 Firefighter I (FFI), and 15,019 Firefighter (FFII). 7,300 Fire Safety Inspectors have renewed as well. Mr. Kennington said he has heard some firefighters are waiting to renew believing that is supposed to be more advantageous to them. Mr. Kennington said that is not true. Continued concern over getting the word out to all firefighters to renew was discussed.

Mr. Orahood distributed the July Fire Training report. Out of 113 volunteers who tested this month, there were no complaints.

Mr. Gill gave the committee an update on the volunteer test workgroup. Each committee member was assigned a topic to review and given copies of the current and proposed objectives. They are working on standardizing the test, which should alleviate complaints, and reviewing the hours spent taking the course in relation to the number of questions on the test. Mr. Gill hopes to have a draft for review at the October workgroup meeting and present it to the Fire Committee in December. Mr. Orahood collected comments on the volunteer test from committee members and will update the proposed test and bring to the next meeting.

Mr. Orahood introduced Bob Casto and Gayle Ashbridge from the Ohio Board of Regents regarding the Career Technical Articulation Guides (CTAGs). The objective is to decrease the time it takes to get a degree, recognize prior training and certifications, and eliminate paying for and taking the same courses twice. Mr. Casto explained that House Bill 95 was passed in 2003 that mandated two and four year colleges and universities get together on the transfer of credit. In 2005, House Bill 66 extended HB 95 to include credit transfer between the career technical, joint vocational and two-year schools to four-year colleges for technical oriented degrees.

Copies of knowledge and skill objectives developed for the Firefighter I (FFI), Firefighter II (FFII), and Volunteer CTAGs were distributed. The proposal is to give 10 semester or 16 quarter credit hours to FFII, 5 semester or 8 quarter hours to FFI, and 1 semester or 3 quarter hours to volunteers. If the Fire Committee endorses this, it will be presented to the EMS Board for approval. Ms. Ashbridge said fire department chartered programs will not be included in the C-Tag program, but will instead go through the "stackable certificate" program. This will enable chartered institutions not subsidized by the state to receive statewide credit transfers as well.

Committee members discussed overlapping curriculum, expanding CTAGs to include public safety jobs such as dispatchers, creating officer development or fire administration courses for those wishing to advance their careers, and blue sheet courses. Mr. Steele asked why the inspector course taught at a career center is a stackable. Ms. Ashbridge said it was a place to start and should they find it overlaps in to a CT2 area, they could be moved there. Mr. McLean asked how long it will take before all certification classes in the fire service fall under the stackable method. Ms. Ashbridge was hesitant to give a completion date, but thinks the project might take only one to two years as the new Chancellor and Governor are giving the project a very big push.

**ACTION: Motion to endorse the CTAG courses for Volunteer, Firefighter I and Firefighter II.** Steele first. Sacco second. None opposed. Motion approved.

Mr. Orahood suggested another motion to approve the C-Tag knowledge and skill objective check off sheets which were distributed. Members wanted more time to review them and it was tabled until next month's meeting. Mr. McLean said he would like additional members of this committee to work on the project along with Mr. Orahood and Mr. Holcomb.

STAFF LEGAL COUNSEL, Heather Frient

No report was given.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT, Richard Rucker

The Director's report was distributed and included what was discussed and presented to the EMS Board at their July 8, 2008, meeting regarding changing the fire disciplinary process. Mr. Rucker informed the Fire Committee that he first met with Ms. Heather Frient, Ms. Yvonne Tertel and Ms. Melissa Vermillion to discuss the problems that the Division had encountered with the fire disciplinary process. He then contacted the EMS Board members who have a seat on the Committee to discuss his recommendation to change the disciplinary process. The reasons for the process change are: to ensure consistency between disciplinary sanctions issued to both EMTs and Firefighters, allow for a joint consent agreement that would be adopted on the same date (EMS Board day) which will be less confusing to the individual certificate holder, the fire Board members are already familiar with the disciplinary process, and both fire and EMS case review could be handled at one time, ultimately reducing staff time for the assistant attorney general and EMS investigative staff. The fire cases would be heard immediately following the normal executive session for EMS discipline. Jim Holcomb and one other fire board member (as appointed by the Executive Director) would serve as the Fire Case Review team. Mr. Rucker said the new process is fair to the firefighters by making the process less confusing and less expensive, and frees up time for the fire committee members to focus on training issues. The EMS Board members were in favor of the change and unanimously voted to approve it.

Mr. Steele asked if there are now two fire boards and Mr. Rucker said no. Mr. Rucker and Ms. Frient clarified that the fire committee is not a Board and that members are appointees of the eight fire representatives of the EMS Board. The Fire committee reports through the EMS Director, who is the CEO of the Board. Ms. Frient said each EMS Board member representing the fire community may designate someone to the Fire Committee, but it does not specify responsibilities. She said there is flexibility within the law to allow the fire Board members to retain their seat on the committee for investigatory purposes, but to designate an individual to handle other issues. Mr. Steele said he assumed Ms. Frient was quoting 4765.04 and Ms. Frient agreed. He stated that the Fire Committee is going to make rules on discipline, but someone else will enforce them. Ms. Frient clarified that the Board members representing fire will enforce the rules. Mr. Rucker said fire is going to make rules and fire is going to enforce discipline. It doesn't have to be the people on this committee today because members will change over time. He stated that the bottom line is that the new process is best for firefighters. Mr. McLean said Mr. Holcomb and Mr. Mankins would be the ones who face firefighters being disciplined, not this committee as they sold it. Ms. Frient echoed Mr. Rucker's earlier comments that members overseeing discipline will change over the years; it will not always be the current individuals who sit here today.

Mr. McLean said he doesn't think anyone disagrees with the revised disciplinary process, but feels it could have been handled better. Mr. McLean said if something needed to be discussed because there was a problem or a change was needed, perhaps there should have been some discussion with this committee. Mr. Rucker apologized that the Fire Committee did not feel like he communicated with them. However, he explained that he reports to the Board and therefore wanted to make sure the fire Board members were okay with the process before bringing it to the Fire Committee. The Board members were asked to notify their designees as soon as possible to discuss the changes with them. Mr. Rucker stated that if there is a breakdown in communication between committee members and their Board member, then we need to work on improving that.

Mr. Rucker said this is a bump in the road, but as Mr. McLean expressed earlier, the process is good. Ms. Frient said communication needs to keep flowing between the Committee, the Board and the Division. Mr. Rucker said he would like to meet with the eight fire Board members and their designees to discuss their concerns in more detail.

Committee members expressed a variety of concerns regarding the new process including the fact that the specific rules for discipline refer to the committee, and that the fire roll-out sessions addressed the disciplinary issue one way, which is now being changed. The Committee members stated that they were the ones who talked with the fire community and would have to take the heat on this change. Mr. Steele asked if there is a new fire investigative policy that is different than what was previously distributed. Ms. Frient said she would have to check with Ms. Vermillion.

Mr. Steele said he contacted Ms. Vermillion to find out how many fire cases are being investigated and said he has not received a viable answer yet. He said Ms. Vermillion reported 72 cases are received a month and hears an average of two Goldman proceedings per month for fire and EMS. Mr. Rucker said Ms. Vermillion can provide a lot of data on the EMS side because it has been going on for nearly eight years, but the fire process has just started. He said a lot of fire cases are coming in, but only some have been brought before anyone. Ms. Frient stated that, in past practice with the EMS Board, several cases may be opened, but fewer cases come before the Board because some cases are closed during the investigative process (i.e., there is not enough evidence to continue, individuals might have inadvertently marked yes to a misdemeanor, etc.). Mr. Steele said he asked at July's meeting if there were any disciplinary cases and that Mr. Rucker stated no; however, in a span of six days there were disciplinary cases presented at the July EMS Board meeting. Mr. Rucker clarified that no fire discipline cases were presented to the EMS Board at their July 16, 2008 meeting; however, the fire disciplinary process was discussed.

Mr. McLean asked if committee members could sit in on the EMS Board disciplinary process for one month instead of the fire Board members in order to learn about the discipline process and have a part in making the decision. Mr. Rucker didn't have a problem with them observing, but didn't think they could vote. Ms. Frient said they can discuss that option when the two groups meet with Mr. Rucker.

CHAIR'S REPORT, Phil McLean

Mr. McLean said during a meeting with instructors at Independence, Ohio, he received compliments regarding Mr. Kennington's assistance on getting certification cards processed and wanted to pass that on.

The finalization of NFPA 1403 was on the agenda, but Mr. McLean will move it to next month's meeting. He reiterated that this committee and Fire Marshal Bell both believe NFPA 1403 is a priority. Mr. Cotner reported that he spoke with Mr. Beatty regarding his comments opposing the optional 1403 certification. He said Mr. Beatty's disagreement boils down to the question of if a certification is done for this, where does it stop. Do you create a certificate for a safety officer or an engine driver? The other issue is liability for Fire Chiefs. Mr. McLean said this goes back to the top two list of people being injured or killed during live fire training in acquired structures and driver training. These two topics are the top priorities the committee is focusing on. Mr. McLean does not want to find out someone was killed in an acquired structure because the instructor wasn't versed on 1403 and there was no opportunity for that instructor to upgrade himself or herself. With or without the optional certification, the Fire Chief will always be liable. This committee has an opportunity to provide the best training for an instructor in 1403. If this committee can make that course available, we owe it to the fire service to do so and it is the top goal for this committee.

In July, Mr. McLean attended a meeting at the Fire Marshal's office regarding junior colleges creating different tiers and levels of training and discussed the Board of Regents college credit transfer. The next meeting is scheduled in September.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Gates apologized to committee members regarding some remarks he made several meetings ago. He said he made the comments out of anger because he was being prodded along during an issue that is very upsetting to him. Mr. Gates said he discussed it with Mr. McLean, the President of the Ohio Fire Chiefs Association (OFCA), and his EMS Board member, Mark Burgess. Deep down he thinks this has some bearing on the previous discussion held today. Mr. McLean said this committee is a unique group and everyone has a deep passion for what they are doing and what they have accomplished. He thinks this is probably why that situation took place. Mr. McLean stated that, as the Director had mentioned, we had a bump in the road and need to concentrate on the big picture.

Committee members requested the blinking button on the website for the continuing education online tracking system be turned off.

OLD BUSINESS

Nothing was brought forward.

ADJOURNMENT

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

**Meeting adjourned at 11:42 PM.**