

FINAL

**FIREFIGHTER AND FIRE SAFETY INSPECTOR TRAINING COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
October 14, 2008**

Chaired by: Phil McLean

Meeting Date and Location: October 14, 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, Richard Sacco and Jim Steele

Committee Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Summer Boyer, Aleta Dodson, Heather Frient, Tom Macklin, Doug Orahod, Richard Rucker, Robert Ruetenik, Melissa Vermillion

Guests: Dave Belcher, Violet Township; Mark Burgess, EMS Board; Jeff Cotner, Ohio Society of Fire Service Instructors (OSFSI); Scott Henry, Washington Township Fire Department; James Holcomb, Violet Township/EMS Board; William Mallory, EMS Board; Scott Walker, Ohio State Fire Marshal/Ohio Fire Academy

The meeting was called to order at 10:06 AM.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF THE SEPTEMBER 9, 2008 FIREFIGHTER AND FIRE SAFETY INSPECTOR (FFSI) TRAINING COMMITTEE MINUTES

ACTION: Motion to approve the September 9, 2008, committee minutes. Steele first. Sacco second. None opposed. Motion approved.

STAFF REPORTS

STAFF LEGAL COUNSEL, Heather Frient

No report was given.

FIRE CHARTER REPORT, Doug Orahod

Mr. Orahod distributed copies of the certification report showing the online renewals for the month of September and year to date. The report also itemized the numbers by county. Mr. Kennington reported there was no activity for volunteers in four counties this month: Delaware, Fairfield, Franklin and Hocking. Information regarding the January 24, 2009 renewal deadline was sent to: Mel House of the Emergency Management Agency (EMA) who will send it to all county EMA directors; e-mailed to over 900 Fire Chiefs; mailed promotional posters to all the fire departments (approximately 1,290); and Mr. Kennington will be speaking at the Ohio Association of Emergency Medical Services (OAEMS) conference as well as the Ohio Professional Firefighters Association (OPFFA). Mr. Kennington distributed miniature copies of

the poster to committee members. Mr. Rucker said the committee and the Division are doing their due diligence in publicizing the deadline. Mr. Orahood reported that the Fire Chief Listserv is now available for Fire Chief's to sign up for informational announcements via e-mail.

Mr. Orahood distributed copies of the monthly September fire staff report and the fire training monthly activity report. He reported that 36,701 firefighters have renewed to date. He reported approximately 100 fire departments/schools and 180 individuals have signed on to use the online continuing education (CE) training and tracking system, with over 1,000 CE courses entered.

Mr. Orahood distributed copies of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) firefighter fatality report regarding the death of a junior firefighter. He referred to recommendation number nine from the investigative report regarding the development of a state endorsed junior firefighter program that addresses the tasks junior members are permitted to perform. He and Mr. Rucker wanted to know if committee members thought Ohio should develop such a program. Members discussed having guidelines available on the EMS website; having such programs run through high school and technical schools under the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) umbrella to eliminate liability for fire departments; whether Boy Scout explorer programs would fall under state or local jurisdiction; having participants sign waivers to ride in the fire truck; and having links to the VFSI and Boy Scout programs on the EMS website. Mr. Orahood would be reviewing the Boy Scout Explorer program guidelines.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT, Richard Rucker

Mr. Rucker reported that Mark Mankins, EMS Board and FFSI member, resigned from his position. Mr. Mankins message said it had been an honor to serve with the Board, FFSI committee and the DPS staff. Mr. Rucker said he will be missed. Mr. Sacco asked whether there would be a quorum for fire disciplinary hearings with the recent resignations of Carl Jordan and Mark Mankins. Mr. Rucker said until new appointments are made, the quorum changes because it will be based on six members instead of eight.

Mr. Rucker announced John Sands has been promoted to EMS Chief of Operations, replacing Lorrie Laing. Mr. Sands has 32 years experience working for township, city and county governments. He served in both the fire and police departments in the city of Vandalia, as a Lieutenant and Fire Chief, respectively. Mr. Sands is a certified paramedic, Firefighter II, and an instructor in both areas.

The next town hall meeting will be Wednesday, October 29th, from 6:00 PM to 8:30 PM at the Washington County Career Center in Marietta, Ohio. He invited FFSI members to attend and expects several Board members will be there.

Copies of a report showing fire disciplinary actions for August and September were distributed by Melissa Vermillion. Mr. Gill asked if these handouts are public record and Mr. Rucker said they are.

Mr. McLean referred to last month's meeting and the issue raised of how this committee will know if trends are occurring related to training, standards, etc., that need addressed in the rules if the EMS Board is issuing the discipline. Ms. Vermillion said once the cases are adjudicated, they would come through Mr. Rucker and Mr. Orahood at the request of the Board members. Mr.

Lundy said the disconnect comes if the FFSI is not monitoring the disciplinary process, how will the committee know if an investigation uncovers the fact that a rule isn't working well for the charter and needs to be revised. Mr. Burgess said rules shouldn't be changed because they are causing discipline problems, but because it affects training, patient care or protects the public. Mr. Lundy said he did not mean rules should be changed to eliminate discipline, but only to make the rules more workable and make the process flow better.

Mr. Steele said per the rules, this committee is to provide advice and counsel on investigations and administrative actions, but since the Board handles this, FFSI can no longer do that. Mr. Rucker said the EMS fire Board members who designated the committee members to fill these seats will now provide the advice and counsel on the fire disciplines. Mr. Steele says he cannot find this in the rules and would like some clarification. Mr. Gates said he discussed the Board members issuing the fire discipline thoroughly with the Ohio Fire Chiefs Board of Directors who were not very happy about it. Their interpretation is once Mr. Gates was designated to this committee, it does not give the Board member who designated him the right to give advice and counsel as it is not written anywhere in the rules. Mr. Gates said the EMS Board fire members can overrule this committee. It is in the ORC rules, but the problem he has is with how it took place. Mr. Mallory said as having been on this committee and now on the Board, committee members need to have better communication with the Board member who appointed them. As a former member of this committee, he still is going to keep his finger on the pulse of the committee, and FFSI members should make the same effort with Board members. Mr. Burgess said as far as rules promulgated, the EMS Board doesn't override those. Mr. Rucker said the Board made a motion to change the disciplinary process. Mr. Gates asked whether it was legal to do so and Mr. Rucker said both the Ohio Department of Public Safety (ODPS) legal counsel and the Assistant Attorney General (AAG) approved it.

Mr. McLean asked if there was any more thought or discussion given to having FFSI members replacing EMS Fire Board members during that disciplinary hearing process so all FFSI members are familiar with the process. Mr. Rucker said there has not been any other discussion on this. Mr. McLean said the FFSI was going to do the investigative process until they hit a snag that caused concerns at a certain level that this committee shouldn't be involved in the process. It was then recommended that the EMS Board fire members handle it. That is still the concern all FFSI members have. This committee put so much work into the deals and laws, sold it to the fire community, and then all of a sudden the Board is going to handle it. Mr. McLean said maybe the EMS fire Board members have the knowledge and ability to do it, he doesn't know, but believes those members are not as familiar with how the rules are structured as this committee is. Mr. Gill said he prefer the Board do the discipline.

Mr. Rucker said committee members are scheduled to meet with the EMS fire board members at the January 8th EMS Board retreat at 10:00 AM. Mr. Burgess said he thinks it would be great to have everyone meet together.

CHAIR'S REPORT, Phil McLean

The Ohio Fire Academy completed the vehicle drivers "train the trainer" course last week. There were 160 participants and they are looking at another class offering in January or February. Mr. Gates said he attended the training and one of the statistics shows that only 25%

of fire departments in the United States have tankers, but they account for 75% of the wrecks. He said 80% of Ohio fire departments have a tanker, which might be part of the driving problem.

Mr. Cotner said he reviewed the list of objectives Mr. Orahood sent him for the 36-hour volunteer course. With the knowledge and skills, this would be a 70 hour class. Mr. Cotner said no matter how you slice it, the 36-hour course is not meeting the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards. NFPA rules 1403 and 1451 both require a Level I Firefighter. He recommended the committee look at the 36-hour course from a different view and focus on how to get volunteers upgraded to the Firefighter I (FFI) level as opposed to trying to fix the volunteer course. Suggestions included changing the name of the 36-hour course to “volunteer firefighter awareness” or “outside firefighter”, adding a disclaimer that this course does not certify or qualify them to enter a burning building, creating a three-part training module of the 100-hour upgrade to FFI, setting up a standardized curriculum taught from one textbook or a book created specifically for this course, and instead of trying to fix the 36-hour course, market the 120 hour class as has been done for the January 24 deadline. Mr. McLean said he doesn’t think anyone in this room thinks this course makes anyone a firefighter. Mr. Kennington said no one from the legislature on down wants to touch this course. Mr. McLean said the 36-hour course cannot be eliminated because there are communities who rely solely on volunteers during a fire. Mr. Steele said everyone has tried to eliminate this course without much success. Mr. Gates said a lot of chiefs are requiring volunteers to be a FFI and not the 36-hour volunteer course because they know they are not trained to be in a fire.

Mr. Kennington said when the certification process began, there were 59,000 volunteers, but right now there might only be 10,000. He suggested contacting those who have dropped out of being a volunteer and find out why they left. Mr. Kennington said they might have moved on to become a FFI or FFII or decided the 36-hour class didn’t give them enough training to risk their life, which could be the ammunition needed to make recommendations to change this once and for all. In 2010, the state will know exactly how many chartered institutions are teaching only the 36-hour class.

Mr. McLean wants the group to continue working on the 36-hour course. Mr. Orahood said that addresses part of the issue, but still doesn’t address training and testing consistency across the state. Mr. Gates said everyone is happy with the new test without the rope question. Mr. McLean said the test is going good, but the pass rates are as bad as ever.

Mr. Orahood asked if anyone was interested in working on creating the three training modules for the FFI objectives that were approved last month and Mr. Steele volunteered.

Mr. McLean reported Mike Beckman of the Ohio Fire Officials Association (OFOA) said the plans examiner certification workgroup has stopped progressing on that project. Mr. Beckman would like to continue working on this with the FFSI group to develop a certification as well as complete the hazard recognition course. Mr. Holcomb agreed to continue being part of the workgroup. Mr. Henry will let Deputy Chief Cooper know that the FFSI group has agreed to continue working on this issue.

After today’s meeting adjourns, the 1403 workgroup will meet.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Holcomb attended the International Code Council (ICC) meeting in Minneapolis. In 2012, part of the ICC code will require all new homes built must be outfitted with a fire sprinkler system.

OLD BUSINESS

Mr. McLean said for the good of the order on the discussion today involving Mr. Rucker and the investigative process, he thinks it is critical that the FFSI committee get together with the eight fire Board members to discuss the disciplinary process and ensure they are comfortable with what they will be deciding on. This is a two-way street and they obviously don't have the knowledge and the background that we do in the creation of the rules. They might have a background in fire, which is fine, but I think the bulk of the knowledge exists in this group.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Meeting adjourned at 11:39 PM.