

Berks County Fire Services Working Group

Thursday January 26, 2023

Officers: Chair Colin Hackman, Vice Chair Chris Schaeffer, Secretary Mike Kline

Attendance:

Zone 1 Matt Brett, Mark Richards

Zone 2 Blair Miller, Rusty Wagner

Zone 3 Bob Martin

Zone 4 Nevin Klahr, Colin Hackman

Zone 5&6 Brian Sierociniski, Mike Kline, Chris Schaeffer

Zone 7 Tom Kemery

BCFA Roger Weidenheimer

BCFT no one in attendance

BCFPA Andy Culp

DES Brian Gottschall, Mike Smith, Matt Stairiker, Christine Wood, Phil Salamone

Additional Attendance Scot Landis, Chris Jordan

Meeting called to order at 1800 Hours by Chair Hackman. There were no additions or corrections to the December 8, 2022 meeting minutes. Minutes approved as written.

Communications

Chris Jordan from the Exeter Twp Fire dept. provided a presentation on first responder tax credits. If anyone would like to become part of a target group with Chris to take this information to all of the zones for possible participation, please contact him.

Zone 1

Zone 1 had a conversation among the chiefs regarding operations channels and their use. The discussion was for dispatched calls to be assigned to one of the operations channels sooner and more often. Also, if the other zones are interested, Zone 1 is looking for input on what call types should be assigned to ops channels. This would need to be agreed upon by all Zones and approved by DES.

Zone 2.

Zone 2 will be presenting the formal request to each zone for the removal of the current 4-part message in the radio SOPs. If approved, this would make all messages 2-part. If not acknowledged by DES, field users would need to revert back to a 4-part message.

Question: Why is plan Charlie being used for everything else other than just weather-related incidents? Is it possible to provide the reason for a plan Charlie each time through a CAD message or include on the email sent out. DES reports plan Charlie is used for multiple reasons (Technical Related, Personnel Related, Weather Related, etc.). DES will make an attempt if time and personnel allow to send an email out for the reason of plan Charlie.

Question: When switching from the hailing channel to an ops channel why do we switch back over to the hailing channel to contact the dispatcher? DES at this time has limited resources and must utilize those resources as they see fit. This is not currently within DES capabilities. As per the current Radio SOP, if a field user needs DES, they must switch to the hailing channel and if DES needs Command, they will switch to the operations channel.

Zone 3

Nothing to provide.

Zone 4

A new representative has been added-Nevin Klahr. Nothing else to come before the meeting.

Zone 5 & 6

The zone is not in agreement on removing the 4-part message and using the 2-part message only currently. The tanker task force and brush task force for southeastern Berks/Zone 5&6 is being disbanded and will no longer be available to departments in the county. An official date is necessary to be set so DES can have time to contact all the depts that utilize these task forces to satisfy the run card requirement. Zone reps and DES agreed the official disbanding will occur on September 30th 2023. A letter must be sent to DES to officially announce this intention.

Zone 7

February 1st the new cadet class will start the academy for 1 year. City EMS will be adding an additional squad truck to the lineup and an implementation of acting deputies from the lieutenants when needed.

BCFA

The next association mtg is Saturday January 28 @ 2pm

The new membership cards are out for renewal. 30 year members become Life Members of the Association with no dues required.

BCFT

The Facebook page has been updated to reflect the new classes and upcoming events. All modules for current essentials classes are filled.

BCFPA

Any company interested in joining the association should contact someone for more information. An autism awareness class is being sponsored by the FP association on February 8th. Members are free and non-members are \$50. If you are holding a large event and need FP to help with traffic control, please feel free to contact the FP association for assistance. Currently there are no zone 2 and 3 reps in the fire police association.

DES

Currently working on an updated working group list. Nothing new to share regarding the open mic radio issue, still working with Motorola. They are still unable to recreate the issues but they are aware there is still a problem to resolved. Any recommendations for SOP changes need to be in by the end of January for the upcoming year.

DES is working to implement an additional backup paging method, this would be accomplished by using a portable radio and not being tied to a radio console. If this method would be needed the way you would hear the dispatch would be different. During this method all tones would have to be done one at a time creating a lag with information concerning the dispatch with the actual voice report. So after the tone you will hear "stand by for emergency traffic". Personnel would need to place their pager on monitor and after all tones were completed, the announcement would be made with the municipality, location and call type. Tom Kemery made a suggestion that on higher priority calls the zone all call is used. DES is actively working on a plan.

DES made aware to the working group that the current company RAVE (Swift Reach) that provides the text paging would like us to move from the Swift platform to their platform. Rave bought out Swift and is currently working on transitioning everyone over. The problem with moving is Rave cannot generate the current unique email that is need to be sent out to produce the information to transition to text messaging. They are working on it but cannot provide a time frame. DES is looking into alternative providers, possibly systems such as Active 911, I am responding and First Due. There is no time frame on a transition to a new provider if that is the path however the Swift platform which is what is in use now will no longer be supported after July.

Phil Salamone is working with Total Visibility the vendor that provides the current accountability system to provide a place to upload photos. This would allow depts to take their own photos and use them for the county accountability tags

Old Business- None

New Business

Officer elections were held, a motion was made by Matt Brett; 2nd by Roger Weidenheimer to retain the current officers motion carried all in favor. NOTE: Chair Colin Hackman made it known that this would be his last year as Chair.

A question was asked if the meeting could be recorded. The Teams site is provided for our use by the county and they are unable to record the meeting.

The next meeting will be Thursday March 23, 2023 at 1800 hours via Teams. No further business to come forth, Chair Hackman adjourned the meeting at 1950 hrs.

