**STATE EMERGENCY RESPONSE COMMISSION (SERC)**

**DRAFT Regular Meeting Minutes**

**Wednesday, October 18, 2023**

1. Call to Order - (Vice Chair, Chief Patrick McLaughlin) - 10:02 am
2. Additions or Deletions to the Agenda – (Vice Chair, Chief Patrick McLaughlin)

None

1. Roll Call – (Conducted by Max Kennedy, VEM)

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| **Seat – Name** | **Present** | **Absent** |
| Commissioner of Public Safety - Jennifer Morrison / **Patrick McLaughlin (Vice Chair)** | **X** |  |
| Secretary of Natural Resources - Julie Moore / **Tim Cropley** | **X** |  |
| Secretary of Transportation - Joe Flynn / Mike Touchette / Craig Digiammarino / Andy Shively |  | **X** |
| Commissioner of Health - Mark Levine / |  | **X** |
| Secretary of Agriculture, Food, and Markets - Anson Tebbetts / Annie MacMillan / **Clark Parmelee** |  | **X** |
| Commissioner of Labor - Michael Harrington / **Dan Whipple** / Stephen Monahan | **X** |  |
| Director of Fire Safety - Mike Desrochers / **Michael Skaza** | **X** |  |
| Director of Emergency Management - Eric Forand / **Max Kennedy (Secretary)** | **X** |  |
| Local Government - **Chris Violette** | **X** |  |
| Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) – **Bob Morlino** | **X** |  |
| Regional Planning Committee – **Andrew L’Roe** | **X** |  |
| Fire Service - Christopher Dube |  | **X** |
| Law Enforcement - **Ryan Palmer** | **X** |  |
| Emergency Medical Service (EMS) – Prescott Nadeau\*  *\*Present for roll call only, had to leave the meeting after roll call was taken* |  | **X** |
| Hospital – **Kate Hammond** | **X** |  |
| Transportation Entity reporting chemicals - **Dave Patneaude** | **X** |  |
| Entity reporting Extremely Hazardous Substances (EHS) – **Mark Toof** | **X** |  |

**Others and Members of the public:**

* Leonard Wallace, USEPA
* Rhonda Camley, Finance
* Charles Colley
* Christine Forde, CCRPC
* Sue Plant, VEM

1. Approval of Regular Meeting Minutes of May 17, 2023

Motion made to accept by Andrew L'Roe (ACRPC)

Tim Cropley (ANR) seconded the motion

Motion carried

1. Presentation on Lithium-Ion Batteries

Bob Morlino, Chair of the Vermont LEPC and a Vermont Hazmat tech and instructor of the Vermont State Fire Academy, gave an overview of the course that the Fire Academy has created for the fire departments in Vermont to assist firefighters in handling lithium-ion battery fires.

1. Team Reports
   1. Tier II Submissions/Financial Report & HAZMAT Team Report – (Chief Patrick McLaughlin, Division of Fire Safety)

* Currently, there are 27 members with three open positions. We're actively recruiting two positions in the South. I have one position member in the HR slot working through the hiring process. I submitted a request to HR for five temporary positions. I also submitted to the Joint Fiscal Office an approval for one full time position. This position will be charged with HAZMAT compliance and supporting the LEPC. It is a HAZMAT compliance officer position normally out of VEM and now the position has been moved over to DFS and we're looking to get that position staffed. It'll be a limited-service position, half federal funds, and half task funds to support the position training.
* In September, we did some harbor booming. We were able to, with the assistance from EPA, acquire about 1000 feet of harbor boom from Connecticut. We gave some to the Shelburne Fire Dept in September. We did some Harvard booming and drilled off the GRS plans that the EPA had done 2 or 3 years ago on Lake Champlain. We have plans and strategic positioning.
* This past weekend we did RAD review in our Dummerston AOT building where we have some equipment in our cache for radiological emergencies. We did our annual review and made sure all our personnel were still up to speed on the equipment and response. We incorporated them into our monthly training so that our personnel are up to speed.
* In November, we have a vendor coming to deliver a HAZMAT IQ training as well as a HAZMAT bio IQ training. These are two eight-hour classes, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, at the Williston Fire Station training room.
* In December, we'll be doing our year-end review; going over calls and reviewing equipment.
* We will be hosting our biannual HAZMAT technician recertification class and that will run from January until April. In April we will have our job performance evaluations for the class. That's every second weekend, the first three months, on Saturday and Sunday, and we'll go through the entire HAZMAT tech course and get everyone recertified and our new members will be trained at the same time. Right now, we currently have 968 trained.
* We've got 911 dispatcher training tomorrow, so continuing to do training across the board for emergency responders. Due to the flooding, we crested over 200 calls for state HAZMAT and of those 200 calls, 98 of them being out the door responses compared to last year when we did 44 out the door responses. I think it was 97 or 96 calls just in the month of July. It was a significant month, and our response trucks were out and we had support from the Civil Support team as well. We had two teams from Global Foundries with us in Barre and did everything from propane calls to structure firefighting, supporting the local agencies.
* For our equipment, we still have a couple of grants waiting on FEMA approval. We've got conditional approval for the updated spectrometer on truck three and we’re just waiting for the final approval.
* We added, with Doctor Irwin's assistants, some alpha particle detection for all the trucks in our red cache, so all our trucks now have additional radiological tools and equipment. Truck four and car one have cradle point systems being installed. Those are dual point Wi-Fi systems with Verizon and FirstNet networks available to them. So, when we get on scene, we create our own network and are able to get Internet where we may not have had it 100% of the time.
* We are back to full vehicle staffing and all the trucks are where they need to be and back in service.
* Regarding the Tier 2 program to date, we received 2759 Tier 2 reports. The 2022 submission period ended in March of 2023 and reports have been submitted to the EPA. There are still some stragglers with payments, but It was a very successful year, probably one of the more the successful years in our system and it was very much due to Val Bowman, who's Central Office admin. She was paramount in the ability to have an additional eyes processing these and in answering questions, allowing me to be able to do HAZMAT work. She was able to assist in clerical work. Unfortunately, she’s departing DPS in the coming weeks and I just wanted to take a moment to thank her for her support that was critical in the efficiency and success to this year's Tier 2 program.
  1. Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) Spill Team Calls – (Tim Cropley, ANR).
* Usually our spills are in the 150 range for the quarter, we have 508 listed on this one because of the July flooding. From May 1st through the end of September, 229 of those were due to the July declared flood emergency, 147 involved above ground storage tanks, but 106 of those 147 involved pump outs of oil and water from above ground storage tanks that did not actually result in a release.
* We were getting support from EPA as well as FEMA for recovery of any HAZMAT incidents that were flood impacted.
* So fortunately, we didn't have as many releases as we did during Irene. As an example, in 2011 we had approximately 920 total spills. I think a lot of people learned from the experience of Irene. Plus, since Irene, we have an AST rule that has specific 3-year construction requirements. If you're in a floodplain, you do have specific things you're required to do to help prevent your above ground storage tank from being impacted by a flood or releasing due to a flood.
* We have two members leaving our spill team in the near future, likely by the end of the year and we are starting the recruitment process by the end of this month so they can start training at the beginning of November and start pulling shifts beginning next year. We'll be looking for a new spill program manager because I plan on retiring at the end of the year, so I'm very happy about that.
* We have a geographical response strategy plan that we're going to test on Lake Champlain. The ones Patrick talked about in the Shelburne area with the VHMRT and the local fire departments. EPA said that they have some funding for additional testing of those plans. We may end up choosing different plans from what was done because we didn't have reps at yours unfortunately, but we may also try to target other plans that have not been tested and we’re planning on inviting the VHMRT to those so that we can get valuable input from them as well. If we end up doing the same area, or a close by area, then we'll invite the Shelburne Fire Department since we know that they have resources to assist in the case of a release on the lake. The meeting to select that will be October 30th and then following the selection of the strategies, we'll be doing other planning meetings.
* We also have our upcoming annual meeting with the HRT and Vermont Emergency Management on November 7th and the next day the Spill program is having a meeting with EPA to do a hot wash from the flood response, to discuss how everything went, what worked well, what did not. We'd like to do a hot wash with VHMRT as well, to discuss what worked, what didn't, and how we could work better together better in the future.
* The Spill program is working on developing a better plan and approach for future disasters that are federally declared. We're developing a 10-page plan for use within our division. Our division will have our own ICC structure that we'll be using for future disasters, and we'll be pulling in resources, determining what other organizations we will be working with.
  1. Fire Academy Updates – (Michael Skaza, Fire Academy).
* We're still running short staffed as many are carrying two open full-time positions. We have a site coordinator position that is posted if you know any folks who might be interested and are well qualified for that position, please encourage them to apply. We have interviews lined up this afternoon for our open training coordinator position, so we're hopeful that we'll find the right person very soon. We've added a part-time administrative assistant to the Fire Academy to help us process records and recertify firefighters. And since the last time I reported to you, we've hired 4 new part time instructors and they’re up and running out in the field, doing really good work. One instructor has resigned, so holding steady at about 90 part time instructors.
* We're rolling into our HAZMAT training season. We like to do a lot of this work in the winter when we can't be outside flowing water and things like that. It’s busy in the HAZMAT training arena, we will be doing HAZMAT awareness and operations courses in Bethel starting on January 2nd, Ludlow on December 11th, Middlebury on December 28th, Shelburne on December 6th, and Sheldon on November 7th. Also, within our two firefighter programs we will be doing modules on ignitable liquids, flammable gases, and foam firefighting, in Ludlow on March 25th and Shelburne on February 28th. Bob just gave you a really nice look inside at the new lithium-ion battery fire awareness course we have rolled out, and we have five offerings of that course regionally around the state. Just last week, we completed our first course on October 12th in Lyndonville and had an astounding 51 students attend. That was a great crowd and thanks to Chief McLaughlin for hosting that event in his fire station. We're seeing really strong enrollment in the remaining offerings, and we will be in Bennington with those on October 23rd, Underhill on October 25th, Rutland Town on November 2nd and Norwich on November 29th. They're all posted on the Vermont Fire Academy website. After we get through those first five offerings of the lithium-ion battery course, our plan is to do another regional round to fill the rest of the holes in the state and then it will be a regular course in our course catalog that folks can request. With the recent release of NFPA 470, which is the standard for training of responders in hazardous materials and weapons of mass destruction, the Fire Academy has updated our curriculum and testing to the new addition of this standard and we are currently awaiting accreditation. It is our intent to roll out this new edition for HAZMAT awareness and operations after the first of the year. And for those of you who are paying attention to standard numbers, NFPA 470 is a new number. It combines 47472 and 1072 into one standard as part of NFPA's consolidation project.
* The Fire Academy did work with the state HAZMAT team to purchase a tank rollover prop. That was funded with an Assistance to Firefighter’s grant, and that prop has been received and is in service and by all accounts, it sounds like the HAZMAT team has found a lot of value in that. In September we were awarded our next federal fiscal year HMP grant funds totaling $173,583 and you may recall at the last meeting, we were expecting a 9.7% reduction in the award from our previous year. However, in something that has absolutely never happened to me before and grant management, the program called me and said Hey, Vermont, you're a high performer in this grant program, we would like to offer you an additional $66,000 that other states were unable to spend. So of course, we accepted that and put together a plan so that grant pays for all of the hazardous material training that the Fire Academy delivers, as well as the 50% grant funding that Patrick mentioned for the full-time position.

1. Committee Reports
   1. Finance Committee Report (Rhonda Camley).

There's nothing to report now that we don't have the SERC grants.

* 1. LEPC Report (Bob Morlino, LEPC Chair).

We had the LEPC meeting on May 19th and we're planning another one at the moment.

1. Public Comments

* Leonard Wallace - This week Cameo Chemicals came out with a new version 3.0. For those that are not familiar, last year we integrated the ability to take the isolation zones that are in the emergency response guidebook and project those onto a map and export them in Google or Marplot. The other two major upgrades to Cameo Chemicals were you'll now know if the chemical will sink or rise in the atmosphere or sink or float in fresh water especially with the protecting of groundwater, surface water, and drinking water places. For folks who use level ANB boots, they upgraded the fabric information in the Cameo Chemicals new version.
* Chief Patrick McLaughlin - If there is someone in the membership that would like to be nominated for the SERC Chair position, please let me know. I'm more than willing, as well as Max, to support that chair as much as we possibly can, helping with agenda development and bringing entities in. We’d really like someone from industry, but it doesn't have to be. We'd like to see if we can get that shared positioned filled and I can go back to vice chair.
* If you have any ideas or things you'd like to see brought before the committee, please let us know and we'll work to bring those presentations together and try to stay on top of the current HAZMAT happenings.
* We had the New Hampshire HAZMAT team in state during the flooding to augment the HAZMAT team and that worked quite well, to the extent that when Keene was here, we ended up having a radiological incident in Hartford that ended up just being a check source.  
  On those larger scale incidences, where you have an entity you haven't worked with before and you have federal agencies, your agencies, local agencies, and an entity that's never played in the sandbox, things went extremely well. They were extremely professional and knew the job inside and out. Thanks to the guys in New Hampshire for helping us out, they were really helpful! We’re happy that we've got a good working relationship with the state Fire Marshall's office. The coordinator was able to assist in facilitating the response of those local agencies into our state during an emergency and a natural disaster.

1. Adjourned after passage of motion by Chief Patrick McLaughlin, seconded by Bob Morlino - 11:50 am

Next Regular Meeting: January 10, 2024

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