

# SOUTH CAROLINA FIREFIGHTER MOBILIZATION

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## MEETING MINUTES

### Firefighter Mobilization Oversight Committee

Sept. 20, 2023, at 10 a.m.

Public notice of this meeting was properly posted at the South Carolina State Fire, 141 Monticello Trail, Columbia, SC 29203 and provided to all requesting persons, organizations, and news media in compliance with Section 30-4-80 of the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act. The meeting was also held via video and teleconference.

#### I. Call to Order and Welcome

The meeting was posted and advertised pursuant to South Carolina laws, rules, and regulations. The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m. by Chairman Jones.

Others in attendance included Tres Atkinson (Dorchester County Fire Rescue), Charlie King (Anderson City FD), Stuart Robinson (SLED), and David Reed-virtual (Columbia FD). State Fire employees included Ken Kerber, Susan Duncan, Brian Archibald, Chad Beam, Shelly Allen, and George Stapleton.

A quorum was present. Chairman Jones welcomed the Committee members and guests.

#### II. Roll Call of Members

SC Firefighter Mobilization Committee											
Jonathan Jones	✓	Darryl Jones	✓	Joe Palmer	✓	Bruce Kline	✓	VACANT		Mark Davis	✓
Kim Stenson Sub: Mike Russell	V	Mike Bedenbaugh	V	Phil Jolley	A	VACANT		Joey Tanner	V	Mark Keel	✓

✓ : Present    V: Virtual    A: Absent

#### III. Approval of Agenda and Previous Minutes

Bruce Kline made a motion to approve today's agenda. Mark Davis seconded. The motion carried unanimously, without discussion.

Bruce Kline made a motion to approve the Feb. 23, 2022, minutes. Mark Davis seconded. The motion carried unanimously, without discussion.

#### IV. Chairman's Remarks

##### A. Committee Member Updates

Chief Jonathan Jones stated the two committee vacancies have been filled.

- Chief Charlie King will replace Chief Steve Kovalcik.
- Chief Tres Atkinson will replace Chief Brian Leggette.

## **B. Employee Updates**

- Doug Spinks resigned as IST/Risk manager. Shelly Allen, a former lieutenant in the US Coast Guard, has been hired as his replacement.
- Shon Hamilton retired in August 2023. Brian Archibald, a Task Force 1 and HART team member, has been hired as his replacement.
- Academy Superintendent Dennis Ray retired. Jason Pope, former Firefighter Mobilization coordinator, has been hired as his replacement.

## **V. Mobilization Coordinator's Report**

Chad Beam provided a report to committee members.

Beam stated that SCEMD staff agreed on the need for a statewide notification system. At no cost, EMD staff helped create a Firefighter Mobilization System through Palmetto, which is ready for use. There are 194 fire departments, along with their respective equipment, currently in the database. He also provided a virtual tour of the new dashboard and database and highlighted its capabilities.

Beam shared the most recent mobilization requests since the last meeting (missing persons, tornado response in Allendale, warehouse fire in Darlington, scrapyard fire in Hartsville, LODD in Irmo, warehouse fire in Johnsonville, and church fire in Barnwell).

Five South Carolina counties have moved to "FleetTalk" and interoperability is a concern. As a result, tri-band plus FleetTalk radios (Kenwood VP8000) are to be purchased for all regional coordinators. The counties include Cherokee, Fairfield, Saluda, Pickens, and Abbeville. All five of these counties have requested mobilization in the past.

## **VI. SC-TF1 and SC-HART Update**

Chad Beam shared a summary of recent conferences and events along with a list of future events/incidents/exercises and a roster indicating 129 active members.

He also discussed the Columbia apartment (LODD) collapse. With the deployment to the Columbia apartment collapse – it was the first time SC Task Force One shored up a "live" building. The ATF was also involved and spoke highly of Task Force One during a recent meeting.

A short-term strategic plan has been created and executed. A long-term strategic plan will include all regional team leadership.

Staff executed a contract with Texas A&M Extension. All federal credentialed teams have a FEMA number. To prepare for the future, classes hosted by SCFA will include a FEMA equivalent number.

Chief Jones discussed Task Force One's needs and vacancies (medical professionals, HazMat specialists, canine handlers, structural /civil engineers, etc). Chief Ken Kerber stated the vacancies continue to be advertised and 36 applications are pending. Regional interviews will be conducted. Chief Jones stated the SC Department of Transportation may be a source of state-employed structural engineers for the team.

Chief Jones stated there is non-recurring State funding to purchase 15 canines. However, logistics need to be in place before purchasing canines.

For an upcoming training exercise, a three-story parking garage was built and collapsed on campus. The USC School of Engineering provided the concrete. The site contains 15 cars along with multiple "victims." Every discipline will be exercised around the clock.

In June 2023, a three-day HART training exercise was conducted in Charleston with the Metro Marine Unit. It was a successful exercise.

Additionally, in June 2023, the first Lakota-Bravo rescue occurred in Table Rock.

In August 2023, the annual HART Week training took place in Table Rock and involved three South Carolina counties. A team from Kentucky attended to watch the week of training.

Three HART rescuers are employed by State Fire.

Chief Keel stated SLED wants to work with State Fire staff regarding incorporating their helicopters and crewmembers into the HART program. SLED's pilots are ready to assist during emergencies.

## **VII. SC-IST (Palmetto IST) Update**

Staff is working on a credentialing process and researching third-party credentialing through the All Hazards Incident Team Association. Most key positions are at the point of being credentialed. Staff has been meeting and working with regional IMTs. Julie McCabe, a former State Fire employee, is involved with the LowCountry IMT. It is housed at the Charleston Fire Department where she works.

IST remains involved with the National Association for incident management teams. The first mid-year Academy (Oct. 30- Nov. 3) will be hosted on State Fire's campus. Six specific position courses will be offered for free. The event will also be live-streamed.

The State of Louisiana requested IST assistance to respond to its wildland fires but, due to a hurricane on the east coast, staff was unable to assist. However, SC Forestry employee and committee member Darryl Jones was able to assist.

An IAP was produced for Hurricane Idalia.

Shelly Allen has been assigned LLR's business continuity plan that was previously managed by LLR's IT Department.

## **VIII. Old Business**

### **A. Funding Update**

Mobilization has built up a cash balance due to a vacancy. More than \$95,000 was carried over from the previous fiscal year. The current balance is \$241,546.38.

Historically, Task Force One, HART, and IST are funded through the Fire Marshal's office. The SC Legislature recognized the need to replenish and replace the TF-1 and regional cache purchased in 2005. Non-recurring funds include \$5 million for USAR operations. It takes \$1 million to sustain the programs for one year. However, according to State House budget writers, more non-recurring funds were available to use for multiple years.

The USAR budget is \$1.6 million to include training. In addition, \$12 million was requested for equipment replacement. This includes a mobile command center with all remote capabilities.

Seven pick-up trucks have been received, along with John Deere gators, and golf carts. Money has been saved by purchasing via military surplus.

There are currently 34,000 pieces of equipment from more than 600 vendors. Staff has to research which items are on state contract.

Currently, \$11 million is uncommitted. Chief Kerber's focus is to help facilitate the procurement of needed items. Other requested items include:

- \$3 million to build a new USAR headquarters emergency operations center,
- \$2.75 million to renovate the existing USAR building, and
- \$1.5 million for a command-training center.

Chief Jones stated the plan is to combine funds and add on to the existing USAR building to include an Emergency Operations Center. The goal is to have the EOC separate from the team workflow area, and bunk space for 80 - for a total of 300 beds on campus.

The SC General Assembly approved \$5 million non-recurring (\$1 million for each region (5) for training and equipment replacement).

## **IX. New Business**

### **A. Establishment of ERTF Working Group**

Chief Jones explained the history and need for establishing an ERTF Working Group to create a plan.

A motion was made by Chief Kline to establish an ERTF Working Group and to develop a plan, per state statute. Chief Davis seconded. The motion was carried unanimously without discussion.

Chief Keel shared SLED was funded last year to lease the former Gilbert Elementary School to be a statewide training center. It will need to be upgraded and renovated and will be leased for 20 years. Different types of beneficial training include active shooter training. SLED welcomes other agencies to be involved in any future potential training offerings.

Chief Jones stated the relationship between SLED and State Fire remains a positive one and future opportunities exist to continue working together. Chief Keel agreed the relationship is strong.

## **X. Next Meeting and Adjournment**

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, Jan. 10, 2024, at 10 a.m. in the State Fire Marshal's conference room in Columbia. There will also be a virtual option.

Chief Keel made a motion to adjourn. Chief Davis seconded. The motion was carried unanimously without discussion. The meeting was adjourned at 11:53 a.m.