

Berks County Fire Services Working Group

July 24, 2025

Officers: Chair Colin Hackman, Vice Chair Chris Schaeffer, Secretary Blair Miller

The meeting was called to order at 1800 hours with 23 people in attendance. There were no additions or corrections to the previous month's minutes (May 2025), they stand approved as read.

Attendance:

Zone 1: Jesiah Newsome, Josh Young, Mark Richards

Zone 2: Blair Miller, Dean Dalious, Rusty Wagner

Zone 3: Bob Martin

Zone 4: Colin Hackman, Lance Parmer

Zone 5&6: Brian Sierocinski, Chris Schaeffer

Zone 7: Andrew Getka

BCFA: Roger Wiedenhammer

BCFT: No one in attendance

BCFPA: Tim Goodhart

Forestry: Gregory Reese

DES: Brian Gottschall, Christina Wood, Matt Stairiker, Michael Smith, Philip Salamone

Additional Attendance: Scot Landis, Kris Macauley, and Tracie Young-Brungard.

Communications: Kris Macauley and Tracie Young-Brungard were in attendance from the Office of the State Fire Commissioner and provided a PowerPoint presentation for the recruitment/retention program.

Zone 1: Would like a definition of ILS MEDICAL for their members and EMS. Brian Gottschall reported this wasn't an easy definition and relates to every EMD card and the outcome of the questioning. He will be forwarding out the documentation available and answer questions, if needed, afterwards.

Zone 1 would also like a designation/classification of a high-water unit. Brian Gottschall confirmed with Christina Wood that there could be a capability of the unit(s) in CAD

however, there needs to be a definition of the unit/capability that is agreed upon by the FSWG.

Zone 2: Zone 2 offered assistance with the definition of the high-water units.

Zone 3: Nothing to report.

Zone 4: Lance reported when DES is clearing units as it pertains to FP. Lance asserted that units are being cleared from the CFS even though they are still on the scene and this is being done even when OIC is reporting fire is clear with the exception of fire police. Brian Gottschall inquired if this is occurring with other agencies or just his. Lance reported that this is occurring with other agencies – however people aren't formally addressing it. Michael Smith reported he was aware of such reports that are being investigated currently.

Zone 5&6: Nothing to report.

Zone 7: Nothing to report. City supports the flashover and call type suggestions. Cadet class is down to 8 cadets currently.

BCFA: CHF72 reminded 10-2 on 8/9 for Smokey's Birthday Bash. They are looking for apparatus for the Touch a Truck portion of the event. Anyone willing to help should contact Joel Lutz at jblutz@brecknockfire.com or Dean Dalious.

BCFT: Flyer sent out for trainings coming up - FF Ops in Apartment Buildings, Chimney Fires, Hoarding Conditions, Leadership I. All was included in the flyer.

BCFPA: Reiterated Zone 4/Lance's reports of fire police being cleared from calls prior to them actually being cleared. Tim is seeing FP CW being used as a talk around instead of users switching to a different talk group.

Forestry: No attendance / report.

DES: Nothing new to report.

Old Business: Flashover Simulator – Gottschall appreciated submission of the document and noted it was helpful when going to County leadership, DEP, etc. Brian believes they are close to having a package together to take to County Legal for them to reconsider. County Legal was notified this would be coming, they noted they would take a look at it. Jesiah thanked everyone for the assistance on this document – noting that this is signed documentation showing that this is a leading cause of firefighter LODD.

Call types – Brian Gottschall noted that the document was compiled by DES with consideration from Zone 1, 5&6, and current DES policy. Brian Gottschall reiterated that

the Structure Investigation only includes fires inside an oven, not other appliances, and as such other appliances would be dispatched as a SF.

Zone 1 - acknowledged this was a good start but would have to be taken back to Zone 1. Colin interjected and said we need to come up with something and move forward, possibly a subcommittee for this. Zone 1 expressed concerns with what they are seeing in a text page and reiterated this was a good start but in the end a subcommittee was not necessary.

Zone 2 – reported this needs to be taken back to the Zone for input, noting that run cards may need to be adjusted. Brian Gottschall acknowledged this need and noted there will be a window given to make such adjustments. Rusty was in support of a subcommittee.

Zone 3 – Agreed this was a good starting point. Doesn't agree there is a need for a subcommittee.

Zone 4 – Agrees it needs to be taken back to the Zone. Open to either having a subcommittee or not having one.

Zone 5&6 – Acknowledged Zone 1 did a good job with this. Chris asked for clarification on fire reported out. Brian Gottschall explained that if it is ANYTHING in the building that is now reported out – it is a Structure Investigation. Additionally, DES Staff was questioned and they reported that frequently SF's are processed and dispatched and while still on the phone the caller reports the fire is now out – however it will still be dispatched as a SF.

Zone 7 – Doesn't believe this needs a subcommittee but was in agreement for the proposed document from DES.

DES – When we get to a final plan and circulate said plan, how much time do fire departments need to make adjustments prior to implementation? Lance questioned how long does DES believe this should take for the fire service. Wood and Gottschall both noted that this was dependent on the fire service, as some zones may or may not need to make changes.

Colin – this needs to get back to our zones which needs to be a priority and how much time is needed if run cards need to be changed. These answers should be available for September's meeting. Rusty suggested this is going to take too much time because of bi-monthly meetings and suggested a subcommittee. Brian asked if it was unreasonable for the Zone to have a special meeting and asked how a subcommittee would solve the issue. Rusty said that e-mails would be sent out and they would move on it right away. Colin reiterated that this should be sent out immediately which gives them enough time until the next Zone and FSWG meetings.

EMS Proximity Dispatching – DES reported they are making headway however the GIS data from surrounding counties is a lower quality compared to Berks which is making complexities of enabling/moving forward with Proximity Dispatching. Colin questioned if there are run card changes for the call type changes, how Proximity Dispatching would fall into it. Wood reported both methods are on the current forms.

County Radio Refresh – Is DES still in negotiations? Gottschall – yes, but that shouldn't change whether agencies decide if they are in a need of a radio refresh or not.

New Business: None.

Good of the Order: Gottschall (25FD) – Spoke about Right to Know Law. 25FD is continuing to work with Senator Schwank's Office regarding Fire Service involvement with Right to Know Law. They are working on compiling a packet for agencies to forward to representatives. Gottschall encouraged all on sharing this to other agencies outside of Berks County.

Next meeting is Thursday, September 25, 2025 at 1800hrs.

There being no further business to come forth, Chair Hackman adjourned the meeting at 1953 hours.

Respectfully submitted,

Blair Miller

Blair Miller, Secretary

Structure Fire	Structure Investigation	Miscellaneous Fire	Brush Fire	Vehicle Fire
Any smoke or fire in or from a building or structure unless:	<p>The fire is reported to be out</p> <p>The fire is inside an oven (including when the fire is still active). Does not apply to a microwave or toaster or similar oven.</p> <p>The smoke is coming from a chimney or other feature that is a normal outlet of combustion without fire</p> <p>** recommend jurisdictions that cover crematoriums file premise alerts **</p> <p>The fire is reported to be in an unoccupied building smaller than 20x20</p>	<p>Trash fire</p> <p>Dumpster fire</p> <p>Pole fire</p> <p>Transformer fire</p> <p>Tree on wires with fire or smoke present</p> <p>Portable toilet fires</p>	<p>This call type applies to reported instances of fire involving vegetation (grassland, pasture, farmland, meadow, trees, etc.)</p> <p>This call type also applies to reports of controlled burns that appear to be spreading uncontrolled</p>	<p>This call type applies to reports of smoke or fire coming from a vehicle</p>
Any fire on the exterior surface of a building or structure including when conditions indicate fire is imminent (e.g. melting or blackening of the surface) or if the caller says the building is at risk of catching fire from something else that is burning (VF, BF, MF, etc). Consider the possibility of dispatching two separate incidents (SF, BF).	<p>Outlet arcing or sparking without smoke or fire</p> <p>Hot smells without smoke or fire</p> <p>Appliance malfunctions without smoke or fire</p> <p>Residential lockout with oven or stove left on without smoke, fire, or audible alarm</p> <p>Wires arcing or sparking at the weather head without fire</p>	<p>Report of objects other than a motor vehicle into a structure where the structure is reported to not be falling down or falling in (collapsing)</p> <p>PD request fire to evaluate the integrity of a structure</p> <p>Controlled burns unattended or other concern without reported spread</p> <p>Animal rescues</p> <p>Lockouts - special call only assisting other public safety on location or primary response on request.</p> <p>Smoke or fire from a mulch bed, ornamental planting (landscaping), or lawn (manicured grass)</p> <p>Incidents that do not fit the definition of any other fire service call types</p> <p>Water condition threatening electrical service/appliance without smoke or fire</p>		

