Safety Committee Meeting Minutes-October 2012

October 9th 2012@ DFES

*Note- There was no September meeting, as it fell on 9/11 and most of the Membership had other events or prior commitments.

I. Call to Order

At 1901 Meeting was called to order by Richard Hopkins. Attendees were Richard Hopkins (filling in for chair Richard Prather whom had teaching obligations) and Secretary Dixie Pierce. Members in attendance Brian Lowman, Rick Hemphill, Bob Moncrief, Harry Gossard, Ronnie Gray, W. Allen James, Troy Lloyd, Becky Maginnis, Kevin Lewis, Dale Hill, Charles Baker, Mike Reid, Jim Sprecher, Kelli Smith, and guest Jeb Laughman from Selective Insurance. Will Ball was also present only long enough to make his presentation.

August Minutes Approved 1902

II. Old Business

A) Safety Roundtable Discussion

1. Chief Ball bought before the committee his concerns of mission “essential” apparatus running emergency as opposed to mission “critical”. He stated that the Chiefs’ Committee had asked him to speak to us on this matter on their behalf. Chief Ball stated that he felt that many mission “essential” personnel and apparatus such as fire police, the emergency rehab unit (to which he referred to as the food wagon), and air unit were running “emergency” far too often than he felt was warranted. He cited a search as an arguable point of the emergency rehab unit not needing to run emergency. Dixie Pierce explained that the rehab unit has specific SOG’s and SOPs in place that govern the response of the unit and that searches specifically are run “non-emergency”. Chief Ball argued that this was not the case, or at the very least, were not being followed. Dale Hill echoed Dixie’s response that he had seen the SOPs mentioned that a driver could be held accountable to, that in fact, all of the personnel/apparatus he was mentioning had SOPs in place, and told Chief Ball to create a guideline as he suggests our committee drafts, would have to encompass all emergency personnel and apparatus, even Chiefs vehicles, and that he could not “pick and choose” which committees/apparatus/personnel that a policy could affect. Dixie also said that most of the time if not dispatched on the initial working fire assignment, the driver/officer of the unit asks the Incident Commander how they need us “emergency” or “non-emergency”. Chief Ball argued that the IC had “other, more important things to do” than answer us. Both Dale Hill and Richard Hopkins countered that they would rather apparatus as if unsure of the response, as opposed to guessing what response may be appropriate, and that it takes just a moment to answer. He also stated he felt that certain apparatus and personnel should always be dispatched “Alpha” and then can be upgraded to an “Echo” response if necessary. He stated that situations requiring the fire police, air unit, or emergency rehab unit to run “emergency” should be only for exceptional circumstances and wanted to know how the safety committee could argue that there are times, more often than not, that these apparatus/personnel are needed “emergency”, especially with Jeb Laughman present. Dale reiterated that all the apparatus/personnel Chief Ball was referring to had SOPs of some sort in place for “emergency vs.non-emergency” and Chief Ball stated that it was his belief that those guidelines were not being followed properly. He commented that there were videos of the emergency rehab unit responding “emergency” to calls, as if this proved the emergency rehab unit was doing something wrong. Dixie asked him how this was different from other apparatus running emergency posting video via Facebook and YouTube and how is the emergency rehab unit running emergency, different from a chiefs vehicle or even an engine running lights and siren to a call that may not warrant an emergency response such as a flooding condition, emergency lock in, or an “odor” call. Yes, there are times that warrant an emergency response, but more often than not these calls are handled “Alpha” and so are the majority of the calls the emergency rehab and even air unit respond to. Chief Ball seemed visibly upset and ended the conversation as he stood up stating that “the Chief’s committee wanted me to bring it to this committee and that’s all I was doing” and walked out of the meeting.
2. Troy Lloyd had a teachable moment. Says a FF sustained an injury near Sharpsburg while on a house fire. The FF was in the home when an evacuation was ordered immediately. The FF exited with his partner through a window and took off his mask once on the roof. While making his way to the ladder thrown near the window, the FF used his pike pole for balance and stabbed into the shingles which ruptured a bubble of hot tar and the FF received burns to the face. His partner actually kept him from falling off the roof after the tar exploded. Jeremy Sprecher also pointed out that at least there was a ladder thrown to the windows for the FFs to safely exit. Mike Reid said that this work will always be dangerous and that we have to be cautious about getting in the mentality we can prevent injuries.

3. Richard Hopkins recommends checking out a video on Firehouse.com of a natural gas truck tank failure that occurred in China and killed three FFs.

B) Insurance Update

Jeb Laughman commented as we discussed the second case that he was very happy to hear that it was quickly and correctly handled from an insurance stand point. He reiterated to take lots of pictures as soon as feasible for claims. Also we as a group came up doing a training video of incidents that have happened, showing how they happened, the outcome, and how the outcome could have ended better. The hope would be that even if just one FF took a second to think about the material in the video (for example, thinking about the facial burns and choosing not to remove their mask until safely on the ground) than it would be one less injury. Becky Maginnis said she is very pleased with the amount of first reports of injuries (FRI) coming in. She said it is very helpful, even for minor issues that did not require medical care because she had all the info she needed right at her disposal. Dixie Pierce asked if she could gather an Oct-Dec posting of events after the first of the year since more reports are coming in, to see what the top five complaints are, regardless of the need for medical care and she and Jeb said this would be a great idea. Jeb said there has been a drastic decrease in the amount of monies paid to injured personnel. He said the first trend of claims paid decreasing came after the physical program was instituted. He also stated that the AMOUNT of claims in the past ten months have jumped (falls, sprains, eye dust, etc.), but the AMOUNT of money paid out has fallen markedly. Jeb made sure to note that the jump in the number of claims is NOT a bad thing; it actually is a good thing, because again, it means that more FRI’s are being filed.

Rick Hemphill said that overall company compliance in at 94.3% and that just three years ago, companies could not even give numbers to Selective about how many “employees” they had. Jeb said that he was pleased that within three short years our county has a 94% physical compliance rate, a working safety committee in place, working to place an ISO system, and had such a great FRI campaign. He would like to see this trend continue. He applauds the work we’ve done and need to keep moving, but that we are far ahead of where he thought we would be by now. Bob Moncrief asked to have those broke down by Fire and EMS, and Becky said she was sure she could make that happen. Jeb said he wants all of us to feel free to ask him any questions, day or night.

C. Google Group

After some discussion, there still seems to be a great deal of confusion with folks not being able to access the Google group or pages. Rick Hemphill provided an alternate solution of a webpage and one generic email address and will try to have that up and running by next meeting.

D. Update for Safety Officer/Committee

The Amendment will be voted on next week and we were advised to have our delegates vote “Aye” for the Safety Officer Program which would allow LOSAP collection.

E. Fillable Forms

Putting together a plan for the adobe forms. Troy and Matty have taken each section and broke them down on what info needs to go into the appropriate fields. Need sent to Rick to place on our group page. Bob Moncrief would like to see it go on the
county page to help the ISOs and chiefs. We will place on our sites first and come back next month and vote to do any editing that may need to be done for a liability standpoint.

III. New Business

A) ISO Identification

Troy brought up that we should come up with something to designate the ISOs to help them stand out on a scene. Suggestions were bounced around and we settled on having “ISO” stickered in Scotch Lite to place on helmets. Bob Moncreif says that if Troy sends him the size of letters (he will measure the standard helmets for correct sizing) he will take care of having them printed. Rick Hemphill also can change the PAT tag color for ISOs/Co Safety Officers, and Jeb said many jurisdictions do it that way. Also, many stations have not yet responded to the request for a list of personnel qualified to become ISOs.

B) Fire Police Jurisdiction

The fire police were concerned with what their chain of command should be in the event one of them were injured on a job that was not directly affiliated with the fire companies that they belong to. Jeb told them workers comp still covers them and the officer would be responsible for notifying his chief that he was injured to make that FRI. He mentioned a contact name and number of someone in charge of the event the officer was working would be helpful. Kevin Lewis echoed Jeb’s statement that the FRI falls to the officer and that workers comp would still cover them because they are performing a job under the jurisdiction of the fire department they belong to. This is because it should be written in the departments bylaws, that their fire police can perform other duties under the capacity of the Sheriff or other departments, because the bylaw is giving permission for the insurance company to cover them by defining their scope of practice, even in the event of a LODD, and even if that officer was not under their parent companies direct care and custody at the time. It is up to the adjuster, not a chief, or sheriff, to decide whose insurance company should ultimately pay for the officer’s injury based on care control and custody. Bottom line is as long as there is a bylaw stating that the departments fire police can perform other duties as needed then they are going to be covered, period. If an officer is injured in another departments district, it is due diligence that the Safety Officer or Chief of the company whom the officer is serving helps file the FRI, but it still MUST be reported to that officers home department. The caveat to all of this is any company without a bylaw stating the above referenced material or whose bylaw say that their fire police cannot serve any other jurisdictions and/or departments. In which case if an officer does get injured while serving another department or jurisdiction, the officer willfully breaks that contract with their home company and in that instance county insurance and workers comp would NOT apply.

C) ISO/Safety Committee being “official”

Kevin Lewis said that there was no one from the ISO committee present at the last Chiefs meeting and so the program was tabled once again. Dale Hill was asked to be sure that it is placed on the agenda for this month’s meeting on 10/24/12. We must have the chiefs committee “do something with it” so we can effectively operate as a committee.

IV. Adjournment

Motion made by Charles Baker, Dale Hill second. Adjourned at 2026

Respectfully Submitted by Dixie L. Pierce