

MINUTES
Mine Families First Response and Communications Advisory Council
New Stanton, PA
May 6, 2015

A meeting of the Mine Families First Response and Communications Advisory Council was held on May 6, 2015, in the Fayette Room at the DEP New Stanton Office in New Stanton, PA.

Attendance:

Members Present:

Judith Shabbick, Special Medical Response Team (SMRT), Chairman
John Kline, United Mine Workers of America (UMWA)
John Pippy, Pennsylvania Coal Alliance (PCA)
Richard Fink, House Representative

Others Present:

Joseph Sbaffoni, DEP-BMS
Jeffrey Stancheck, DEP-BMS
Laura Edinger, Policy Office
Allison Gaida, DEP-BMS

Chairman Judith Shabbick called the meeting to order at 10:14 a.m. Kathleen Kowalski Trakofler, Mental Health Professional, was not in attendance. PEMA and Senate members and alternates have yet to be appointed, as well as an alternate from the House of Representatives.

Minutes from the September 10, 2014, meeting held in Marion Center, PA, were reviewed.

A motion was made by John Pippy and seconded by John Kline to accept the minutes as submitted, and all members accepted the motion.

Bureau of Mine Safety Report of Activities:

Bureau of Mine Safety Director Joseph Sbaffoni stated that the updates have been made on the Mine Families First Resource Reference Manual. Emergency Response and Training Manager Jeffrey Stancheck will continue to update the manual with June 1 as his deadline for completion.

Director Sbaffoni informed the Council that, though Pennsylvania finished last year with no fatalities, unfortunately this year started out with two. The Bureau is in the process of finalizing investigation reports on both of them.

Discussion took place on the recent Pennsylvania accidents.

Update of Member Status:

Chairman Shabbick, with the assistance of PCA Member John Pippy, have been reaching out to the House of Representatives, Senate, and PEMA through letters, emails, and phone conversations. Mark Lepore's alternate reappointment is now in the Governor's Office awaiting approval. Director Scaffoni offered to meet with the Senate and House when he is in Harrisburg to follow up on the appointment issue. The Bureau will arrange a meeting with PEMA to discuss their nominations for appointment.

Recollections of Sago:

Ron Bowersox was not able to attend the meeting, so this item will be included on the next meeting's agenda.

MFFAC Recommendation in Mine Incident: Not Classified as Emergency:

Director Scaffoni relayed the Mine Families First Act pertaining to the charge of the Mine Families First Response and Communications Advisory Council stating that he feels that the Council has done a good job. He reviewed the law as it stands and the Mine Families First Response and Communications Advisory Council is concerned only with a defined mine emergency, not individual incidents; nor incidents where the liaison/advisory council is activated.

Old Business:

Chairman Shabbick had previously brought up the issue of including behavioral health in Mine Emergency Response and Development (MERD) exercises. As a result of the Upper Big Branch accident, there were concerns about the mental health of mine rescue team members. Discussion took place on the benefits of having rescue team members talk to a medical provider prior to assisting to check rescuer's mental health. While this could be an option, discussion centered on the culture of mining and, therefore, having fellow team members have an awareness level of signs of stress that could be communicated upward. John Pippy presented what he has experienced in the military; that information is best presented in a timely manner as close to the deployment as possible. With this in mind, perhaps a 'stress check' could be part of the preparation checklist prior to assignment.

Chairman Shabbick and Kathleen Kowalski Trakofler will work together to put a presentation together.

Chairman Shabbick questioned whether a MERD families first training was going to be held so that a trial could possibly be part of the MERD.

Jeff Stancheck's plan is to have a full day of speakers and then a half day mini-MERD at New Stanton. This could be in conjunction with a Mine Families First Response and Communications Council meeting. Jeff would need two months to organize the speakers and the MERD.

New Business:

Judith Shabbick provided a detailed overview of the Special Medical Response Team (SMRT).

Next Meeting Date and Location:

The Mine Families First Response and Communications Advisory Council would again like to try to hold a meeting in conjunction with the PEMA conference this fall. Otherwise, a meeting will be scheduled for April or May 2016.

A motion was made by Rich Fink and seconded by John Kline to adjourn meeting at 11:36 a.m.