

MINUTES
Mine Families First Response and Communications Advisory Council
New Stanton, PA
April 18, 2017

A meeting of the Mine Families First Response and Communications Advisory Council was held on April 18, 2017, 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
L. Ray Bashline, Senate Representative
John Kline, United Mine Workers of America (UMWA)
Richard Fink, House Representative

Others Present:

Mark Lepore, Mental Health Professional
Chris Anderson, Special Medical Response Team
Will Dando, Pennsylvania Coal Alliance
Tanner Lowmaster, Rosebud Mining
Tom Rodgers, Rosebud Mining
Philip Barker, PEMA
Craig Carson, DEP-BMS
Allison Gaida, DEP-BMS
Margaret Scheloske, DEP-BMS

Chairperson Judith Shabbick called the meeting to order at 10:06 a.m. Chairperson Shabbick clarified that a quorum of four was present for voting purposes.

Minutes from the April 18, 2016, meeting held in DEP New Stanton were reviewed.

**A motion was made by John Kline to accept the minutes as submitted.
The motion was seconded by Richard Fink and all members accepted the motion. The minutes passed unanimously.**

Chairperson Judith Shabbick opened the meeting with tribute in memory of member and former council chairperson Kathleen Kowalski-Trakofler who passed away on March 23 after an illness. Chairperson Shabbick enlightened the council by reviewing Kathleen Kowalski-Trakofler's many accomplishments and contributions to the mining industry. The Special Medical Response Team (SMRT) recently conducted a training session at the Cargill Salt Mine in Ohio where they brought back salt samples to be given to the Mine Families First Response and Communications Advisory Council members in memory of Kathleen. She will be greatly missed.

Update of Member Status and Welcome New Members:

Chairperson Shabbick requested introductions be made around the room. She welcomed newest member L. Ray Bashline as the Senate appointee and thanked PCA Will Dando for his intervention in moving this appointment along. PEMA member nominee Philip Barker's appointment paperwork is in progress, along with PEMA alternate William Spencer, Mark Lepore, Chris Anderson, John Kline, and Will Dando.

Report of Bureau of Mine Safety Activities:

Bureau of Mine Safety Director Colvin Carson gave an overview of the Bureau's activities since last year's meeting. He relayed that the Bureau of Mine Safety Emergency Response and Training Manager Jeffrey Stancheck retired from the Bureau on March 31. The Bureau is conducting interviews and hopes to fill this position within a month. At that time the Mine Families First Response and Communications Advisory Council will be notified of the new Bureau's contact.

Director Carson stated that Pennsylvania currently has 23 active bituminous mines and 9 active anthracite mines. Three new bituminous mines have recently opened – Maple Springs Mine and Acosta Mine in Somerset and Crescent Mine, is east of Ebensburg. Director Carson was pleased to report a 15-month fatal-free span.

He updated the Council on a significant event that occurred in February at a Greene County Mine. Due to a fan outage, Bureau inspection staff were present to see some serious violations, which resulted in the mine being shut down and the decertification of nine certified mine officials. He believes that these actions may have prevented a serious mine disaster.

Update - Proposed Stress Questions for Mine Rescue Teams:

Chairperson Shabbick gave an overview of last year's meeting discussion where it was agreed that the Mine Families First Response and Communications Advisory Council would work to help move the mental health issue from the couch into the mine rescue arena. This would be accomplished while the captain is checking air hoses and preparing to go underground by asking mental health assessment questions to identify if it was in the team's best interest for members to go underground. Response to 'feelings' questions could be considered a weakness in a male-dominated environment, and Chairperson Shabbick would like to see mental health moved into a culture where it was not seen as such. A means to accomplish this would be to ask noninvasive questions prior to a mine rescue mission to determine state of mind of team captain and members.

Chairperson Shabbick proposed having questions ready to ask at a MERD the Bureau is conducting on May 25 at the Indiana Fire Academy. She suggested that she and Dr. Mark Lepore prepare appropriate questions to ask the participating mine rescue teams if the Council agreed. Based upon a USSAR Urban Search and Rescue format, open questions can be asked to monitor the physical and mental health of team members. By doing this, mental health is looked at from a medical viewpoint. A male figure in authority asking this type of questions will provide

fellow members with the ability to figure out why they are there and whether they are mentally prepared to be a rescue member and go underground. During the last meeting, Dr. Kathleen Kowalski-Trakofler mentioned that the team captains know their team members and would recognize if there was a change in behavior.

Dr. Mark Lepore explained mental health in terms of wellness and self awareness, helping an individual refocus and see how something occurring in their life might impact them. Team captains need educated to know the triggers so they can initiate a conversation. He also suggested debriefing questions to be asked to members immediately or even days after a mine rescue event.

John Kline made a motion for Judith Shabbick and Mark Lepore to develop questions carte blanche to be asked by team captains at the Bureau of Mine Safety MERD to be held on May 25 at the Indiana Fire Academy. L. Ray Bashline seconded the motion which was unanimously approved by the Council.

If Council members have question suggestions, they are to email them to Chairperson Shabbick prior to the May 25 MERD. Director Carson gave an open invitation for Mine Families First Response and Communications Advisory Council members to attend the MERD.

Presentation – Proactive Drug Awareness at Annual Mine Training:

Tom Rodgers from Rosebud Mining explained that Rosebud wanted to do something which would be beneficial in helping their miners and their families with the widespread opioid crisis. They hired Judith Shabbick as counselor who conducted a program for Rosebud employees during an annual refresher class. Chairperson Shabbick gave an overview of this presentation.

New Business:

Chairman Shabbick announced that this may be her last meeting as chairperson and pointed out that the United Mine Workers of America is the one group that has not served as a chair for the Council. UMWA member John Kline respectfully declined. The Council agreed that the chairperson issue will be revisited at next year's meeting.

Philip Barker will extend an invite to the Mine Families First Response and Communications Advisory Council members to attend their PEMA conference on September 30 to October 4.

Recollections of Sago:

As UMWA alternate member Ron Bowersox was again unable to attend, this agenda item will be put on hold until a future meeting.

Next Meeting Date:

The Mine Families First Response and Communications Advisory Council will hold its next annual meeting on April 10, 2018, at the DEP New Stanton office.

A motion was made by Rich Fink and seconded by L. Ray Bashline to adjourn meeting at 11:19 a.m.