

MINUTES
Mine Families First Response and Communications Advisory Council
New Stanton, PA
April 19, 2016

A meeting of the Mine Families First Response and Communications Advisory Council was held on April 19, 2016, 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
Kathleen Kowalski-Trakofler, Mental Health Professional
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
Craig Carson, DEP-BMS
Jeffrey Stancheck, DEP-BMS
Allison Gaida, DEP-BMS

Chairman Judith Shabbick called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m. At her request, introductions were made around the room. Will Dando announced that PCA member John Pippy has been deployed in the military, and that he would be replacing him on the Mine Families First Response and Communications Advisory Council. Nomination paperwork will be submitted to the Department to begin his reappointment process. Chairman Shabbick clarified that a quorum of four was present for voting purposes.

Minutes from the May 6, 2015, meeting held in DEP New Stanton were reviewed.

A motion was made by Kathleen Kowalski-Trakofler to accept the minutes as submitted. The motion was seconded by Richard Fink and all members accepted the motion.

Bureau of Mine Safety Director Introduction:

Jeffrey Stancheck introduced Colvin Craig Carson as the new Bureau of Mine Safety Director. Mr. Carson served as Bureau of Mine Safety Acting Director for seven months before being permanently appointed to the position on January 23, 2016.

Bureau of Mine Safety Report of Activities:

Bureau of Mine Safety Director Craig Carson provided an update to the Mine Families First Response and Communications Advisory Council on four (4) incidents in which a fatality occurred in the underground bituminous mining operations in Pennsylvania since January 2015.

- January 28, 2015 – LCT Energy, LP – Brubaker Mine
- February 20, 2015 – Rosebud Mining Company – Heilwood Mine
- June 27, 2015 – Dana Mining Company – 4 West Mine
- January 16, 2016 – Dana Mining Company – 4 West Mine

He also informed the Mine Families First Response and Communications Advisory Council of a serious accident which occurred on April 29, 2015, at Hanson Aggregates, Whitney Mine, describing how three miners were injured by an air blast coming out of the portal of the primary escapeway.

Chairman Shabbick stated that the Mine Families First Response and Communications Advisory Council is tasked by law to review the Whitney Mine accident. There was some discussion on whether the Council is to meet within a year after the accident or after the final report is completed. Chairman Shabbick will research this and relay her findings to the Council. It is to be noted that the Mine Families First Response and Communications Advisory Council did discuss the Whitney Mine accident at this meeting.

Rich Fink made a motion for the Mine Families First Response and Communications Advisory Council to reconvene after the final investigation has been complete. John Kline seconded the motion which was unanimously approved by the Board.

Chairman Shabbick wanted the minutes to reflect that the Mine Families First Response and Communications Advisory Council members are available to offer their professional services to the council members, if necessary.

Emergency Response and Training Manager Jeffrey Stanchek is responsible for updating the Mine Families First Resource Reference Manual on an on-going basis. The last update on the Bureau's website was in 2014. Jeff Stanchek will update the reference manual and distribute to the council member, along with assuring that the website includes up-to-date information. He will be concentrating on the counties with mining operations. Mark Lepore offered to assist Jeff Stanchek with the American Red Cross updates.

Regarding Director Carson's report of the above fatalities, Chairman Shabbick believes that the families were notified in a timely manner by the appropriate personnel and were offered the proper resources as outlined in the Mine Families First Implementation Plan.

Update of Member Status:

Jeffrey Stancheck provided an update to the Council on his communications with the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) and distributed an email with three nominees. Chairman Shabbick will notify Heather Davis from PEMA of the proper format to submit nominees for appointment.

Chairman Shabbick approached various individuals from the House and Senate on their responsibility to provide members to serve on the Mine Families First Response and Communications Advisory Council. The House is represented; however, vacancies still exist for the House alternate and a Senate member and Senate alternate. The individuals Chairman Shabbick spoke with are aware of these responsibilities; however, no appointees have yet to be submitted.

John Kline offered to have the UMWA reach out to legislators to assist in this endeavor to appoint members to serve from the Senate and an alternate for the House member.

MERD Training:

Jeffrey Stancheck reported that no training sessions were held in 2015 due to various issues. He stated that plans are to hold a Mine Emergency Response Development (MERD) training in September or October of 2016. Alpha Natural Resources, Cumberland Mine, has offered to sponsor a one-day MERD training at the mine and use mine rescue teams from that operation for the field exercise. However, due to current issues at the company, a commitment cannot be made until after May. If a MERD cannot be held at the Cumberland Mine, an alternate location will be scheduled. Jeff Stancheck will inform the Mine Families First Response and Communications Advisory Council once he has more concrete information. Will Dando, PCA, offered to find another company to hold the MERD if the Alpha scenario does not work out.

Recollections of Sago:

The agenda item will be tabled until the next meeting as Ron Bowersox was unavailable for this meeting.

Old Business:

Update of Miner Mental Health Issues:

Chairman Shabbick gave a presentation updating the Mine Families First Response and Communication Advisory Council members on miner mental health issues. She proposed to incorporate a stress assessment in the next MERD training exercise on a trial basis to introduce mental health stress check to the miners.

A discussion took place on how best to ask questions or determine the stress level of a team member prior to assisting on a mine rescue team at an emergency. Kathleen Kowalski-Trakofler stated that a survey or checklist would be useless. A team leader, who is familiar with his team,

may pick up on the stress signs, both verbally and visually. Team leaders can be trained to ask a few questions and then observe. Teaching team captains emotional intelligence would be a tool to help the team function better in a crisis situation. These were topics discussed will be further researched.

Chairman Shabbick, Dr. Lepore and Dr. Kowalski-Trakofler will begin to develop a stress assessment tool which will be distributed to the Mine Families First Response and Communication Advisory Council for review prior to the MERD.

New Business

There was no new business to discuss.

Next Meeting Date and Location:

The Mine Families First Response and Communications Advisory Council will hold its annual meeting in April 2017 unless the final report for the Whitney Mine incident has been finalized. Dates for the next meeting will be determined later.

A motion was made by Kathleen Kowalski-Trakofler and seconded by Rich Fink to adjourn meeting at 12:12 p.m.

ADDENDUM:

Chairman Shabbick, having reviewed the Mine Families First Response and Communications Implementation Plan, provides the following clarification;'

1. The Act applies to underground mining only at this time
2. The definition of mine emergency is for three or more fatalities, not injuries only.
Therefore, the need for review of Whitney Mine Incident of April 29, 2015, is considered closed for the advisory council.
3. According to the above cited document; An After Action Report (AAR) is to be prepared by the council within thirty days.