

Virginia Fire Services Board

Fire Education and Training Committee

Friday, December 1, 2023

Virginia Department of Forestry Headquarters

900 Natural Resources Drive

Charlottesville, Virginia 22903

9:00 AM

MINUTES

A regular meeting of the Education and Training Committee was held at the Virginia Department of Forestry. The meeting was called to order by Committee Chair James Calvert and a quorum was present.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

James Calvert, Committee Chair – Industry (SARA Title III/OSHA)
Jerome Williams – Certified Fire Service Instructor
Abbey Johnston – Virginia State Firefighter’s Association
Donald Hart – Virginia Association of Counties
Jess Rodzinka – Virginia Professional Fire Fighters
Ben Reedy – Insurance Industry

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT

Walt Bailey – Virginia Fire Services Council
Ernie Little – Virginia Fire Prevention Association

AGENCY MEMBERS PRESENT

Nicholas Nanna, Deputy Director
Jamey Brads, Chief of Training and Operations
Spencer Willett, Government Affairs Manager

GUESTS PRESENT

Mike Watkins Benjamin Powers
Brandon Proffitt
Benjamin Ruppert

CHANGES IN THE AGENDA

PUBLIC COMMENTS

CONSENT AGENDA

Motion: To approve the minutes of the previous meetings (February 2023 and September 2023)

Motion: Johnston, **Second:** Rodzinka

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Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Minutes approved

REPORT FROM THE VDFP CHIEF OF TRAINING

Chief of Training and Operations Jamey Brads presented. There are staffing changes being made to curriculum development, including the retirement of Jeff Leibold and the use of Division 7 Chief Marc Brade to assist in curriculum development. The agency is implementing a new check off procedure for Train the Trainer courses. Brads also presented on technical rescue program accreditation and the inclusion of these courses for ProBoard. VDFP will have over 40 accredited programs at various levels after this process is complete. Brads explained further the practical check offs for instructors. There will be no more train the trainers until January or February to make sure the check off process is implemented correctly.

James Calvert asked what the timeline is on a task book or checkoffs. He stated that timelines can sometimes be problematic at the federal level. Brads stated the model is similar to the federal task book but would not take as long as federal incident command system task books.

The aircraft rescue fire fighting (ARFF) chiefs meeting will be held in January. There has been a decline in attendance in ARFF courses. VDFP will shift to regional training that will rotate biannually. This will still allow for firefighters to meet regular training requirements. VDFP is also assisting Wallops Island with ARFF training again. Brads spoke to three mobile burn trailers (MBTs) funded by the Virginia Fire Services Board (VFSB) three years ago and how only one or two are in service because of maintenance issues. VDFP will ask the VFSB for funds to repair and update these in February according to the Live Structure Grant Policy. The new trench trailer and confined space trailer have been built out. Online testing is experiencing delays because of issues with latency. VDFP is working with new vendors to alleviate this issue. The previous vendor could not meet the needs of the Virginia Information Technology Agency (VITA). There will be a demonstration for agency staff next week. He provided an update on modular firefighter I training, with one cycle complete in Charlotte County. Students were struggling with the didactic portion of this program and this is being remedied by VDFP for future classes. The electric vehicle fire training program to provide awareness level training for all firefighters as mandated by HB 2451 (2023) was explained. The program will be more inclusive than just electric vehicles. Subject matter experts (SMEs) from Fairfax, Loudoun, Chesterfield, and VDFP

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are developing this program. A third party will create the program, based on the work of the SMEs and other agencies across the country such as the Fire Department of New York. This will be completed by July 1.

COMMENTS FROM THE COMMITTEE CHAIR

Calvert highlighted how this is an exciting time to be a part of the program at the Department of Fire Programs (VDFP) and the VFSB. He spoke about a National Fire Academy pilot program about energy storage systems, which did not necessary meet the requirements of HB 2451 (2023). Calvert stated that keeping accurate records is very important to track exposure to toxic environments that firefighters are exposed too. He stated that people are very interested in the online training, but information technology issues exist. He thanked training staff for their hard work.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a. Online Testing Update

This was covered in the report from the Chief of Training above.

b. HB 2451 EV Fire Training Update

This was covered in the report from the Chief of Training above.

c. Community College Firefighting Courses

Calvert spoke about apprenticeships and how companies can pay for the training and cover the liability of students. He wants to utilize community college resources to further training in Virginia's fire service. Amherst, Bedford, and Campbell counties are working to run academies through the local community college.

Deputy Director Nicholas Nanna spoke about equipment and self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) for the community college system. He still does not have a reasonable and affordable solution for this. Calvert talked about how the departments could provide the equipment to the students in the courses. Further discussion occurred concerning how a student would receive gear if they were not

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members at a department. Equipment and apparatus is expensive and this will take collaboration between all parties.

Brads talked about a December 7 review of curricula for career and technical education (CTE) in Virginia. The Department of Education is leading this group. Brads stated that almost 50 CTE centers that offer different trade programs exist in Virginia. Calvert stated he was a technical school supporter.

Mike Watkins, from the public, spoke in support of CTE programs. He highlighted one of his officers who started as a firefighter in a CTE program. He suggested that a cohesive movement forward be developed for the full community college system. They are working with their local community college which would be an ideal facility. Calvert stated that since it is December 1 that he looks forward to getting Goochland's project completed.

NEW BUSINESS

a. No-Show and Late Withdrawals at VDFP Courses

Brads stated that Cornerstone is sending out reminders and this is dropping the rate of no-shows in courses. In 2022, there were 840 no-shows. In 2023 to date, there were 689. Withdrawal within 5 days of the start of the course in 2022 was 2112. In 2023 to date, there were 3169. This is causing issues because some courses are designed for 24 students for example, but only 10,12, or 15 students are there. VDFP is still providing the course, but this is problematic. If this was a no-show issue, VDFP would ask the VFSB to update the no-show policy. The NFA bans no-shows for 6 months on the first offense, and if no-shows continue, for longer periods.

Calvert asked if action needs to be taken now. He spoke to how people should be exempted for emergencies. Brads stated he would refrain from action until the February VFSB meeting. He would like to give a more extensive report before action is taken.

Ben Reedy asked about a reserve/wait list. Brads explained how this waitlist automatically places people into the class when a spot opens in the system. Reedy suggested opening the spots to the full wait list and allow people to sign up first

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come, first serve. This would make sure those who want to take the class or who are able can.

Bettie Reeves Nobles, as a member of the public, asked about the results of the NFA no-show policy. Brads did not ask for this data from NFA. He reiterated that NFA has a strong policy and he offered it as an example. Not showing up for class is a bad representation of the locality or department.

Jess Rodzinka asked about updating MBTs or training trailers with IPADs with cellular capabilities to enroll and unenroll people in the class if a student shows up. Brads spoke to the challengers with giving instructors that capability. Every instructor would need administrator access on Cornerstone to verify qualifications before allowing someone into the class.

ADJOURNMENT

Clerk of the Committee
Spencer R. Willett