

**APPROVED MINUTES
NYSDEC JOINT STATEWIDE HEALTH & SAFETY
COMMITTEE MEETING
May 31, 2007**

Attendees:

Joe Lattanzio	(Co-Chair) DEC Director of Employee Relations - Albany
Jim Kersten	(Co-Chair) PEF/EnCon - Region 9
Mark Cadrette	Director, Health & Safety Unit - Albany
Ed Kucskar	Health & Safety Unit - Albany
Nanette Geary	Health & Safety Unit - Albany
Andy Jacobs	Asst. Director, Division of Forest Protection & Fire Management - Albany
Wayne Bayer	PEF - Albany
Holly Clark	PEF - Albany
Jack Marsch	PEF - Region 6
Steve Wood	C-82 - Lieutenants
Luke Evans	C-82 - Rangers
Ron Stabak	Division of Law Enforcement [Guest]
Margaret Shirk	CSEA Headquarters [Guest]

J. Lattanzio opened the meeting with the announcement of Mark Cadrette's appointment as DEC Health & Safety Director.

Minutes

It was reported that the minutes of the March 1, 2007 meeting were finalized and distributed via GroupWise on May 9, 2007.

Health & Safety Committee Training Sub-Committee Report

J. Kersten reported that there has been no action on this issue. Since the SHIP Grant money did not roll over, we will need to investigate other sources to fund the \$15,000 required to conduct the training. If SHIP Grant funding is available with the next contract, we will pursue it. Until that time, it was mutually agreed to make this agenda item inactive until PEF advises otherwise.

Health & Safety Ergonomic Training Proposal

J. Lattanzio reported that the CSEA-supported Ergonomics Assessors Training was announced to the Department on 5/19/07. M. Kozak of CSEA is conducting the training for both the Central Office and the Regions. Our Training Office has assisted in advertising the program, and the class is posted on the GLC. It is our goal to get 4 to 5 assessors in each region. Under the oversight of the Health & Safety Unit, the trained assessors will do workstation evaluations. J. Kersten brought up the issue of the Department Ergonomics Policy which does state "if monies are available." J. Lattanzio stated he does not think this will be an issue. If it does occur, a resolution will be pursued by the Health & Safety Unit or, if necessary, the Affirmative Action Office. M. Cadrette reported that 95% of the ergonomic remedies are low or no cost. Management requested the Unions' support in encouraging staff to participate. To date, the following numbers of participants are scheduled for or have had training: Central Office-10; New Paltz-6, Schenectady-1; Ray Brook-5, Watertown-1, Syracuse-2 (Watertown and Syracuse staff may have to go to Avon); Stony Brook-11, LI City-5, Avon-14, Buffalo-9.

The assessing process will work as follows: The assessor evaluates a workstation and then completes a form which is forwarded to the Health & Safety Unit to review for accuracy. After its review, the H&S Unit sends the report to the supervisor. S. Wood asked if the program will include DLE and the use of laptops in the vehicles. E. Kucskar reported that, at this time, the program only covers standard workstations. The H&S Unit will, however, look into this for the future.

There was a brief discussion of the previous O&D policies (e.g., ergonomics) having been replaced by Department OADs. During this discussion, J. Kersten suggested "Updating Old Health & Safety Policies" as an agenda item for the next meeting.

Region 4 Parking Lot Lighting (CSEA)

M. Cadrette reported that the issue of inadequate lighting has yet to be resolved. In an attempt to modify the light fixtures, the builder apparently made matters worse and sidewalks went dark. The original lighting was restored. The builder is pursuing a Town of Rotterdam variance to improve the lighting. The Department would prefer the type of lighting currently at the nearby Library. Hopefully resolution will be reached before day length becomes shorter. Mark advised that this information is common knowledge at Region 4 and has been discussed at the R-4 Health & Safety Committee meeting.

Rangers Request for Third Magazine for Issued Pistols

L. Evans explained that Rangers are now issued one extra 12 round magazine, and that quite a few Rangers have personally purchased an additional 10 round magazine. This presents a potential safety issue when changing out a magazine—i.e., a ranger could think it is a round of 12 and in reality only have 10 rounds. T. Rinaldi is willing to discuss the third magazine or, if the Rangers would rather, a shotgun. The Rangers feel that, now that they have Police Officer status, they should have the same issued firearms. The cost of the third magazine would be approximately \$50-\$60. Ranger Evans stated that the contract does allow for this equipment and that they are trained with shotguns at the Academy.

Ranger Request for Issuance of Shotguns

L. Evans told the Committee Rangers are getting more involved in fugitive searches and are working closely with the State Police. Many Rangers feel a shotgun would level the playing field in these instances. The pistol is appropriate for close up instances, but a shotgun would be more suitable in fugitive search situations. The Rangers would like the option of "shotgun qualified" Rangers being issued a shotgun if they choose.

A. Jacob said this is an issue which has been around for a long time. He stated that the Ranger points are valid, and the Division will consider the Ranger request. He also reported that OPP is revamping its firearms policy. The policy will apply to ECOs and Rangers alike.

Emergency Lighting for Ranger Vehicles

L. Evans reported that, when you open the back hatch of the Ranger vehicles, their lighting is not visible. Some blue in the lighting fixture would be much more visible. Replacement lenses at minimal cost may remedy the issue on some vehicles. He is not sure if retrofitting would work. A. Jacob reported that blue lighting in the rear is a new State law. All new vehicles will have LED lights.

World Trade Center (WTC) Medical Monitoring

DOH has a new follow up program. N. Geary reported that WTC responders were contacted directly by the NYS DOH Bureau of Occupational Health. The deadline for sign up was today. We will need to pass the numbers on to GOER. We will continue to provide updates on this program but most of the info will probably be confidential.

Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs)

It was reported that most if not all of the AEDs have been distributed with great assistance by the Division of Operations. A copy of the AED Plan was given to each of the Union reps present. The H&S Unit has promoted the program through the e-News Health & Safety Corner. 80-90 staff have volunteered to participate in the program. J. Kersten reported that PEF feels every DEC employee should be trained. J. Lattanzio explained that the program is voluntary, and is open to all employees wishing to participate. Title 9 only funds a specific number of trainings. The schedule is being developed with the Employee Health Service.

J. Lattanzio told the Committee it is still our hope to have an AED in every one of the 460 patrol vehicles. If we can't get OGS to fund this initiative, the Department may wish to pursue. M. Cadrette said that the Department is required to file a progress report with OGS every year, and we plan to pursue this initiative then. We will be getting posters, pictures, etc. from the manufacturer, Philips Medical, to publicize the program. An e-News item will come out today.

J. Kersten asked about the desktop AED icon. M. Cadrette reported it is not our priority at this time as we are focusing on setting up the database system to track the system and other program issues such as maintenance inspections which will probably fall to Operations staff, camp counselors, fish hatchery managers. A list of trained volunteers will be posted near the AED units.

Supervisors' Health & Safety Training (2007-08/Phase 3)

E. Kucskar reported that we have one more class scheduled for this year. J. Kersten commented that PEF is encouraging their stewards to attend the training but they are unaware of where and when the courses are scheduled in the regions. PEF was told that the classes are posted on the GLC. M. Cadrette to send J. Kersten a copy of the training schedule. J. Lattanzio reported that we have trained approximately 900 supervisors over the past three years. Rangers have participated but DLE does their own training.

W. Bayer asked about plans to train new supervisors. M. Cadrette reported that he plans to revisit the contract and possibly hold additional classes next year. J. Lattanzio said working this training into the Training Office's Supervisory Institute might also be a possibility.

Compressed Gas Training

M. Cadrette reported that the Health & Safety Unit is working with the programs to address this issue. The issue is how compressed gas cylinders are secured in vehicles during transportation, especially when stored in a vehicle with closed windows during the summer months. Temperatures inside a closed vehicle would exceed the recommended limits.

H&S advises employees should remove compressed gas cylinders from their vehicles when they park. The H&S Unit is looking at lab and field situations where compressed gas is being used and how the employees transport the gas. They are working with the programs to identify training measures and will address some of this in our facility inspections for stationary issues. H&S plans to put out pamphlets and make training videos mandatory for staff using the gas.

E. Kucskar said the Unit does not currently have such a video but will work with the programs to secure one. An article on storage of compressed gas will appear in the 6/13/07 issue of e-News.

J. Kersten asked if we should be modifying program SOPs to include transportation of compressed gas. E. Kucskar said that an SOP would not necessarily be required, but would be up to the discretion of the Programs, dependent upon the amount of usage. Regardless of whether a written SOP exists, employees must be provided any instructions necessary for the safe performance of their job. DLE and the Rangers use it for their air packs. H. Clark reported that DEC employees use compressed gas cylinders in gas station inspections. We audit the machines that inspect the emission system of cars. PEF would like a canvass sent out to all Regional and Division Directors to determine the extent of usage. Management agreed to do this.

PEF inquired if there are standards for signage on the trucks. E. Kucskar reported that it probably would vary from NYS DOT standards to Federal standards.

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

M. Cadrette reported that, in an effort to make employees more aware of program SOPs, an article was included in a recent issue of the e-News. R-8 Local H&S Committee members assisted in the preparation of this article. At locations without access to the Intranet, the H&S staff do advise supervisors to supply their employees with a paper copy of the SOPs when discovered during inspections. J. Kersten reported that PEF did a survey of over 400 employees and over 40% of those surveyed did not know where to find their SOPs. PEF to forward a copy of these results to the Health & Safety Unit.

Health & Safety Corner in e-News

J. Lattanzio distributed our three (3) most recent e-News articles, and mentioned the H&S Unit would welcome receiving articles from the Unions for submission.

New Numeric Identification System for Medical Monitoring

M. Cadrette briefly discussed EHS' implementation of a new tracking system which has eliminated the use of the social security number. The H&S unit has also likewise updated our DEC database. Rosters now will include names and a new identifier instead of the SS #. He also reported that a few weeks ago, there was a lapse in the system and blood work samples were identified by name and SS #. (The correspondence between agencies did not.) The EHS Director indicated he was aware of this and EHS will take steps to correct the problem. J. Kersten stated that we are making some progress; however, EHS still needs to update their internal paper records.

J. Marsch would like something in the minutes regarding the scheduling of tetanus exams. W. Bayer asked for an update on Lyme Disease reporting? M. Cadrette reported there is no good way to track Lyme Disease. Our only feedback for self-identification would be the Accident Reporting System for Workers Comp purposes. We have a number of people with reported tick bites but, most often, people see their own personal physician for tick bites which result in Lyme Disease.

Defensive Driving

J. Lattanzio reported that the program has been completed for the year.

2007 Hazwoper Training & New Exam Requirements

E. Kucskar reported that most of the classes have been completed. We have trained 463 staff, and held two exams. The average score was 94 for both classes. Eight (8) people have failed (less than 2%); 7 have taken the re-test and passed. Anything less than 70 is a failing grade. Overall we have gotten good employee feedback on the course and test. For next year, we are looking to combine all curriculums into one since a significant amount of the course is the same and would allow some beneficial cross training.

Hazardous Substances Risk Categories & Administrative Categories

J. Kersten reported that some programs are not interpreting the risk and administrative categories properly, resulting in some employees being excluded. Participation should be determined by the EHS physician and the H&S Unit. Although it was not a common observation of the Committee, PEF/J. Kersten said it appears that some programs see the administrative categories as a fiscal tool to cut costs. M. Cadrette reported that the risk category is determined by the program supervisor. Once you are in a risk category, you continue to be monitored until you have an exit exam. Frequency of exam is determined by EHS. If a supervisor identifies an employee changing positions, the employee is interviewed by EHS at an exit exam. J. Kersten stated that it seems only the Division of Minerals has this problem. H&S staff to follow up.

OPP Dispatch System

J. Lattanzio reported that last fall Council 82 filed a class action grievance regarding the R-5 dispatch system and poor communication issues. Management acknowledged the problems. As a resolution of the grievance, it was mutually agreed to refer the matter to this Committee for quarterly updates to be provided by Lt. Ron Stabak of the Division of Law Enforcement.

As background for the Committee, Council 82 explained that the current NYSP microwave link which DEC DLE uses to connect to DEC Dispatch is unreliable and frequently breaks down for relatively long periods of time resulting in a loss of communication with DEC Dispatch for long periods of time. Cathead Tower in lower Hamilton County is a vital link for communications to the Southwestern portion of the region. For at least a year, Ray Brook Dispatch has been able to receive but cannot transmit to mobile units on this tower. The effect is that there is no communications capabilities to Dispatch on Cathead Tower. It appears that this problem is being addressed with an attempted repair. The communications infrastructure at the Region 5 tower locations is old and out of date. The equipment is subject to frequent failure resulting in the loss of reliable radio communications for lengthy periods of time. Because replacement parts are difficult to obtain, the repair of the system is difficult.

In resolution of communication issues, including a Canadian emergency (ambulance) service using our frequency, NYS decided we needed a statewide dispatch program. Lt. Stabak gave an overview of the Department's participation in the Statewide Wireless Network System and explained the scheduled build out of the new high band radio system across the State. He also explained recent improvements with the current VHF system and planned upgrades.

The new System is part of the SWINN project and will begin a test phase in Region 9 (Chautauqua, Erie County) and NYC Metro 21 System in August.

Council 82 felt the rollout of the SWINN radio network is behind schedule and it is likely not to bring relief for years to come. Due to the challenges of the Adirondack topography, the SWINN

system's design in DEC Region 5 will not mirror the system in other parts of the State. The Region 5 area will be the last area in the State to have SWINN coverage.

Lt. Stabak also discussed various issues encountered with the purchasing process. Tyco, our vendor of choice, is meeting with OFT on 6/05/07. If OFT approves, monies have already been approved for purchase.

Workplace Violence Prevention Legislation

G. Balluff reported that our Legal Office is drafting the policy for the Department. The draft will be most likely be reviewed by the Workplace Violence Committee in July. DEC is using the DOL policy as a guide. This will cover occupational assaults and homicides only. H. Clark is on the PEF statewide committee and will be PEF's DEC contact. Draft will be shared with PEF, CSEA and Council 82.

2007 Meeting Schedule

The next meeting will be held on **August 30, 2007 at 9:30 AM in Room 1022 at 625 Broadway, Albany, NY**. December 6, 2007 was mentioned as the tentative date for the last meeting of 2007.

Inactive/No Updates

Union Drilling Natural Gas Rig Accident: Schuyler County
Pandemic Flu
Avian Flu
Fire Drills
Emergency Response
Green Cleaning: Executive Order 134
Site Safety Report/Region 6 Spill
HVAC & Lease Enforcement Issues at Allegany Office