

Rutland County Fire Mutual Aid Association, Inc.
Minutes of the March 20, 2008 State Dispatch/Chief's Meeting

The meeting was held at the Pittsford Fire Department and called to order by President Schlachter at 7:00 p.m. and began with the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL:

Department Members Present: Brandon Fire Department, Clarendon Fire Department, Ira Fire Department, Killington Fire-Rescue, Pittsford Fire Department, Proctor Fire Department, Rutland City Fire Department, Shrewsbury Fire Department, Wallingford Fire Department, West Rutland Fire Department

Officers Present: Chief Robert Schlachter, President; Michael Skaza, Secretary/Treasurer

Coordinators Present:

Other Guests: Laura Wallet, PSAP Administrator; Captain Don Patch, VSP

President Schlachter and Laura Wallet emphasized the importance of updating your department contact information at the dispatch center. There are many agencies who have not done this and it can result in problems if an emergency arises and the information is needed and not up to date. Anyone who has not updated their agency information, must call the dispatch center as soon as possible.

Any department wanting to change which transmitters they are dispatched from must contact Bob Schlachter and complete a transmitter change form to make the change happen. Chiefs should assess which transmitters provide the best coverage for their area and make the changes accordingly if needed.

With the dispatching system getting busier each year, we really need to clean up unnecessary radio transmissions on the dispatch frequency. All departments must recognize that the dispatch frequency is not for truck to truck traffic and should only be used for radio transmissions that are intended for the dispatch center. Departments **MUST** maintain all operational communications on an alternate frequency (fireground frequency). All departments should review the dispatch protocols and ensure that all of their members are adequately trained on them. The dispatch protocols can be downloaded from the County website at www.rutlandcountyfiremutualaid.org. The following points were emphasized as not being followed by all departments:

- It is not necessary for multiple pieces of apparatus to sign on with the dispatch center for the same call. The dispatch center only needs to know that the first unit is responding. Likewise, it is not necessary for dispatch to know when units, other than the first arriving unit, are on the scene. The response or arrival of all other units should be announced on the fireground frequency if it needs to be announced.
- Departments are not to be requesting dispatch to make an announcement to switch to channel 2. All responders must be trained to automatically use channel 2 for fireground

or truck-to-truck communications. The dispatchers should not be expected to remind your firefighters that they need to be operating on the fireground frequency.

A discussion took place on the establishment of a run card system. This would be a system where alarm assignments were preplanned and on record in dispatch so that an incident commander can simply request additional alarms and the dispatcher would know who and what to dispatch without the incident commander having to request each individual piece of apparatus that he wanted. The maintenance of a run card system is a lot of work, and it was pointed out that we cannot even get departments to keep their contact information current at the dispatch center, so there are questions on how a run card system would be kept up to date.

VCOMM has requested that VTAC 4 be used statewide for all communications with aeromedical helicopter landing zone operations. A motion was made and seconded to use VTAC 4 for landing zone operations when requesting DHART or another medical helicopter response; and to send a letter to DHART to advise them that VTAC 4 will be used in Rutland County as a landing zone frequency. PASSED.

VCOMM has identified that pager replacement will be a priority in the upcoming grant cycles. This is being driven by the requirement to move to narrow banding and many departments are using pagers that will not be compatible. The discussion at this point is to work to upgrade the pagers that agencies are using to Motorola Minitor V pagers. This will also provide us an opportunity to have common programming done with the possibility of instituting a tone that would activate every pager in the County for all call messages. It was pointed out that no department would qualify for such a grant if there were not NIMS compliant and have not completed their NIMS Survey with the Department of Homeland Security.

Captain Patch explained his understanding of the control of scenes and which agency would retain the Incident Commander position for certain types of calls. He explained that there have not been any changes in this thought process and summarized it as follows:

- Incidents with fire, threat of fire, haz-mat or injury: Fire Department Command
- Incidents with joint response that do not involve fire, threat of fire, haz-mat or injury: Police Command

He further emphasized the need for using a unified command structure at all scenes where you have multiple agencies responding.

A discussion took place on the procedures that are used by the dispatchers to decide whether fire departments get dispatched to reports of motor vehicle accidents. Apparently there have been some incidents reported by Chiefs where the fire department was not dispatched and they should have been. Laura Waller explained that the dispatcher has only the information from the caller to go on and if there is any doubt, the dispatcher should be sending the fire department. She stated that if there is a report of fire, injury, haz-mat, or an unknown status of any of these conditions, then the dispatcher should be dispatching the fire department. She asked that if there were situations developing where the fire department has not been dispatched, that the Chief Officer of the Department call the dispatch center immediately and request a dispatch. In addition, if there are situations where the fire department is not dispatched and should have been, she asked that these issues be brought to a dispatch supervisor right away so that they can be easily looked

into and corrected. It was recognized that the dispatchers do a very good job of screening the calls and we are really only talking about a few calls. Each of these calls, where the fire departments were not dispatched, seemed to involve unusual circumstances and have been taken care of.

Captain Patch explained the duties and responsibilities that he has as the Public Safety District Coordinator for the Troop C area. He is the link that local agencies have to State resources for special teams or equipment. In addition, he is responsible for having situational awareness of major incidents in the area for the purpose of keeping the Department of Public Safety and the Governor abreast of developing situations. You will be seeing the Captain or his designee (trooper) on major scenes for the purpose of checking in with the incident commander to ensure that he does not need additional resources from the state level. This is an outreach that has not been seen before and it should be welcomed.

With no other business at hand, a motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting. PASSED. The meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael J. Skaza

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Secretary/Treasurer