SERC MEETING MINUTES – 2/9/21 – DRAFT

Via Microsoft Teams

**In Attendance:**

**Welcome:**

General Counsel Spencer Lord reviewed public meeting in a virtual environment.

* All members will be participating remotely per law
* Recording is allowed, Katy Bellemare will be recording from MEMA
	+ All others who would like to record should identify themselves

SERC Chair/MEMA Director Phillips welcomed the group to February virtual SERC meeting. Reminder to mute phones and computers when not speaking to contain background noise.

**Review and Approve Meeting Minutes**:

SERC Chair Phillips asked for a vote on previous meeting minutes.

Meeting minutes for 11/10/20 – Nick Child motioned to approve, and David DiGregorio 2nd the motion. Unanimously approved.

**Update on Organizational Changes to Improve SERC:**

Building out the Technical Hazards unit to accompany Planning Unit. To support unique hazards, not just radiological front.

**Dawn Brantley** spoke on the Technical Hazards unit. The goal of the unit is to create additional roles for the RERP Program, to bring in critical infrastructure and key resource planning, and give a home to multiple cross-agency programs, such as high hazard dams, Tier II, and SERC.

Introduced John Viveiros, Technical Hazards Unit Supervisor, who was part of the RERP program for more than 15 years. John’s initial duties include strengthening and streamlining program to better benefit both localities and the state.

* John explains his role as supervisor. John will make an effort to reach out to everyone and push for standard monthly meetings, and sub-committee meetings. Emphasizes the importance of working together as a group and utilize everyone’s strengths to better the program. His contact information is: (508) 922-4571 and via email john.l.viveiros@mass.gov

Introduced Kenyi Suarez, Technical Hazards Program Coordinator. Kenyi will maintain duties of previous role as Document Control Coordinator for the RERP program, as well as be responsible for Tier II reporting, supporting John with critical infrastructure and SERC program in general.

**EPC Certification Applications Presentation:**

Andrew Trice, Planning Group Lead, reviewed the following community’s certification applications, which were approved by the SERC members.

Town of Carver – Tom Walsh, EMD, presented to the membership for full 5-year recertification. Unanimously approved.

* SERC Chair Phillips asked Tom if the approach is broader than Tier II compliance or a more all-hazards approach, how does that work for them, and how to keep membership engaged. Tom explained that they have a broad approach with two meetings a year, invite everyone per EPCRA guidance. First meeting is in the Spring where they elect office and do an update, second meeting is on all-hazards. This has kept citizenry well-engaged.
* Ally Sleiman asked Andrew for copies of attachment A and F, which Andrew will send after meeting.

Southern Berkshire County – Charles Burger, REPC Chair, presented to the membership for full 5-year recertification. Unanimously approved.

* Bob Barry, local coordinator responsible for Berkshire County, spoke highly of group. Applied and received 2018 EMPG money grant and used it for pod supplies, which is helpful to be used in points of distribution as well as equipment for vaccination sites. Great model for regional approach.

Southern Wachusett REPC – Chris Montiverdi, EMD, presented to the membership for full 5-year recertification. Unanimously approved.

* Chief Welsh, spoke highly of committee for bringing emergency resources together to understand who the players are and how they can help and support to be better prepared in the event of a hazards. Smaller departments lean on their area towns for assistance.
* Bob Barry, on behalf of Worcester County, extended strong support for proposal.

Andrew Trice thanked REPCs for being thorough and complete in their applications.

**Tier II:**

John Viveiros went over the Tier II report. Tier II system was rolled-over in late December to facilitate the opening of the 2021 reporting period, beginning January 1 going until the end of March. Initial and follow-up memos sent out to all reporting facilities to let them know via the system of the current reporting period. Received 1,500 reports from reporting facilities thus far, with estimated 4,000 that will come in throughout the reporting period. Sub-committee meetings will produce a report and then a more thorough brief for the next SERC meeting.

**GIS:**

Desiree Kocis reports no major updates. She wants to make the data more robust and useful, and verify accuracy of the data. Desiree and John have decided to wait for all Tier II reports to come in to produce usable data and update sites on the map to reflect a cleaned data set of all Tier II facilities. This will allow the user to click on the map and show location, name, chemicals hosted, as well as link to report. Aiming to have all information updated by April and early May.

**HMEP Grants:**

Lori Gifford provided grant status report for the Hazardous Material Emergency Preparedness (HMEP) Grants. HMEP is a 3-year role-over grant (2019 – 2022).

SERC Grants Workgroup met in late January and wanted to talk about EPC Certification process and the HMEP grant allowable activities. EPC Certification level no longer determines funding level under HMEP grant program. The Workgroup is looking for additional guidance from the SERC group regarding allowable activities under the grant program and other ways of managing grant program process, i.e. competitive versus EPC Certification.

No money has been used in two years for the Massachusetts Hazmat Tech Conference due to Covid-19 and will need to be reallocated to something else. Year 2020 – 2021 grant received additional money from regular allocations which has not been ear marked for anything. Year 2021 – 2022 grant cycle is open now and an application can now be put in to identify where money should go; requesting guidance from SERC group for how money and carry-over balance should be allocated.

David DiGregorio asked to clarify if the Tech Association has 2 years of funds that were not spent. Requested to speak to Lorri offline to verify.

Heather Tecce asked to clarify if there is training performed at the conference, or if it is strictly a conference. Asking because someone wanted to do the conference at the local level but was not sure if it was eligible. David DiGregorio explained that the conference has conference-related guest speakers as well as trainings that goes on throughout the two days.

**Regional Report Out:**

Bob Barry, Western Massachusetts MEMA Region III & IV: Several groups coming for renewal to be presented during 5/11/21 meeting (West Springfield LEPC, East Longmeadow LEPC, Central and Northern Berkshire REPC, TriEpic and Montachusett in Worcester County). Bob gave brief overview of current REPCs and communities that are not currently represented.

James Mannion, Eastern Massachusetts MEMA Region I & II: Five local coordinators are actively assisting communities in EPC certification; however, many are not interested in applying at this time. Public safety personnel are tied up with testing and vaccination sites, supporting schools and citizens. Mystic REPC, which is made up of 25 towns, is looking to recertify. Neighboring communities are interested in joining as well (Danvers, Bedford, and Concord).

**JDC Ammonia Program:**

Janet Bowan, EPA guest speaker, presents on the EPA Region 1 General Duty Clause Pilot for ammonia refrigeration facilities in New England.

SERC Chair Phillips asked Janet if there is a role for the local and regional EPCs and SERC in the program. Janet explained a list was sent to SERC contacts in each state prior to initial certified letter and information request letters. They did a SERC call prior to initiative launch to let local fire departments know about initiative and they may receive calls. If anyone is interested in knowing when workshops will be rescheduled, please send Janet contact information.

SERC Chair Phillips asked Janet if she sees the EPA targeting other products with this kind of intensity in the future. Janet explained it depends on what the national initiatives are in the future. EPA sets national priority sectors every couple of years and ammonia refrigeration happened to be one of them that got carried over for a 6-year period.

**Facilitated Discussion**

SERC Chair Phillips opened the floor for facilitated discussion to get feedback and observations from group on the SERC process. She wanted to focus on EPC recruitment and potential opportunities for growth for LEPCs or encourage communities to join regional efforts. She mentioned having four levels of certification as being excessive and should not be a barrier to entry or bureaucratic burden for local partners. What should certification levels look like, how to connect to grant funding and eligibility and how to use funding to support EPC work. Obstacles to planning from community perspective, how can the state help local municipality planning.

John Viveiros requesting assistance from group to have comments, suggestions and ideas to serve as talking points during sub-committee meeting regarding certification levels (i.e., should they have two levels of certification, do they not tie eligibility or HMEP grant to certification process).

Heather Tecce commented that during the process of getting certified has turned many REPCs and LEPCs away because of the paper work. Heather explained that many are in compliance, however paperwork is excessive, so she pushed forward the suggestion to turn it into a checklist. Communities are meeting capabilities and are just not certified, and as they are not on the calls and do not feel welcome.

Nick Child spoke in regards to funding and conversations regarding making Tier II fee-oriented and sending some funds back to local levels. REPCs would have benefited from contractor support, however EPCRA/HMEP funds would not be enough to get a contractor on board. Emphasized the importance of reminding town administrators, town managers, and select boards that this is required. SERC Chair Phillips acknowledged there is HMEP funding limitations, proposing to revisit how the funds are allocated to get start up funding to establish a template or workshops. She also updated the group that General Counsel Spencer and John are looking through the Tier II fee-based model.

David DiGregorio asked to clarify whether members cannot receive funding until they are certified, John confirmed. David questions whether there is a possibility to support REPCs and LEPCs in the planning stages of trying to get certified with some funding to serve as an incentive and to assist with the process. SERC Chair Phillips mentioned that one of the benefits of consolidating the various certification levels is having a larger pod of money to help REPCs and LEPCs who have not yet completed the certification process.

Mike Castor proposes a potential barrier of not having different levels of certification is if a community does not have sustained planning efforts if many years or at all may be intimidated from attempting full certification. Funding and availability of personnel may be barriers to make full certification difficult for these communities. Offering it in different levels provides a basis for communities to get into the process and develop community support and confidence to go for the full certification. Mike explained that the SERC group did not see many meaningful benefits from projects with HMEP funding and that full certification gives more confidence at the possibility that the project will be completed have an actual result. SERC Chair Phillips asked Mike to clarify if benefits are not being seen at local level, regional level, or state-wide more broadly. Mike clarified that there was not any one particular project or community. He referenced other types of grants from other organizations and initiatives that see many applicants and funds are awarded but questionable if a meaningful product was actually produced. However, Mike believes that by requiring the communities to be certified they will want to improve their planning and attempt for a higher level of certification.

**End of Meeting**:

Martha Mittelstaedt motioned to adjourn the meeting at **TIME** and Tom Walsh 2nd the motion.

Next SERC meeting date is May 11, 2021.