SERC MEETING MINUTES – 8/10/21

Via Microsoft Teams

**In Attendance:** Aaron Gilbert, Ally Sleiman, Andrew Beaulieu, Andrew Trice, Andy Goldberg, Bud McDonough, Chilmark, Christina Colarusso, David DiGregorio, David Ostiguy, Dawn Brantley, Diana Rawles, James Mannion, Jeff Trask, John Illingworth, John Viveiros, Kari Sasportas, Katy Bellemare, Kenyi Suarez, Kevin Filchak, Kevin Galligan, Lauren Sardella, Lorri Gifford, Mark Munroe, Martha Mittelstaedt, Michael Josti, Mike Castro, Nichols Todd, Patrick Carnevale, Robert Barry, Robert Czerwinski, Sarah Eig, Scott Cluett, Tom Walsh

**Welcome:**

John Viveiros reviewed the Governor’s executive order regarding public meetings in a virtual environment.

* All members will be participating remotely
* Recording is allowed, Kenyi Suarez from MEMA will be recording the meeting
  + All others who would like to record should identify themselves (no committee member stated that they will be recording the meeting)

Deputy Director Patrick Carnevale welcomed and thanked the group for attending the August SERC meeting. He explained how John Viveiros has been working with several other folks on potentially reforming the state SERC with the goal to make the process better and more productive for the group. Patrick asked for ideas or comments to improve the SERC process and mentioned that at the end of the meeting there will be a session to discuss ideas on creating a better process for the SERC program.

**HMEP Grants:** Lorri Gifford shared a power point with the group. Lorri explained and clarified that the SERC suspended EPC certification as a condition of eligibility to apply for HMEP grant funds for this year only and the suspension should not be expected to continue going forward. The committee worked on rolling out the 2021-2022 HMEP subgrant requirements and eligibility as follows:

* Competitive grant open to all EPCs
* Funding capped at $3,000 per community
* Split into two priorities

Priority 1:

* + 75% of the available funds would be set aside for plan develop
  + Funding cap: $3,000 per community
  + Can only be used to develop hazmat plan
    - Priority would be given to those communities with:
      * EPCs forming REPC, with Tier II reporting facilities and do not have a plan
      * Standalone EPCs with Tier II reporting facilities and do not have a hazmat plan
      * EPCs forming REPC, without Tier II reporting facilities and do not have a plan
      * Standalone EPCs without Tier II reporting facilities and do not have a hazmat plan

Priority 2:

* 25% of the available funds would be set aside for plan revisions, training and exercises for those communities that already have a hazmat plan (LEPC/REPC)
  + - Funding cap: $3,000 per community
    - Priority would be given to those EPCs with:
      * SERC Certification
      * Tier II reporting facilities
    - Left over funds from priority 1 would rollover into priority 2

James Mannion mentioned that the group has given planning grant money to EPCs that already have plans, however money should be given to communities that don’t have plans. Grants could be used to hire someone who can make the whole process easier to get certified.

**Review and Approve Meeting Minutes**:

John Viveiros asked for a vote on the previous meeting minutes.

Meeting minutes for May 11, 2021 – Dave DiGregorio motioned to approve, and Tom Walsh 2nd the motion. Unanimously approved

**Tier II:**

John Viveiros went over the Tier II reporting period which is from January 1st through March 1st. Last year, the Tier II system received over 4,000 reports from reporting facilities. Our database was maintained and coordinated by Mayra Quintana who has recently accepted a new position working with Lorri Gifford at MEMA. Kenyi Suarez will be taking over the maintenance and coordination of the Tier II database. John Viveiros, with MEMA’s general council and public information personnel, will work together to develop a policy on freedom of information and to track what MEMA disseminates. By the next meeting MEMA plans to have a policy in place.

Patrick Carnevale asked Dave DiGregorio how the Department of Fire Services handles requests or how they provide information; is there a structure or guidance? Dave explained that they don’t necessarily get any requests for information. John Viveiros clarified that most of those requests are received by MEMA. MEMA is putting effort into being more proactive in disseminating information, as well as exercising caution in the release of sensitive information. James Mannion stated that MEMA East asks communities if it is okay to give out information to those who request it; in the case that information is requested and must be sent out, they inform the community. Andy Goldberg added that it is important to have transparent, understood, and reviewed procedures in place, particularly with respect to potential security breaches.

Bud McDonough asked if MEMA is keeping a registry of who is requesting information. John Viveiros responded that MEMA is working on record keeping on these requests.

**EPC Certification Applications Presentation:**

John Viveiros, Tech Hazards Unit Supervisor, reviewed the following community’s certification applications, which were approved by the SERC members.

Central Berkshire REPC – Robert Czerwinski, Fire Chief/EMD, presented to the membership for recertification. It was moved and seconded to approve the application. Unanimously approved.

* Tech Hazards Unit Supervisor John Viveiros asked Chief Czerwinski the number of times he has applied for recertification? Chief Czerwinski mentioned that this is his 3rd round of recertification and that he believes they are the oldest if not one of the oldest certified REPCs within the Commonwealth. John Viveiros reviewed the application, and stated that it was clear a lot of time was put in the application; it was complete and thorough. John emphasized that there is a lot of coordination within the community to get this done, especially in the COVID-19 environment.
* Chief Czerwinski has done several zoom meetings to try to keep people up-to-date as to what is going on within the region. They tried to get equipment to whoever needed it or wherever it could be used. Chief Czerwinski offered thanks to Region’s III/IV, especially Bob Barry, for all the help and support in the Berkshire’s. In regard to planning, they are working on updating their plan. They did a tabletop exercise – Type 4, Type 5 Hazmat incident exercise with 31 of their partners. There was good coordination although Chief Czerwinski thinks that they need more unified command training which they will work on within the next couple years.
* Dave DiGregorio asked if there is still a fair amount of representation of the district hazmat team on the REPC. Chief Czerwinski has not seen anyone from the hazmat team on the REPC.

**Administrative Sub Committee Updates:**

John Viveiros spoke on Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) High Hazard Flammable Trains. PHMSA has sent an email to MEMA asking if MEMA has received and disseminated information on high hazard flammable trains. Through Tier II MEMA receives information from reporting facilities who store certain chemicals within the threshold; MEMA does not really collect information regarding trains. It appears that it is going to be a new requirement from PHMSA. PHMSA asked if MEMA has received and disseminated information to local communities and stakeholders. John mentioned that the administrative subcommittee had a discussion internally as they had never heard of this before. Spencer Lord and John Viveiros have identified a state rail plan and they will discuss this further with PHMSA. MEMA would like to start collecting information from the rails to identify who is handling these high hazard flammable trains. At this point, the answer to PHMSA is that MEMA is not collecting this type of information. This topic is just an introduction as the group will be discussing this further in the next couple of SERC meetings.

Andy Goldberg has never heard of this. Andy mentioned that Nick Child would know a little more on this topic. MEMA should find out Nick’s status as a member of the SERC; they believe that Nick Child has retired.

Pat Carnevale suggested Dave DiGregorio should be part of this topic as this train situation impacts hazmat teams and fire departments. Pat mentioned West Springfield going through a situation with the Big E and the large freight yard they have.

**Planning Sub Committee**

John Viveiros shared a video with the group with the intention to show why the SERC is needed and Tier II reporting.

The video could not display properly, below you can find a link to the video.

The Video: Silent Killer: Hydrogen Sulfide Release in Odessa, Texas (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jh2HWT8gPeY>)

**Regional Report Out:**

James Mannion, Eastern Massachusetts MEMA Region I & II, mentioned that they don’t have any applications ready for approval, but they have a few communities working on applications: Marlborough, Brookline and Hudson. Other communities are waiting to see if there is going to be a new application process in place. James said that hopefully the new HMEP grant will encourage more communities to apply.

Bob Barry, Western Massachusetts MEMA Region III & IV, would like to thank the SERC for approving the Central Berkshire application as they did a great job putting their application together. Bob also mentioned that Southern Berkshire has a similar program and they anticipate Northern Berkshire to apply next month. All three REPCs work very well together, were very active during the pandemic and were utilized heavily with the distribution of PPEs and supported vaccination sites with equipment, towers, etc. The three REPCs know the core of their responsibilities are in and around Hazmat, but also branched out in all Hazards. Kevin Filchak has two REPCs who plan to present at the next SERC meeting: Nashoba Valley (Harvard, Lancaster, Clinton, Bolton and Devens) is a start-up application and Montachusett REPC (Fitchburg, Leominster, Lancaster, Fitchburg State and Princeton) will be presenting for renewal. MEMA West remains active in the LEPC and REPC meetings out in the West.

John Viveiros asked Bob Barry what is the biggest obstacle in building EPCs? Bob explained that these are mostly volunteer efforts and some of these volunteers have full time jobs. Bob feels that if these volunteers had financial assistance for administrative support, it would help a lot. John Viveiros clarified that most of the grant goes out to the development of the plan, not necessarily for administrative support.

**Facilitated Discussion**

John Viveiros opened the floor for facilitated discussion to get feedback and observations from the group on SERC meetings; how to make these meetings more useful and efficient. John provided some suggestions: making these meetings regional; doing a site visit for one of the reporting facilities; to bring in additional training with subject matter experts on what EPCRA is.

Pat Carnevale asked the group to participate in this discussion and give MEMA their feedback. He mentioned that MEMA will try to provide information/materials ahead of the meetings to give the group more time to go over the materials and be able to participate in discussions during this session or the meeting. Going forward, John Viveiros will be the main point of contact for SERC related things and Kenyi Suarez will be the point of contact for all Tier II reporting.

James Manion suggested creating subgroups to get together and discuss things that could be useful (i.e. website, videos, etc.) in the SERC meetings. Dave DiGregorio suggested a section where they could talk about what is happening that month in the state in terms of accidents.

Martha Mittelstaedt asked John Viveiros what more does MEMA need from the Committee? John mentioned that what he would like to see is more clarity on the role of SERC members. Suggested to potentially bring in subject matter experts to teach on the role of EPCRA. How can the group work together to provide recommendations and solutions?

Andy Goldberg brought up a map with good representation of where all the active EPCs are located. It would be beneficial for the group to have an updated version of the map to focus on where there are still gaps and concentrate on those regions. Lorri Gifford will send out the updated version of the map to the group.

Aaron Gilbert suggested a few links for the group: <https://www.csb.gov/cai-/-arnel-chemical-plant-explosion/>. Aaron also recommended the preceding CSB video which he believes led to the development of Massachusetts' Hazardous Material Processing Permit Program. It covers the Arnel Chemical Plant explosion in Danvers, MA.

John Viveiros stated that the next meeting would be on November 9th, 2021 at MEMA Headquarters (virtually), 10 AM to 11:30 AM.

Dave DiGregorio reminded the group that on Sept 15th and 16th the Mass Hazmat Association conference will be held in Plymouth in person. To register go to: <http://www.mahmt.com/>

Christina Colarusso from Martha’s Vineyard introduced herself as the new Emergency Management Director.

**End of Meeting**:

John Illingworth motioned to adjourn the meeting, Bud McDonough 2nd the motion. Motion approved.

Next SERC meeting date is November 9th, 2021.