

Massachusetts Tech Rescue Policy/SOG Subcommittee

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, August 20, 2024 at 11:05 a.m.
Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams

A Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams of the Massachusetts Technical Rescue Policy/SOG Subcommittee was opened at 1105, with a quorum by Chairman Chief Matthew Belsito.

Members in attendance remotely. Roll Call taken:

Matthew Belsito, Fire Chief - Sutton

Paul Betti, Deputy Director of Special Operations, DFS

Barry Aptt, Deputy Chief - Gloucester

Jon Martin, Lieutenant - Auburn

Robert O'Brien, Chief - Hanson

Cheryl Barker, Guest-Sutton

Chief Belsito advised that Deputy Chief Dave Randolph, Brookline Fire and Firefighter Daryl Springman, Northampton would be unable to attend.

Chief Belsito took a moment to congratulate Chief O'Brien and his brother for recently saving the lives of boaters who were involved in a boating accident.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Motion: A motion was made by Chief Aptt to accept the minutes of the **May 15, 2024** meeting. The motion was seconded by Chief O'Brien and with no further discussion passed unanimously. Roll Call Vote Taken; Betti-yes; Aptt-yes; Martin- yes; O'Brien-yes, Belsito-yes.

MTR SOP Subcommittee Correspondence: Mr. Betti reported only those documents he distributed to the membership.

DISCUSSION:

Revising and Prioritizing SOG's:

Should this Committee adopt the DFS SOG's. Mr. Betti recommends adopting so that when DFS becomes a state asset the SOG's pertaining to Tech Rescue will be in place. Mr. Betti will forward any additional policies as they all will eventually have to be accepted.

Chief Belsito listed the DFS policies that Mr. Betti put forward that he believed would be relevant to Tech Rescue.

- Record Keeping Practices;
- Guidelines for Submitting Photo/Video for DFS Social Media (updated 3/1/23);
- DFS Policy Regarding the Purchase, Storage, Use and Disposal of Lithium Batteries, 12/8/23;
- DFS Alcohol and Drug Testing/Screening Program in compliance with 49 CFS Part 30 and s382; and
- DFS Driver Policy and Procedures, issue date 12/15/21.

Mr. Betti stated that he went through all of the DFS policies and only pulled those that would relate to Tech Rescue.

Creating a Tech Rescue folder that would fall under Tech Rescue Special Operations:

-And be accessible by all. Currently all information is stored in a DFS folder within the DFS system, that is only accessible to specific people.

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Creating a Tech Rescue folder that would fall under Tech Rescue Special Operations: cont'd.

-Mr. Betti is concerned that due to this limited access people aren't being provided with information that they should have. He would like to find a way to create a folder that would be easily shared on SharePoint.

-Chief O'Brien agrees that this would bring transparency to all policies and the sooner this is done the easier it will be going forward.

-Lt. Martin asked if we could adopt a blanket policy accepting and adopting all DFS policies. Someone would have to make sure that all DFS policies are forwarded.

-Chief Belsito is proposing that the committee change the letterhead on the DFS policies recently provided by Mr. Betti, to the SOP Subcommittee's letterhead and forward said policies to the Council.

-Who would be responsible to make sure that all future DFS policies are updated and forwarded?

-Lt. Martin advised that HazMat has an ongoing SOP Policy Committee who meet on a regular basis.

Would we be able to put these policies under our letterhead legally? Does HazMat use their own letterhead?

-Mr. Betti does see the need for an ongoing committee going forward.

-Chief Belsito advised that he and Mr. Betti will bring this to the Council pre-meeting for discussion.

Using the Existing SOP Committee spreadsheet:

The committee can continue to use the existing spreadsheet for new policies received from DFS, noting those that have been created by DFS Legal as such.

-Chief O'Brien offered that if the Letterhead isn't changed at least there could be an introduction letter stating that the following policy will be put in place as a Tech Rescue policy. A cover letter to the Council could indicate that on a specific date, the following policies had been adopted by the SOP Subcommittee and should be put on a portal that avails access to our membership.

-Lt. Martin confirmed that he does not have access to DFS SOP's.

-Mr. Betti stated that this puts an interesting spin on all policies on the DFS website. This could make all State policies accessible to all agents and contractors. Chief Aptt agrees.

-Chief Belsito and Mr. Betti will bring this to the Council pre-meeting.

There currently is not a good method of sharing information with agents and contractors. Would this be a technology problem? Or is this an easy fix?

-Mr. Betti asked if all had the chance to go over HazMat's list of their policies in spreadsheet form. He realizes that they have too many, he is suggesting that the committee members go over the list and selectively chose those that could be used for Tech Rescue. He asked that committee members review the list and bring forward only those policies that apply. This would always be an open agenda option.

Chief Belsito asked if there were any additional comments or concerns. None reported.

Tiered Response:

FF Daryl Springman had offered to present the Tiered Response that is used by the Western Region. It is hoped that a presentation by FF Springman can be arranged.

NEW BUSINESS-

EMAC- discussed the creation of a handbook which would provide needs and resources for response to an EMAC incident.

-Chief Belsito asked if this would come under SOP Committee charge.

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NEW BUSINESS-

EMAC- cont'd.

-Chief O'Brien will forward this information to Chief Belsito, who will then follow it up to the group. This resource will show the equipment, resources and practices that were taken on previous incidents and also FEMA typing. This could be a good document to work off of when planning budgeting for equipment and manpower. He advised that most calls are for Swiftwater, Type I or II. It would also address what is needed for Auto Response-Self Sufficient group response. The information would assist in determining what services and equipment would be expected of responding teams. For the purposes of this handbook, Chief O'Brien suggests that Swiftwater Response be dealt with first. If an EMAC pops up in the meantime there would at least be something to refer to. Chief O'Brien stressed that for budgeting purposes, Backfilling is a big issue. Sometimes Backfilling isn't even entertained. Municipalities sometimes end up eating these costs. It might be worth it for the purposes of the Committee that Chief O'Brien and Jackie meet. It takes quite a while to get reimbursement from the State.

Chief Belsito would love Chief O'Brien to reach out to the Region 3 Chiefs and the Metro Region 2. He is sure that many Chiefs have no idea how this would work.

The major funding issue will be financing for Backfilling. Backfilling numbers also include travel time. These concerns are different for a Task Force response where reimbursement would be by FEMA and would be dispersed in a more timely manner.

Chief Belsito would like to see 70-80% of Chief's attend an informational meeting.

-Mr. Betti reported that he had actually sat down with the Marshal to discuss this issue to determine how this could be fixed once it falls under DFS. Legislatively how would they get enough money put aside to be able to reimburse Municipalities within 30 days, with DFS being responsible for chasing down the money through FEMA.

-Could hotels and supplies such as lumber be put on a Corporate Credit Card.

-DFS should hold the burden for these costs not the municipalities.

Combining Tech Rescue and Firefighting resources: Chief O'Brien advised that if Plymouth County has an incident where FIU needs to go through a building that has been deemed unsafe due to stabilization issues, they would call in Tech Rescue to make the structure safe enough for them to do their fire investigation then get out. This eventually could be pushed out statewide. Responders would be combining Firefighting, Tech Rescue and Investigation abilities. Response would be at the request of the FIU team. Similar to how HazMat and the State Police work together.

Going forward:

-Meetings will continue to create a pilot program.

-Standardization created for all groups.

-Policies pushed out.

Combining services would also increase call volume and numbers necessary to justify funding.

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Additional comments or matters before the Committee:

None.

Future Meetings:

The next Council meeting will be held on Wednesday, August 28th.

The next SOP/SOG Subcommittee Meeting will be on Tuesday, September 17 at 1100.

Chief Belsito stated that he felt that this was by far one of the best Subcommittee meetings to date.

Motion to Adjourn:

Chief O'Brien moved to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Chief Aptt.

Roll: Chief Aptt, Yes; Lt. Martin, Yes; Chief O'Brien, Yes; Mr. Betti, Yes, Chief Belsito, Yes.

The motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourn at 1209

Minutes prepared by Cheryl Barker, Admin Asst, Sutton Fire