



# WISCONSIN FIRE & EMS COALITION

321 E. Main Street, Suite 200  
Madison, WI 53703



## Fire & EMS Coalition Meeting Minutes January 4, 2024 – 10:00am – Via Zoom



In attendance: Members: Mahlon Mitchell (PFFW), Chris Anderson (PAAW), Bob Salov (WEMSA), Alan DeYoung (WEMSA) James Small (UW Office of Rural Health), Mike Stanley (WI State Fire Chief's Association), Todd Blaser (WI State Fire Fighters Association), Brad Bowen (WI Fire Chiefs' Association), Dan Schmoeker (WI Fire Inspectors Association), Matt Reigel (WI Chapter International Arson Investigators Association), and Kevin Gerarden Flanagan (WI Society of Emergency Services Instructors).



Lobbyists: Joe Strohl (PFFW), Matt Kussow (PAAW), Tom Fonfara (WI State Firefighters Association), and George Klaetsch (WI State Fire Chief's Association).



Meeting called to order by Mahlon Mitchell and roll call taken at 10:00 am.

### Legislative Update

#### PTSD

- Workers Comp Advisory Council has 2 bills dealing with PTSD, one is a stand-alone bill that does not cover first responders, the other which includes first responders is more controversial and likely not to pass
- George Klaetsch suggests amending the 2<sup>nd</sup> version and removing the controversial items to only include fire and EMS and not the expanded scope.
- Tom Fonfara will sit down with Senator Testin to see how he wants to proceed
- Chairman Mitchell noted that we should focus on the agreed upon bill and get our members added (fire and EMS only)
- Joe will set up a meeting with Sen. Testin, Tom will set up a meeting with Assembly Chair of Labor.



#### EMS Age 18-17

- Chris Anderson reported that PAAW is opposed and has informed legislators that even if it passes, service providers will not hire minors.
- Alan DeYoung noted that WEMSA opposes as well, inability to insure minors is a big problem and this will not solve the employment crisis.
- Mike Stanley reported that the Fire Chiefs are in support and think it's a good idea at this time.



## **EMS Board**

- Chris Anderson noted the bill would add two more rural members to the EMS Board. Since the board is advisory and not regulatory.
- Alan DeYoung said WEMSA has no problem with it given the advisory nature of the board.

## **Fall Prevention Bills**

- Chief Stanley noted this is modeled after the AZ law. It would put the responsibility on care facilities to take care of falls rather than call 911. Provides training on proper lift techniques as well as some state funding for equipment.

## **Healthy Aging Grants**

- Restores funding for grants that were set up years ago but then no longer funded. Relates to the above fall prevention bill. This is where the funding for equipment will come from.

## **Return to Work**

- Three versions of this bill authorize police and fire only to return to work. No hearings set on any of them yet.
- One version has a five-year limit on return to work and applies to everyone, not just police and fire.
- Matt Kussov noted we should talk to leadership before weighing in.

## **Peer Counseling**

- Will be taken up soon in the Assembly.
- Provides immunity for anyone on a peer support team or a struggling member from being required by management to report on a member who may be having mental health struggles.
- It has passed the Senate unanimously.

## **Firefighter Training**

- There would be new classes for rural firefighters so they don't have to take the same standard courses as urban firefighters.
- George Klaetsch feels this bill will go nowhere.
- Todd Blaser noted that the current curriculum doesn't work for volunteers because of the scope. They wanted the curriculum changed for volunteers, WCTS said no.
- Kevin Gerarden noted the Instructors are opposed to the bill

## **911 Pilot Program**

- Provides certain information to first responders before they get to a crash site. People would have to sign up to be a part of this service and list any medical needs they may have.

## **Agency Updates**

- James Small noted that local municipalities have to be responsible for decisions they make and figure out how to fund necessary services. Their study shows that many rural parts of the state have little or no 911 services.

## **Other State Updates**

### **GEMT**

- Chris Anderson noted we're still waiting on federal approval.

### **Fire Codes**

- Sprinklers, DSPS is looking at modifications so it will pass

### **Innovation Fund Status**

- DOR is still working on developing this program.

## **Federal update:**

- Chief Stanley reported that 5-6 departments are beta-testing new PFAS free gear
- Nothing new on the reauthorization of AFG/SAFER grants

## **Organizational Items:**

- Treasurer's Report - \$0 expended
- Minutes of the October 23, 2023, meeting were approved unanimously

## **Next meeting**

- No meeting date was set at this time.

Meeting adjourned at Noon.

Respectfully submitted,  
Cindy McGinnis, PFFW  
January 31, 2024