

Federal Fire Working Group Meeting

Federal Emergency Management Agency/U.S. Fire Administration

16825 South Seton Avenue, Emmitsburg, Maryland 21727

December 4, 2014 Time: 9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Call in#: 1-800-320-4330, PIN#: 718708

ATTENDEES

Anthony Hamins

Mark Henry Salley

Jason Steinmetz

Peter J. Collins

Jim Williams

Ross Mowrey

Dave Klein

Dept. of Defense Fire & Emergency Services Working Group: Carl Glover (Navy), John Staub (Army), Kevin Matlock (Air Force), Stephen Jellie (DLA), Kevin King (Marines), Ricky Brockman (Navy), Fletcher Dahman (Navy/IAFC Fed. Mil.), Thomas Thompson (Camp Pendleton), Chris Handley (Navy), Michael Pritchard (Marines), George Berger (Marines), John Lavoie (Marines)

PRESENTERS

Lawrence McKenna, USFA

James H. Williams, FAA

Keith Henke, USFA

Jason Steinmetz, Forest Service

USFA ATTENDEES

Ernest Mitchell

Glenn Gaines

Alex Furr

Sandy Facinoli

Rebecca Ryan

ORGANIZATIONS

NIST

Smithsonian

Forest Service

Bureau of Prisons

Federal Aviation Administration

EPA

Veterans Administration

Administrator, U.S. Fire Administration

Deputy Administrator, U. S. Fire Administration

Director, National Fire Program Division/USFA

Chief, Prevention & Information Branch (P&I), National Fire

Programs Division (NFPD), USFA
Fire Program Specialist, P&I/NFPD

Opening

Ernest Mitchell, Administrator, U. S. Fire Administration, welcomed all to the meeting and expressed his interest and appreciation to the members for their participation in this group. He apologized that he would have to leave the meeting early as he had another commitment.

Sometimes despite your best efforts you can run into some technical difficulties as we did with the phone-in number and initial issues with the HSIN Connect room; however, once all those issues were resolved, the meeting proceeded.

Roll Call was taken followed by the first of several presentations.

The following presentations were provided:

Lawrence McKenna, Ph.D., P.E.

Research Group

U. S. Fire Administration

Presentation: *Explosions & Fires in Electronic Cigarettes: Scope and Causes*

Mr. McKenna began his presentation by asking “Do You Mind if I Vape?” He went on to explain that the term vape is a contracted form of the word vapor which has its origins in the Latin *vaporem* meaning ‘steam’ or ‘exhalation.’ Vaporize is what the e-cigarette does and vapor is what the e-cigarette produces. Vaping is what users do. He went on to explain that 25 separate incidents of explosion and/or fire involving an electronic cigarette were reported in the U.S. media between 2009 and August 2014. No deaths were associated with these 25 incidents but there were nine (9) injuries and two (2) serious burn injuries.

Mr. McKenna stated that fires or explosions caused by e-cigarettes are rare events. Factors contributing to the apparent higher incidence rates in e-cigarettes vs. other battery-powered consumer products include: known failure modes of lithium-ion polymer batteries; geometry, and charging which includes manufactured product and misuse.

Larry also observed that fires or explosions caused by e-cigarettes are rare. While Li-ion battery failure rates are low, the growing number of e-cigs in use is likely to result in more incidents. However, improvements in battery/charger safety features may offset this likely increase. The shape and construction of e-cigarettes can make them more likely than other products with Li-ion batteries to behave like “flaming rockets” when a battery fails.

In closing, Mr. McKenna provided some recommendations which included:

*e-cigarette manufacturers should consider changing to a different style of electrical connection. The elimination of USB type electrical connections on e-cigarettes will make it more difficult, though not impossible, for users to overcharge the batteries. The inclusion of protection circuits into e-cigarettes should improve safety.

*suppliers, industry associations, user groups and fire prevention educators should all stress the importance of proper charging practices to reduce the number of incidents. Perhaps stronger warnings in the literature and user manuals would be helpful.

James Williams, Manager
Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) Integration Office
Federal Aviation Administration

Presentation: *FAA Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) Integration Office Update*

Mr. Williams opened his presentation by explaining there were two types of UAS Authorization:

***Public** (governmental) to include activities completely contained in active Special Use Airspace (restricted and warning areas) and Certificate of Authorization (COA); and,

***Civil** (non-governmental) which includes:

- Type Certifications which are existing type certifications with institutions like Boeing and Aerovironment to cover both small UAS and may be used for commercial operations

- Special Airworthiness Certificate in the Experimental Category and Special Flight Permits for production flight testing which are currently used for development, marketing and research and rules limit commercial use

- Exemption under P.L. 112-95, Section 33

- Private recreational use (toys, model aircraft)

Mr. Williams touched on a common strategy for law enforcement and first responders explaining that small UAS give law enforcement and agencies tactical advantages and enhance their ability to serve and protect. They require rapid access and reduced costs in order for small UAS to be effective. Mr. Williams noted the early Certificate of Authorization (COA) process was cumbersome and did not provide for rapid “9-1-1” deployment. However, a new common strategy establishes a “defined incident perimeter” and the proponent must complete a Safety Risk Analysis Plan (SRAP).

Mr. Williams said the FAA believes the safest, most successful jurisdiction-wide deployment of small UAS technology supporting public safety agencies is accomplished through a two-phase process:

Phase I: Training. The initial COA application permits law enforcement agencies to conduct necessary ground and flight training to bring all pilots, observers and ground crewmembers to a high level of UAS flight proficiency. This may include developing and conducting scenario based exercises to ensure coordination among supported law enforcement agencies and first responder elements.

Phase II: Operations. This includes deployment within the jurisdiction of the agency and an evaluation by the FAA of a UAS exercise to demonstrate the competency and safety of the proponent’s program.

It was mentioned by Mr. Williams that more than 150 companies have filed petitions for exemption based on Section 333 (P.L. 112-95) in areas such as precision agriculture, shipping/delivery, aerial film and photography, and real estate to name a few. The first six exemptions were granted on September 25, 2014 to movie and television companies and the seventh was granted in early October. It is anticipated that additional companies will submit Section 333 petitions for exemption in the coming weeks.

The FAA published guidance after recent incidents involving the reckless use of unmanned model aircraft near airports and involving large crowds of people. As Mr. Williams explained the FAA issued the notice to provide clear guidance to model operators on the “do’s and don’ts” of flying safety in accordance with the 2012 FAA Reauthorization Act and to answer questions regarding the scope and application of the rules. This guidance was posted to the Federal Register on June 23, 2014 and the public comment period produced more than 30,000 comments.

In closing, Mr. Williams advised that a UAS Event Tracking System (UETS) is under development and this will enable the FAA to better track, analyze, and respond to both airborne and ground-based events. However, before the UETS goes live the FAA needs to receive incident reports on any UAS-related event from law enforcement.

**Keith Henke, Fire Program Specialist
Critical Infrastructure Program Manager
FEMA/U.S. Fire Administration**

Presentation: *Fire Service Information and Intelligence Sharing*

Mr. Henke began his presentation by explaining that the Nation’s fire service is a network of departments and agencies that provide a wide variety of emergency services at the state, local, tribal and territorial level. He further explained what he meant by fire service information and intelligence sharing. Information was defined as raw data provided to support the production of finished intelligence products, and /or provided to the Fire Service to support situational awareness and responder safety before, during, and after an incident. Intelligence was defined as all-crime/all-hazard information that has been gathered and vetted through the intelligence cycle in order to generate products that can be used to guide Fire Service decisions at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels.

Keith shared that fire service information and intelligence sharing can be applied to responder safety, prevention, protection, and response and recovery. He outlined several fire service information sharing efforts: Fire Service Intelligence Enterprise (FSIE); Emergency Management and Response-Information Sharing and Analysis Center (EMR-ISAC); Fire Desk-DHS National Operations Center (NOC); Joint Counterterrorism Assessment Team (JCAT); and Nationwide SAR Initiative (NSI). A brief description of each of these efforts follows:

Fire Service Intelligence Enterprise (FSIE): is a DHS collaborative initiative that seeks to “institutionalize the integration of the fire service into federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial information and intelligence sharing networks—including State and Major Urban Area Fusion Centers—to enhance preparedness and operations of fire service organizations across the country, while supporting the prevention, protection, response, and recovery efforts of all homeland security partners.”

Emergency Management and Response-Information Sharing & Analysis Center (EMR-ISAC): the U.S. Fire Administration maintains the EMR-ISAC whose mission is the collection, research, collaboration, and dissemination of critical infrastructure

protection and emerging threat information to Emergency Services Sector departments and agencies nationwide. The EMR-ISAC produces weekly unclassified *InfoGrams*, containing short articles about the protection of the critical infrastructures of communities and their emergency responders.

Fire Desk-DHS National Operations Center (NOC): The DHS NOC serves as the national fusion center, collecting and synthesizing all-source information, against all-threats and all-hazards to the homeland security effort while supporting the prevention, protection, response, and recovery efforts of all homeland security partners nationwide. The NOC Fire Desk provides technical assistance directly in support of the NOC core mission by serving as a Subject Matter Expert (SME) for the Nation's Fire Service and provides valuable first responder insight to decision makers in support of the DHS mission. The NOC Fire Desk is staffed by USFA personnel Monday through Friday and extended hours during significant national events.

Joint Counterterrorism Assessment Team (JCAT): the mission of the JCAT is to improve information sharing and enhance public safety. In coordination with DHS and FBI, JCAT will collaborate with other members of the Intelligence Community to research, produce, and disseminate counterterrorism intelligence products for federal, state, local and tribal government agencies and the private sector and advocate for the counterterrorism intelligence requirements and needs of these partners throughout the Intelligence Community.

Nationwide SAR (Suspicious Activity Reporting) Initiative (NSI): online SAR training for law enforcement and hometown security partners, including the fire service. Both the SAR Line Officer Training and sector-specific SAR Hometown Security Partners Training products discuss how to report identified suspicious activity to the proper authorities while maintaining the protection of citizens' privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties.

**Jason Steinmetz, Emergency Management Specialist-NIMS
Fire & Emergency Operations and International Fire Support Branch
U. S. Forest Service**

Presentation: *Overview of the 2014 Wildland Fire Season*

Jason Steinmetz, U.S. Forest Service, provided an overview of the 2014 Wildfire season. The fire season in the U.S. was focused mainly on the drought areas of California and Oregon as the summer temperatures in these areas were much above average and the precipitation was generally below average.

By the end of August, a total of 606 large fire occurrences were reported to the National Interagency Coordination Center (including fires managed for multiple objectives). This is up from the 604 large fires reported for the same period in 2013, and down from the 1,016 large fires reported in 2012. Fires reported in 2014 are also well below the record of 1,635 large fires reported during the same period in 2006. Prescribe fires stayed on track with over 1,800,000 acres treated which is 125% above the ten-year average.

Jason explained the national preparedness levels throughout the year which drives the response to wildland fires for the nation. In 2014, the nation spent 8 days in preparedness level 4 and no days at preparedness level 5 (the highest level) and there was never a shortage of firefighting resources.

Jason concluded his presentation by talking about the new 2014 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) which authorized seven U.S. Coast Guard C-130H aircraft to be transferred to the Forest Service for use as Airtankers. The U.S. Air Force will perform maintenance, repairs and modification to the aircraft before they are transferred to the Forest Service. The first C-130H is expected to be operational in 2015.

In addition to the charts/graphs provided in his PP presentation, and as a response to a question posed by USFA Deputy Administrator Glenn Gaines, Jason kindly provided the following information for structures destroyed due to wildland fire in 2014:

Residences: 1026

Mixed Commercial/Residence: 14

Multiple Residences: 21

Non-Residential Commercial: 20

Minor Structures: 860

**No date has been scheduled for the next meeting; we will notify the FFWG members when a timeframe has been established.