

Safety Subcommittee  
December meeting & Safety Report  
Virtual Teams Meeting  
2021-12-16

Attendees:

- Peter Lynch – Chair
- Heather Simons – Vermont Police Academy
- Lindsey Thivierge – Vermont Police Academy
- Ben Whalen – Vermont Fire Academy
- Michael Skaza – Vermont Fire Academy
- Rebecca White – Office of Risk Management
- Trevor Whipple – Vermont League of Cities and Towns
- Dan Whipple – Vermont Occupation Safety and Health Administration

Visitors:

- None

Minutes:

1. Called to Order at 13:30 by Chair Peter Lynch.
2. Introductions – Chair Lynch provided an introduction of the attendees and their rolls within the Safety Subcommittee.
3. Agenda – Chair Lynch requested that the Sunset Advisory Commission Report be added to the agenda, no objection.
4. Sunset Advisory Commission – Through legislation the Sunset Advisory Commission reviews boards and other commissions to determine if those boards or commissions are still necessary. It was the determination of the Commission that both the Training Center Governance Committee and Training Center Safety Sub Committee both remain in place with the importance of their work and mission. A question about the need for agendas and meeting minutes was found to have no clear answer and its has been determined the Governance and Safety-sub committees will publicly post agendas and minutes on the Division of Fire Safety website.
5. Safety Report:

Chair Lynch gave thanks for the work done by Ben Whalen and Lindsay Thivierge in creating the report and promoting safety. Years ago, to make the reporting of both academies consistent the Accident Report Form and OSHA definitions for injuries were adopted. In 2021 the Fire Academy has had two recordable injuries and the Police

Academy has had twelve. In the report from the police Academy you will see injuries that are also not recordable.

In the Executive Summary it was noted that there has been a drop in the number of students attending courses and programs at both the Police and Fire Academies. This drop is specifically believed to be a cause of COVID-19. For perspective the academies have completed over eighty thousand hours of training in the past year with only fourteen recordable injuries. This equates to one recordable injury for every forty-five hundred hours of training. Although the goal is always to have zero injuries the academies are on the right track and remaining proactive in safety.

There was discussion on the difference between a Recordable and Reportable injury. Dan Whipple addressed the board on this advising that a recordable injury is one that requires more than basic first aid, where someone may lose a day of work, and that said injury is written onto an OSHA 300 log form. A reportable injury is one that is logged with OSHA and is more severe in nature such as an amputation, lost eye, or when someone is admitted to a hospital.

### **Fire Academy**

Ben Whalen gave a report on the Vermont Fire Academy. Ben spoke of the two recordable injuries that occurred, one was for an injury sustained performing forcible entry and one where a subject had a seizure while wearing self-contained breathing apparatus, there were no recommended changes to prevent future injuries. Rebecca White discussed if the seizure incident should be considered a recordable injury being the individual was found to have a seizure history and Dan Whipple indicated that since it occurred during training it should be unless there is something from a physician stating otherwise.

Ben spoke about preventative measures the Fire Academy is taking in order to prevent future injuries without significant occurrences. The Fire Academy has continued with early blood pressure screening of firefighter I and II students that has helped student get into their primary care providers. Additionally the fire Academy has changed the format of Firefighter I and II live fire training. Days that were previously one single day have been split into two and all live fire days will be completed by the middle of May, instead of going on into the summer months of June and July.

The Fire Academy advised they completed good safe training through the COVID-19 pandemic and created policies and procedures, disinfectant/screening kits, and virtual classrooms. In total six students contracted COVID-19 with only two contracting it within Fire Academy classes.

The Fire Academy advised they continue to provide information on cancer prevention and supply students with special bags for transporting gear after live fire days and cleaning wipes specifically designed for firefighters.

The Fire Academy had a great safe year and although the goal is zero injuries, with the type of work being completed that will not always be the case.

Dan Whipple discussed the new OSHA heat standard that is coming out and the need for the Academy to review the standard and work to be compliant. Ben advised that the Fire Academy has included in its Rehabilitation Policy a section on heat stress with allowable limits for work within certain temperatures. Additionally, they have a Wet Bulb Globe Thermometer (WBGT) for tracking the temperatures and open communication with the National Weather Service. The Fire Academy has a contract with Denise Alosa who is a subject matter expert that has helped develop their policy. The Fire Academy has invited the Police Academy to attend Heat Stress training and believe the Police Academy has the same equipment which Lindsay confirmed.

Ben discussed that the Fire Academy is always looking for ways to improve safety and recently has placed tourniquet kits in training locations where risk of injury is great as a precautionary measure.

### **Police Academy**

Lyndsay spoke about the Police Academy discussing that they had a total of twelve recordable injuries and that they are also looking for ways of improving safety including:

- i. Temperatures within VPA buildings with no air conditioning.
- ii. WBGT and training with the Fire Academy for a new Heat Policy.
- iii. Training Advisor training.
- iv. COVID protocols.
- v. Building changes upcoming – Heat/cooling added to the buildings.

Lindsay noted that the majority of injuries occurred during routine physical training on the campus grounds and Use of Force.

One injury occurred during use of force where there was no mat behind the student and they fell back and hit their head, they will now be having mats all the way around students to prevent this from occurring again. The student in this case had hit their head and was concussed. There was discussion from Heather on if a concussion means someone hit their head, and the definition of concussion vs. concussed. Lindsay advised in this instance the Training Coordinator noted that after the fall the recruit was not acting right, pulled the recruit out of training scenario and sent them to the emergency room. Heather inquired if this was a recordable or reportable injury, wanting to make

sure proper protocols are followed. Dan Whipple advised that a concussion is a diagnosis and is a reportable injury until a doctor advised they can go back to training, if someone is removed from work (in this case training) they would be removed from performing what is expected but not necessarily have to leave.

Dan Whipple again confirmed the difference in recordable and reportable.

Reportable – Injury that is logged with OSHA itself such as amputation, lost eye, admitted to the hospital.

Recordable - added to OSHA 300 log form. Lost little time from work, more than basic first aid was provided.

Dan Whipple said he really liked the report, it is blameless, and he appreciates all the work that is being done in the report and keeping the training as safe as possible. Trevor Whipple concurred with Dans words, and mentioned the document being detail specific and that he has confidence that the Academies are looking into what happened with all injuries that occur. Rebecca White agreed with the others.

## 6. MOTION.

- i. Motion to except the Safety Report with changes of recordable and reportable being made and that the document be presented to the Governance Committee on December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2021 made by Dan Whipple
- ii. Seconding the motion – Trevor Whipple
- iii. Discussion – Discussion of who represents the Police Academy. Determined that Lindsay and Heather are the two representatives with voting rights.
- iv. Vote called – vote passed unanimously.

Chair Lynch advised the report will go to the Governance Committee on 12/27/21 and that anyone wishing to attend who doesn't have an invite should reach out to him. If the Governance Committee approves the report it will then be brought to House Institutions for review at the legislative level. If for some reason the Governance Committee were to decline the report we would reconvene. The legislative meeting will be an opportunity for the Governance Committee to discuss agendas including the Buildings sub-committee recommendations for feasibility study of ice issues on the gun range, and upgrading the Police Academy building temperature issues. Heather is concerned about this study and the need to incorporate more things including the gym floor in the Police Academy.

Chair Lynch thanked Ben and Lindsay for all their work in the report as well as there work with the memorial for emergency services and time they put into the event.

7. New Business – None
8. Next meeting – June/July 2022 but will plan on midyear discussion.
9. Adjournment – 14:22