

Vermont Fire Service Training Council
Minutes of the March 19, 2020 Emergency Meeting

The meeting was held via conference call and called to order by Christopher Corbin.

ROLL CALL:

Organization Representatives

Vermont Career Chiefs Association	Aaron Collette
Secretary of Education	Robert Evans
Vermont Fire Chiefs Association	Absent
Commissioner of the Department of Forest, Parks & Recreation	Lars Lund
Professional Firefighters of Vermont	Christopher Corbin, Chairperson
Commissioner of the Department of Health	Absent
Vermont State Firefighters Association	F. Tom Estey
Commissioner of the Department of Labor	Dan Whipple
Vermont Domestic Insurance	Matt Miles
Division of Fire Safety Director	Michael Desrochers
General Public	John Marcus, Vice Chairperson
Commissioner of Public Safety	Michael Schirling

Visitors: Peter Lynch, Michael Skaza, Jessica Pomainville, Terry Farr, Ben Whalen, William Jones

Report from the Executive Director of the Division of Fire Safety: Michael Desrochers

The Director thanks everyone for their hard work lately. The Division of Fire Safety is working and offices remain open but are being operated with limited staffing. The USAR, Hazardous Materials, and Fire Investigation teams are all ready to be deployed if needed. The Department of Health and the Administration is sharing information well, but if someone has unanswered questions they can contact him.

Commissioner of Public Safety: Michael Schirling

Commissioner thanks everyone for their dedication and perseverance in unprecedented times. If people are not getting the information that they need he reminds people to let the Division know and they will get the information out. The key message is to remain constant, protect the most vulnerable, flatten the curve of infection, and ensure the continuity of key services to include fire service.

Message from the Chief of Fire Service Training: Peter Lynch

All VFA classes are postponed until April 13th. Classes that have not yet started have either been postponed or cancelled.

The VFA office is open, however, the office is only staffed with one person per day and the

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remainder of the staff is working remotely.

The VFA is relaxing their guidelines to get through these times, if this affects issues related to the Council they will be made aware.

Three of the Regional Schools have cancelled so far and the VFA expects that others may as well.

NFA courses have been put on hold. New Hampshire and Alabama are most likely not going to be attending Three state weekend which will force Vermont to pull out as well.

Small number of students have pending re-tests and the VFA will be extending the 60-day deadline to accommodate them.

The Fire Inspector students who are in the practicum phase will have the deadline extended by 30 days and we will reevaluate the situation at that time. An email will go out to those students today.

The Vermont Fire Academy is trying to find an online platform for students that are currently enrolled in a program. This includes Firefighter I, Firefighter I/II, and Fire Instructor I students. The VFA would like to provide students with the Premier package that has an interactive online classroom. It will take 2 to 4 weeks to deploy this option if it is found to be feasible since the publisher has to set up the online classroom environment.

Training coordinators are working with lead instructors to identify how many of our students have the ability to participate in an online format. The intent is to leave no one behind, there will need to be face to face instruction and remediation to answer questions and reinforce lessons once we can start meeting again.

Motion is made by Collette instructing the VFA to explore online or other alternative instructional platforms for Firefighter I, I/II, and Fire Instructor programs that are currently under way and to authorize the employment of alternatives that are deemed feasible by the VFA, second Estey. Motion passes unanimously.

Dan Whipple asks if the online platform will allow the students to contact instructors if they have questions while doing the online work. Michael Skaza answers that the Training Coordinators will be made available. We may be able to work out a way for Leads or Training Coordinators to have Skype meetings with students.

Lars Lund asks if he can see what Jones and Bartlett has for Wildland online content. Michael Skaza will share this information with him when it is available.

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As this situation continues, there may be a need for extension or adjustment to the recertification requirements depending on length of the event. This information is for the Council's Awareness only and no action is needed at this time. This issue may be addressed by pending legislation.

Christopher Corbin wants people to take a message back to their constituents to seek alternate training methods during this period.

In response to inquiries about a burn ban to decrease the incidence of wildland fires, Lars Lund announced that the Commissioner of Natural Resources can only issue a state-wide burn ban when fire conditions warrant and since that it not the case right now ANR is urging Fire Wardens to make local decisions as to whether or not they issue burn permits due to the threat of COVID-19.

Tom Estey makes a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Lars Lund. Motion passes unanimously.