

**Fire Rescue Commission Meeting
FTCC Regional Fire and Rescue Training Center, NC**

April 9, 2024

Members in Attendance: Harley Cook Vernon Massengill Robert Poe
Freddy Johnson, Sr. Brent Gordon Cloyce Anders
Tim Henshaw Steve Roberson Andy Thomas
Gary Whitman Ryan Cole Brian Taylor

Others present: Brian Wade, Mike Williams, Paul Ward, David Morris, Chris Decker,
Monna Gillespie, Kim Williams, Katherine Burton, Kyle Heuser

Call to Order – Harley Cook 10:00 a.m.

Welcome – Freddy Johnson

Invocation – Tim Bradley

Ethics Statement – Harley Cook

Tim Henshaw made a motion to approve the agenda. Freddy Johnson seconded the motion. Motion approved.

Freddy Johnson made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 9, 2024 meeting. Steve Roberson seconded. Motion approved.

Appointments

Certification Board - NC Association of Rescue and EMS, Inc.

Robert Poe made a motion to reappoint Ken Hogue to the North Carolina Fire and Rescue Certification Board. Freddy Johnson seconded. Motion passed.

Chair Harley Cook reminded members to complete their Ethics SEI Report and Education training.

Board Reports

Volunteer Safety Worker's Compensation Board – Cloyce Anders

The Fund is in good shape. There is one year left of no premium requirements. There are five claims that are more than a million dollars.



Certification Board – Derrick Clouston

Jacksonville Fire and Emergency Services was approved for additional levels of delivery.

Fire Officer 1 and 2, Driver Operator EVD, Pumps, FLSE 1, 2 and 3, Haz Mat Awareness, Operations and MSC, Instructor 1 and 2 and TR Vehicle.

Bakers Volunteer Fire and Rescue was approved for additional levels of delivery.

Driver Operator Aerials, TR Water Rescue and TR Wilderness

Technical Rescue Committee continues to work on the NFPA 1006 2021 revision. Revision is scheduled to be complete on time.

An Online/Electronic Testing Committee has been created and has been tasked with researching the ability to provide online/electronic testing in hopes to assist with the many violations being brought forward.

Certified Fire Investigator Board – Chair Freddy Johnson, Sr. provided an update.

12 applications were approved.

3 applications were denied.

Old Business

Rules - Brian Wade

Staff continues to work with the attorneys and the Administrative Rules Committee to establish rules. They are about halfway through a draft and should be ready to present at the next Commission meeting. The policy and procedures will be the administrative rules and the by-laws will go forward based on the new policy and procedures.

Nepotism - Brian Wade

Brian Wade reviewed the sections of the by-laws to be updated to address nepotism. After much discussion Robert Poe made a motion to remove nepotism from the by-laws. Seconded by Cloyce Anders.

Chris Hinshaw voted no.

Harley Cook voted yes.

Vernon Massengill voted yes.

Robert Poe voted yes.

Freddy Johnson, Sr. voted yes.

Brent Gordon voted yes.

Cloyce Anders voted yes.

Steve Roberson voted yes.
Brian Taylor voted yes.
Gary Whitman voted yes.

Motion passed.

Agency Reports

NC Department of Insurance – Brian Taylor. Updated the status of OSFM. Brian is working with the general assembly on policy changes. It looks promising that our needs to the be successful will be provided.

OSFM has hired our own attorney, Kyle Heuser.

OSHA is doing a roundtable discussion on the upcoming changes Federal OSHA Revision of 1910.156 Fire Department Standards. Kyle Heuser has been researching and reviewing the proposed changes. Brian Taylor will make comment and notify fire departments in an email.

NC State Firefighters' Association – Tim Bradley provided an update. Report attached.

NC Association of Rescue and EMS, Inc. – Joel Faircloth provided an update. Report attached.

NC Association of Chiefs – Ryan Cole provided an update. Report attached.

NC Community Colleges System – Keny Weatherington gave an update.

NC Division of Emergency Management – J.R. Griffin provided an update. Report attached.

NC Society of Fire/Rescue Instructors – Harley Cook. Restructured their Board.

There are now 2 directors per region.

Professional Firefighters and Paramedics of NC – Not in attendance.

NC Department of Labor – Not in attendance.

NC Office of Emergency Medical Services – Not in attendance.

NC Division of Forestry – Not in attendance.

NC Department of Justice – Teresa Posetell – nothing to report.

Cloyce Anders made a motion to adjourn. Freddy Johnson seconded. Motion Approved.
Meeting adjourned at 11:22 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kim Williams

Attachments

NCSFA 2nd Quarter Report April 2024

Introduce Past Presidents

Introduce Board

Introduce Staff

Roster and Relief Fund Board of Trustees Report (BTR)

At the end of the reporting cycle for Certified Rosters and BTR's, January 15th 2023, only 7 fire departments out of 1279 failed to report their rosters and to get their BTR's reported. This was after a huge effort by NCSFA staff to email and call Chief's. Normally by the last day we have to have a major push to find the last 150 or so Chiefs.

Member Dues

We have approximately 17 departments that submitted rosters but have not paid their dues. Letters have been mailed out to those departments making them aware of the suspension of benefits until the dues are paid.

Relief Fund Financial Requirements

In 2014 the NC General Assembly established a minimum and maximum account balances for local Relief Funds. We have had several fire departments miss out on their annual distribution because they went over the maximum, which is \$2,500 per rostered member. Unless you have an approved Supplemental Retirement

Program and Account, that \$2,500 per rostered member is a fixed number, and if you're over it by \$1 you will not get a check. Please make sure your local relief fund treasurer and Chairman are aware of this and keep an eye on the balance. Balances need to be below the maximum by June 30th unless you have an approved Supplemental Retirement Amount approved by NCSFA. Your Treasurer should have received a letter if you are over but it's a good idea to check anyway.

Scholarship and Grants

NCSFA Scholarships and grants are now closed for 2023. There are 15 scholarships per region awarded each year. The scholarships include \$2,000 Associate's, \$8,000 Bachelor's and \$10,000 Master's Degree awards. There are also training grants available. These will be announced soon.

Legislation

This year is the short session, or the second of the two-year 2023/2024 session. We were tracking over 60 bills that had been introduced during the long session, but the joint legislative committee of the NCSFA and NCAFC established priorities for the remainder during the 2024 session. They include:

Our Priorities include, but are not limited to:

Priority! Continue to seek a permanent funding solution for the FIREFIGHTER’S Cancer Benefit Program. During the long session in 2023, SB 326 was introduced that provided for using a modification of gross premium assessment percentages to provide a more permanent funding source. We still support that option and work to get it implemented.

Priority! Seek to add retirees, who have been retired 7 years or less, to the firefighter’s Cancer benefit program.

Priority! House Bill 270 – Continue to support increases in the Fire and Rescue Workers Pension Benefits. This is a \$5 increase in benefits and a \$5 increase in premiums.

Monitor and Support! Any legislation that benefits the fire service, or fire education and prevention of fires.

Monitor and oppose! Legislation that has a negative impact on the fire service, or fire education and prevention of fires. We are monitoring over 65 bills, but here are a few key ones. Several of these have been introduced in both chambers:

Federal Legislation – We continue to Pursue Changes to IRS Regulations that could allow non-profit career firefighters in LGERS. The Retirement Act, Secure 2.0, passed Congress last year without our amendment due to opposition from another national fire service organization. As the new Congress gets underway, we’ll try to find a means of getting it introduced again.

Legislative Day Legislative Day has been scheduled for Wednesday, May 15th. It will be at the Quorum Center; 1st floor conference room at 8:00. We will have a brief introduction, pictures, and then head over to the Legislative Building. Lunch

will be provided. Please mark your calendars. More information will be coming out in the future as planning proceeds.

Follow us on Engagifi.

Cancer Insurance Program Update

As of the end of last year, close to 130 firefighters had received benefits through this program totaling over \$4.6 million dollars. Approximately 84 have been denied due to being ineligible, and 11 were pending. Reasons for denial are: the cancer was diagnosed before January 1st of 2022; an ineligible cancer or not metastasized; or not on the roster of a fire department.

Federal OSHA Revision of 1910.156 Fire Department Standards

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is proposing an extensive new safety and health standard, titled “Emergency Response,” to replace the existing “Fire Brigades Standard” 1910.156. This would now cover Emergency Response Organizations (ERO’s), which are fire departments. The Notice of Proposed Rulemaking for the “Emergency Response Standard” was [published in the Federal Register](#) on February 5, with the public comment period open until May 6. In some states public agencies are not required to meet this standard, but in NC, since we are an OSHA state, public agencies are not exempt.

Being an OSHA state, all of our departments will be impacted to some extent by this new proposed rule, and just the paperwork itself for applying this standard could be exhausting. Even though NC state law exempts volunteer fire departments, that is questionable, especially given the benefits and supervision they receive, as well as the impact of providing or receiving mutual aid from career departments and the issue of combination departments. I’m not sure many departments in NC will actually be exempt. The proposed changes are in a 90-day (ends May 6th) comment period and require immediate action by your fire department.

While we 100% agree with firefighter safety and everything that can be done to improve it, we feel the financial and time-consuming changes in the standard could actually have negative impacts on the fire service organizations and could actually decrease the already struggling number of firefighters and may force many to leave the service. We also question the reliability of some of the data and theories used to produce this proposal. 22 NFPA standards are now included in the proposed OSHA standard by reference. This means that any place the NFPA standard says “shall” or “must” the fire department would be responsible for including them. There are another 14 NFPA standards that are included in part. The bottom line is these changes would have major implications for every department, Officer, and firefighter in NC. Good or bad, your department needs to comment.

We are asking that every fire department in NC assign someone to start reading the proposed standard and that every department file a comment with specific information on the financial burden and hardships that it would create for your department. NCSFA will be submitting a State response, but the need for specific fire department responses is critical. This proposed updated standard would issue hundreds of new requirements that may be very burdensome, and in many cases impossible, for some, especially smaller and volunteer fire departments to comply with. While this may appear to have an impact only on smaller departments and volunteer departments, it also will affect larger departments which use NFPA as a guide, but not a requirement. We encourage all departments, volunteer, career, and combination to [submit comments](#) on this proposed rule and request a public hearing so OSHA can have the best possible understanding of how this proposed rule would impact departments.

BCBS PTS Grant

In 2021, Blue Cross contributed \$500,000 to our non-profit organization, the North Carolina Firefighters Fund, to use in fire service programs with the NCSFA. Half of it went in the form of direct grants to small rural departments through OSFM like the previous year’s grant, but we are excited that \$250,000 is being used to provide assistance to firefighters seeking treatment and assistance with

PTSD and mental health issues. Here are the numbers so far: Since the opening of the grant application process in February 2021, a total of \$97,842, has been awarded to 52 different individuals to help pay for counseling, in-house treatment or travel. Please make sure all of your members are aware of the availability of these funds to assist those seeking help. The application and more details are available on the NCSFA website. This program can help bridge the gap between insurance and/or employee assistance programs and out-of-pocket costs for the firefighter. The funds are there for use and are very under-utilized.

BCBS Cancer Grant

At the end of 2023, NCSFA and representatives from the North Carolina Firefighters Fund, the non-profit arm of the Association, received a \$200,000 Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina check for an additional grant program to assist with cancer screening costs for volunteers. The grant applications have been posted and mailed. This will be the third year that Blue Cross has partnered with NCSFA and NCSFA and NCSFA to provide funds for the NC fire service and we appreciate their generosity. Applications are on the NCSFA.com website under the Forms Tab.

SAFRE Conference

The 2024 SAFRE Conference will be held at the Raleigh Convention Center August 7th-11th, 2024. The theme for this year is Learn-Lead-Mentor.

On-line registration is currently available. Course selections have already been made and I can tell you this year we will have some great classes. Our keynote address for 2024 will be given by Fire Chief, international speaker, and best-selling author Frank Viscuso. Chief Viscuso wrote Step up and Lead and Common Valor, among several other bestselling books. He has also delivered keynote addresses and classes all over the world, including at FDIC. We are excited to welcome Chief Viscuso to SAFRE in 2024 for his keynote address, as well as a 4 hour seminar on leadership in the fire service.

We'll have more as the time grows closer, but with the lineup of classes, exhibitors and activities this will be one SAFRE not to miss so please mark your calendar for that week. We look forward to a great week of fellowship, education and seeing what's new and innovative in apparatus, technology and equipment for the fire service and our first responders.

Summit

We currently plan on hosting a Summit Tuesday again this year this year like we did last year. This will include the Board members from the NCSFA, NCAFC's, and the Boards from all three regional associations (Western, Eastern, and Piedmont). It will also include representatives from the Fire Marshal's Association and OSFM. More will be provided as we get nearer to the Date.

VFIS Member Family Assistance Program

When we changed insurance carriers the old FRAP program went away, but we have a new assistance program to help enable personnel and their families to resolve personal and work related issues to maintain health and wellness. Posters have gone out to all departments listing the new number **866 349 5579**. This combined with our PTS assistance program for therapy and counseling provides some assistance to those struggling with emotional and stress issues.

NCSFA Historian Work

Our Statistician, Dennis Pressley, has continued work under the new responsibility of Historian, as predicated by the bylaw change in 2018. This will be an annual update so we don't have to catch up in the future if we produce another history. There may also be some special historical articles related to the history of the NCSFA.

Questions?

NC Association of Rescue & EMS
Fire & Rescue Commission Report
04-09-2024

- Scholarship on-line Application System closed on March 31. We should have those announced May 15
- Directors Meetings for 2024. Sunday April 28, 2024 @ NCEMS Expo, and then in September at our annual meeting.
- Convention / annual meeting is currently to be held in Holiday Inn Biltmore West, Asheville, NC September 6-7, 2024. In conjunction with our annual meeting, we will host rescue and BLS competitions, as well and rescue and EMS classes. Please mark your calendars.

If we can be of assistance, please feel free to contact us.
Joel Faircloth

Executive Director

North Carolina Association of Fire Chiefs Quarterly Report – April 2024

- **Recognition of any Board Members and/or Past NCAFC Presidents.** Mid-winter conference wrapped the beginning of February – thank you to all that attended. Congratulations to our award winners: □ Career Chief – Michael Hill; Fayetteville FD
- □ Volunteer Chief – Steven McLendon; Wesley Chapel VFD
- □ Career Officer – Joshua Connell; Tryon FD
- □ Volunteer Officer – Sean Johnson; Stoney Point VFD
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We will be back in Concord for the 2025 Conference.

- The NCAFC, NC Department of Insurance and Cape Fear Community College hosted the annual Fire Prevention school at Carolina Beach March 18 – 22, 2024. Over 150 students participated in the course, thanks to all departments who sent someone.
- Beginning in June of this year (2024) the NC Association of Fire Chiefs will no longer keep beneficiary forms on file for the Accidental Death and Dismemberment Policy. These beneficiary forms should remain on file at your respective departments along with other policy information. The preferred form has been emailed out to all members. If you have any questions or concerns, please email the NCAFC Executive Director.
- We continue to partner with the North Carolina State Firefighters Association on legislative issues that influence the North Carolina Fire Services and look forward to helping support the North Carolina legislative actions. Legislative day is scheduled for May 15, 2025.
- The Board of Directors of the NC Association of Fire Chiefs would like to encourage all North Carolina Fire/Rescue Departments to closely monitor and comment on the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) proposed new safety and health standards, titled “Emergency Response,” to replace the existing “Fire Brigades Standard” 1910.156. This would now cover Emergency Response Organizations (ERO’s), which are fire departments. The Notice of Proposed Rulemaking for the “Emergency Response Standard” was **published in the Federal Register** on February 5, with the public comment period open until May 6. In some states public agencies are not required to meet this standard, but in NC, since we are an OSHA state, public agencies are not exempt.
- The NCAFC will host a Human Resources for non-profits workshop on April 30, 2024, in conjunction with the Piedmont Triad Regional Council at their Kernersville NC Campus. Limited seats are still available, Contact the NCAFC Executive Director for any details.

MEMORANDUM

To: North Carolina Fire Rescue Commission

From: John Rodney “J.R.” Griffin II, Emergency Services Branch Manager
NC Division of Emergency Management

Date: April 8, 2024

Subject: NC Division of Emergency Management Updates

Operations Section Updates

- Spend down season. Wrapping up purchases for the fiscal year.
- Tier II RY23 saw a 4% increase in facility reporting, even though some battery storage thresholds were no longer required to be reported.
- Tier II grants are approved and ready to roll out to the counties.
- SERC Resolutions moving through an update.
- NCRRT Contract is in the renewal process.
- NCRRT & USAR Administrative Rules are active.
- NCHART has two new helicopter platforms.
- LE request from the RNC.
- Assisting with updating the Sheltering Plan.
- Several vacancies.
- Western wildfire reimbursement process is underway.

Upcoming Trainings

Eastern Branch Training Week

- May 13 - 17

Boat Operator Training

- April 7 – 11
- April 28 - May 2
- May 19 – 23

NCHART Training

- April 24 – 25
- May 15 – 16
- June 12 – 13

OEMS Exercise

- May 21 – 23

Public Health Exercise

- May 22

Upcoming Meetings

Hazmat Sub-Committee

- April 17 @ 1300

USAR TAG

- April 18 @ 0830

NCRRT TAC

- April 18 @ 1030

SRC

- April 18 @ 1300 (*virtual only*)

SERC

- April 19 @ *Cancelled*