

Board of County Commissioners

Agenda Request

Date of Meeting: May 17, 2010

Date Submitted: April 30, 2010

To: Honorable Chairman and Members of the Board

From: Benjamin H. Pingree, County Administrator
G. Scott McDermid, Director, Department of Public Safety
Louis Lamarche, Chief, Division of Fire Rescue

Subject: Request Board Consideration and Approval of the Proposed Corrective Action Plan and Authorization to Submit to the State Fire Marshall's Office

Statement of Issues:

This agenda item requests Board consideration and approval of the Proposed Corrective Action Plan and authorization to submit the proposed Corrective Action Plan to the State of Florida's Department of Financial Services, Division of the State Fire Marshall, Bureau of Fire Standards and Training, Safety Program, in official response to the recommendations provided in the Richard Rhea Line of Duty Death Investigation Report of February 2010.

Background:

On January 11, 2010, the Board of County Commissioners directed staff to invite the State of Florida, Department of Financial Services, Division of State Fire Marshall, Bureau of Fire Standards and Training to present on standards and requirements of firefighters in the State of Florida in a publicly advertised Board Workshop.

On February 4, 2010 the Board of County Commissioners held a workshop with the State of Florida's Department of Financial Services, Division of the State Fire Marshall, Bureau of Fire Standards and Training, Safety Program. Within the workshop the Fire Marshall explained the need for Wakulla County to begin its system development toward compliance with the State Firefighting established Laws.

On February 5, 2010 the Division of the State Fire Marshall, Bureau of Fire Standards and Training Safety Office issued a final review report regarding the Richard Rhea Line of Duty Death Incident that includes recommendations for improvement within our Fire System (Attachment #1).

On March 1, 2010, the Board ratified discussions from the February 4, 2010 Workshop. Staff was directed to work in cooperation with the Volunteer Fire Departments to develop a Corrective Action Plan to establish the mechanism and plan for becoming compliant.

Throughout March and April the County Attorney and staff held numerous discussions with the State Fire Marshall's Office to determine the exact requirements that are immediately applicable to

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Volunteer Firefighters, especially focusing on the difference in requirements between Volunteer and Career Firefighters. As an example, the High School Diploma / GED requirement was at the forefront of the discussions. During these discussions it was confirmed that the High School / GED requirement does not apply to Volunteer Firefighters, it only applies to seeking Certification as Career Firefighters. Subsequent to these discussions, the State Fire Marshall developed a Fire Department Self Evaluation Checklist to assist Departments in establishing their compliance with the State's Firefighting Standards. The checklist was provided to staff by the State Fire Marshall on March 18, 2010, upon receipt of the checklist each VFD began evaluating their Departments for compliance (Attachment #2).

On April 13, 2010, staff and the Volunteer Fire Department Members participated in a meeting to discuss and develop the Proposed Corrective Action Plan (Attachment #3).

Analysis:

In formal response to the recommendations made in the Line of Duty Death Safety Report, a Corrective Action Plan was developed by a strong group of Volunteer Fire Department Leadership and Department of Public Safety staff. The Corrective Action Plan is formulated to establish a measurable action plan to establish and mark a path towards improving the Department's response to emergency incidents. The Corrective Action Plan also establishes mechanisms through which we can develop continuous quality improvement, namely a County-Wide Safety Committee. The Safety Committee permits our Department to plan beyond the immediate remedies established to improve the system response to power line incidents, but to also improve the Department's capability to recruit, train, educate, and continually improve responding personnel, in addition to the system in which they operate.

The Corrective Action Plan development was a cooperative activity shared by County staff and Volunteer participation. The majority of the items within the Corrective Action Plan has either been implemented or are currently being implemented County-wide. While immediate compliance with Fire Suppression Personnel Statutes was paramount, there are many processes and policies being developed to assure continued development of a more clearly compliant Fire Suppression System Model.

Within the Rhea Line of Duty Death Investigation Report, there were two areas of improvement identified by the Safety Program Manager. The two items recommended by the State Fire Marshall's Agent are as follows:

1. An Assessment of Wakulla County Fire Rescue (WCFR) and its Volunteer Companies for compliance with Firefighter Employment Standards as outlined in 69A-62, F.A.C. should be done in the next two months.

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- Throughout March and April staff and the County Attorney held numerous discussions with the State Fire Marshall's Office to clearly delineate the requirements that are applicable to Volunteer Firefighters, specifically focusing on the difference in requirements between Volunteer and Career Firefighters. As an example, the High School Diploma / GED requirement was one of the items discussed. During these discussions it was determined that the High School / GED requirement does not apply to Volunteer Firefighters, it only applies to those seeking Certification as Career Firefighters (Firefighter 2).

Subsequent to these discussions, the State Fire Marshall developed a Fire Department Self Evaluation Checklist to assist Departments in establishing their compliance with the State's Firefighting Standards (Attachment #1). The checklist was provided to staff by the State Fire Marshall on March 18, 2010, upon receipt of the checklist each VFD began evaluating their Departments for compliance.

2. Personnel of WCFR, Wakulla County Sheriff's Office, Dispatch, and Wakulla EMS should attend training as soon as possible on the National Incident Management System and response to incidents involving downed power lines.
 - Staff has developed a strong professional rapport with the Sheriff's Office staff. Staff and the Sheriff's Office have been working together over the last three months to cooperatively develop a combined incident command capability. These developments have been effective in further developing cooperative scene operations, especially a renewed emphasis on responder safety.

This process has, in addition to the primary improvements, also provided a venue in which interpersonal and professional relationships are permitted to develop, galvanizing the response force within Wakulla County.

On April 24, 2010 the State Fire Marshall's representative inspected the Career Fire Division and the Volunteer Fire Departments in Crawfordville and Wakulla Station. The representative also met with the VFD Chiefs to develop a County-wide Safety Committee which is currently being developed in cooperation with all Volunteer Fire Departments. This Committee will have the charge of reviewing equipment, policies, procedures, guidelines, response efforts, personnel capabilities, and other issues regarding safety as they arise. The Training Model that is currently in development is as follows:

1. Increase the number of Certified Life Fire Instructors by sending staff to Live Fire Instructor Training in Central Florida during the Summer of 2010, permitting the Fire Rescue Division to wholly conduct Firefighter 1 training in-house.
2. Conduct ongoing 1st Responder and Firefighter 1 Training at no cost to the student.

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3. Research mechanisms by which the didactic online portion can be implemented as soon as permitted by the State Fire Marshall's Office.

Options:

1. Approve the Proposed Corrective Action Plan and Authorize staff to submit the Proposed Corrective Action Plan to the State Fire Marshall's Office.
2. Do not approve the Proposed Corrective Action Plan and do not authorize staff to submit the Proposed Corrective Action Plan to the State Fire Marshall's Office.
3. Board Direction.

Recommendation:

Option #1

Attachments:

1. Rhea Line of Duty Death Report
2. Checklist
3. Corrective Action Plan
4. Training Requirements for Volunteer Firefighters, State Fire Marshall's Office