



Iowa General Assembly

2006 Committee Briefings

Legislative Services Agency – Legal Services Division

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EMERGENCY SERVICES INTERIM STUDY COMMITTEE

Meeting Dates: [November 13, 2006](#) | [October 4, 2006](#)

Purpose. *This compilation of briefings on legislative interim committee meetings and other meetings and topics of interest to the Iowa General Assembly, written by the Legal Services Division staff of the nonpartisan Legislative Services Agency, describes committee activities or topics. The briefings were originally distributed in the Iowa Legislative Interim Calendar and Briefing. Official minutes, reports, and other detailed information concerning the committee or topic addressed by a briefing can be obtained from the committee's Internet page listed above, from the Iowa General Assembly's Internet page at <http://www.legis.state.ia.us>, or from the agency connected with the meeting or topic described.*

EMERGENCY SERVICES INTERIM STUDY COMMITTEE

November 13, 2006

Co-chairperson: Senator Tom Hancock

Co-chairperson: Senator Pat Ward

Co-chairperson: Representative Upmeyer

Overview. In this second meeting of the Emergency Services Interim Study Committee, the Committee received testimony from various persons concerning training and delivery of fire and emergency medical services (EMS), state homeland security as related to local emergency responders, and colocation of the Fire Service Training Bureau (FSTB) and the Iowa Law Enforcement Academy. The Committee also received testimony regarding the 2-1-1 call system in Iowa. County and city representatives were given the opportunity to testify as well. The later part of the meeting was devoted to Committee discussion.

Mr. Jim Kenkel, State Fire Marshal. Mr. Kenkel gave an overview of the work performed by the State Fire Marshal's Office, including that of the Bureau of Inspections and the Bureau of Arson and Explosives. Lack of funds and staff pose problems in performing required inspections, including school building inspections. No moneys are available to pay overtime for arson cases. Mr. Kenkel also relayed that the Building Code Bureau is in need of additional staff to timely complete construction plan reviews. The Building Code Bureau recently adopted the International Building Code. Mr. Kenkel made several recommendations to the Committee as follows:

- Provide for a fire prevention coordinator to conduct fire prevention activities across the state.
- Add staff to the State Fire Marshal's Office, including FSTB.
- Enact laws to require sprinkler systems in residential homes.
- Implement county-wide fire departments.
- Determine a central location for FSTB.

Mr. Randy Novak, Bureau Chief, FSTB. Mr. Novak shared with the Committee the mission and functions of FSTB to provide fire service training. The FSTB offers professional certification programs, training materials, and grant writing assistance. Mr. Novak provided information regarding the increased participation in the training classes and programs. To meet future fire training needs, Mr. Novak recommended to the Committee the following:

- Add two new positions to FSTB; a curriculum developer and another field programs coordinator are needed.
- Fund regional emergency response training centers.
- Fund a centralized fire service training facility.
- Fund additional mobile training units. Even with regional centers, the mobile training units will be needed to take training to the local level.

Ms. Mary Jones and Mr. Kirk Schmitt, Department of Public Health, Division of Acute Disease Prevention and Emergency Response, Bureau of Emergency Medical Services. Ms. Jones and Mr. Schmitt discussed the role and responsibility of the Bureau of Emergency Medical Services, including the training and certification for EMS providers. Mr. Schmitt recommended the following:

- Require that all counties provide EMS.
- Establish a user fee for each patient transport.
- Employ a full-time state EMS medical director.
- Require electronic submission for EMS data.
- Require criminal background checks for all EMS providers.

Ms. Jennifer Kammeyer, United Way of North Central Iowa. Ms. Kammeyer presented information on the 2-1-1 calling system. People can access health and human services information, including medical resources, employment support, and family support, by calling "2-1-1". Ms. Kammeyer provided state call center information. All 99 counties in Iowa are covered by the 2-1-1 system.

Ms. Penny Westfall, Iowa Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA). Ms. Westfall provided the Committee information regarding ILEA facilities, training programs and costs, and the resulting benefit of quality training in Iowa. In other states, law enforcement has colocated with other emergency responders with mixed results. Ms. Westfall recommended that a study be authorized, like the study that was done for the crime laboratory, to consider colocation or regionalization of ILEA with other state entities.

Mr. David Miller, Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management Division. Mr. Miller provided an overview of the structure and activities performed by the Division, including training and disaster exercise activities. Mr. Miller explained that the Division has specialized teams including Urban Search & Rescue (US&R) and Special Weapons & Tactics (SWAT). Mr. Miller led the Committee through the several steps of a state disaster response. He explained that when a disaster goes beyond what the local responders can do, state resources come into play. The role of emergency managers is to coordinate and facilitate local responders.

Mr. Miller described the funding for homeland security and local emergency management operations. Many local emergency management commissions need funding.

Also, the Committee discussed communications interoperability with Mr. Miller.

Ms. Susan Judkins and Ms. Lorelei Heisinger, Iowa League of Cities. Ms. Judkins and Ms. Heisinger gave the Committee an overview of Iowa's municipal fire and police retirement system, specifically the contributions made by cities, member-employees, and the state.

Mr. John Easter, Iowa State Association of Counties. Mr. Easter relayed to the Committee that the emergency management coordinators are overwhelmed by the increasing requirements of the position, e.g., homeland security and the lack of funding. Several of the emergency management coordinators intend to leave their posts in 2007.

Mr. Mike Wentzien, Iowa Association of County Supervisors. Mr. Wentzien acknowledged that emergency services are important to county supervisors, specifically retention and recruitment of fire and emergency medical service volunteers; incentives are needed.

Committee Discussion.

- The Committee instructed Legislative Services Agency staff to request approval for a third meeting day from the Legislative Council.
- The Committee passed a motion directing ILEA, FSTB, Department of Public Safety, Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management Division, Department of Public Defense, and Bureau of Emergency Medical Services, Iowa Department of Public Health, to consider the pros and cons, including financial implications and operational considerations, of colocating ILEA with FSTB and also, the pros and cons of colocating a regional training center for central Iowa with ILEA and FSTB.

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EMERGENCY SERVICES INTERIM STUDY COMMITTEE

October 4, 2006

Co-chairperson: Senator Tom Hancock

Co-chairperson: Senator Pat Ward

Co-chairperson: Representative Upmeyer

Overview. The Emergency Services Interim Study Committee received testimony from various persons concerned about the successful delivery of fire protection and emergency medical services throughout the state.

Iowa Firemen's Association. Mr. Mike McKinnon, Iowa Firemen's Association, shared the difficulties facing fire departments such as funding and fundraising in the face of rising costs, retention of personnel, and safety concerns. He reported that the state's volunteer firemen are older, the length of service is shorter, and volunteerism on the decline. Mr. McKinnon advocates that the General Assembly provide the following:

- A better funding system.

- A reinstatement of benefited fire districts.
- A pilot program that would provide for a county-wide fire chief and an assistant chief for each department, the sharing of equipment, and the pooling of financial resources.
- A fully funded State Fire Marshal's Office to enable state inspectors/investigators to timely secure a fire scene, thereby relieving the local fire department personnel.

Iowa Fire Chiefs' Association. Mr. Rick Claassen and Ms. Ellen Hagen, Iowa Fire Chiefs' Association, echoed the concerns of the Iowa Firemen's Association, requesting the following:

- A fully funded State Fire Marshal's Office; sometimes a local fire department has to wait two days before state inspectors/investigators arrive to secure the fire scene.
- Incentives for recruitment and retention of fire volunteers.
- A minimum township levy for fire protection services.

Iowa Association of Professional Fire Chiefs. Mr. Bob Platts, Iowa Association of Professional Fire Chiefs, also urged the following:

- A better funding system using a "public safety levy" or fire insurance tax.
- A fully-funded State Fire Marshal's Office, including the Fire Service Training Bureau (FSTB).
- Allow equal access to training dollars; don't limit the Volunteer Firefighters Training Fund to volunteers.
- Enact legislation to allow fire departments to organize by county.

Iowa Emergency Medical Services Association. Mr. Ric Jones, Iowa Emergency Medical Services Association, identified several issues for emergency medical services (EMS) in the state. Funding is certainly needed for EMS, but also for public safety as a whole, Mr. Jones identified three components of the public safety "triangle": law enforcement, fire protection, and emergency medical services. Mr. Jones urged the Committee to consider the following:

- Incentives for recruitment and retention of EMS volunteers.
- Access to training; time and money required for volunteers to train is an obstacle.
- Mandatory EMS and ambulance service; some townships do not provide EMS service.

Emergency Room Physicians. Mark Singsank, M.D., an emergency room physician, is a member of the National Association of EMS Physicians and has been actively involved in EMS in the state. Dr. Singsank testified to the lack of oversight and coordination over EMS across the state due to the fact that Iowa no longer has a State EMS Director. Lack of physician oversight is a huge problem. Dr. Singsank also testified to the need for a doctor-based EMS advisory council.

Fire Service and Emergency Response Council. Mr. Clint Petersen, State Fire Service and Emergency Response Council, expressed his gratitude for the General Assembly's legislation creating the regional emergency response training centers. Mr. Petersen explained that the council does not have its own agenda, but rather is a representative body that acts through the consensus of the membership. Mr. Petersen requested the Committee to give the council guidance. Mr. Petersen explained the role and activities of the FSTB, giving much praise to the FSTB's accomplishments though the FSTB is overburdened and understaffed. Mr. Petersen testified that a cost estimate study needs to be completed for the regional training facilities.

EMS Structure and Funding. Mr. George Oster, former director, Fire Service Extension, Iowa State University, presented legislative proposals to remedy the structural and financial problems with the state's emergency services system as follows:

- Allow the formation of "benefited emergency response districts".
- As supportive steps, complete the "Emergency Response Information System" (ERIS), a mapping tool that can be used to see boundaries to design the benefited districts.
- Coordinate through FSTB a statewide effort to educate communities regarding the benefits and means of reorganizing.

NE Iowa Training. Mr. Dan Neenan, Northeast Iowa Community College, described the process started in 1999 to build a regional emergency facility that culminated in the "Dubuque County Firefighters Association Regional Emergency Responder Training Facility", opened in August of this year. Mr. Neenan described the types of training that can be conducted in the new facility. EMS, fire, law enforcement, and public safety dispatchers can all train together. The facility was built with both private and public support. In addition, Northeast Iowa Community College offers courses in training for firefighting and EMS.

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