

BOARD OF FIREFIGHTING PERSONNEL STANDARDS AND EDUCATION

ELECTRONIC MEETING through Cisco Webex January 11, 2021 6:00 PM – Minutes

- A. Call to order and determination of quorum – 6:08 PM
Board Members Present
Eric Dreiman (Chair); Eric Gentry (Vice Chair); Rob Lund (Secretary); Joel Thacker (State Fire Marshal); M. Burke Jones; John Smith; Tim Smith; Tom Hanify; Clayton Kinder
NOTE: Due to the Board Members attending electronically all votes were conducted by roll call vote.
Board Members Absent Amy Biggs; Pedro Caceres
Staff Members Present
Alyssa Schroeder; Wade Walling; Elliot Anderson; Kristi Shute; Zach Westfall; Regine Johnson; Elizabeth Westfall; Jim Campbell
- B. Consideration and approval of November 16, 2020 Meeting Minutes
Motion to confirm minutes 1st by Rob Lund, 2nd by John Smith, all other voting members voted to approve the November meeting minutes. Motion carries
- C. State Fire Marshal Report – Joel Thacker
- Awareness of the current state of events in the United States
 - IDHS staff helping with logistics and vaccines around the state. Vaccines are in the first rounds that means all Firefighters are eligible to get vaccinated. Visit ourshot.in.gov to see vaccination locations, secure an appointment, and see how many vaccines have been given. Be aware of members of your community who are eligible to get vaccinated but cannot get to a site. 211 can help but there is currently a two (2) hour phone wait. Please reach out to friends and family and offer hep if you can.
- D. Academy Director – Wade Walling
- Rhett Martin – Due to a conviction his Acadis account has been flagged and locked. If he is ever released, we will request the Board take action.
 - Fire Chiefs Academy Training program update – We have a list of subject matter experts to teach courses in this training. Training will provide a starting point for new Fire Chiefs and Fire Chiefs that are furthering their careers. The Beta course is scheduled for April 5th – April 9th of 2021.
 - Intermittent Fire Instructors for the Academy update – 200 contractors will be moved from our vendor and made state employees to save money.
 - IDEM has added the Fire and Public Safety Director to the notification list for Live Fire Training Burn permits. We have selected 20 Live Fire instructors to train to build the skills necessary to assist in making sure all 1403 standards all being followed.

- 75 Fire Surface Trainings were conducted during COVID-19. We plan to have more trainings in the future.
- Phil Mellencamp has resigned from the Academy and William Huffer is currently helping IHD with vaccines. Please be patient as the Academy is short staffed right now.

E. Old Business –

1. Rule re-write update – Elliot Anderson

- A draft of the revised rule re-write will be available to the Board at the April meeting.

F. New Business –

1. Investigation of Vehicle Rescue Technician course (VRT0002) and recommendation for disciplinary action.

Motion to table until April 1st by Tom Hanify, 2nd by Eric Gentry, Rob Lund abstained from voting, all other voting members voted to table. *Motion carries.*

Wade Walling – Gave a summary of the report that cheating had occurred during a written exam. Elizabeth Westfall – Gave a summary of how the investigation was conducted and the statements different individuals involved had given.

Eric Gentry – Asked for clarification on how the questions for the written exam were “scrubbed”?

Elizabeth Westfall – Explained that the questions that were copied were removed from the bank of questions used for this exam. These questions were replaced with approved back up questions. Eric Gentry – Stated that with the disciplinary action recommendation it could possibly take the individuals ten (10) years to complete.

Wade Walling – Stated with the number of courses in district seven (7) this should not take longer than a year.

Rob Lund – How long would the probation period be on top of the twelve (12) classes?

Wade Walling - one year or until they complete the twelve (12) classes.

Rob Lund – What if they are not district instructors? Will this cause an issue with them assisting with instructing to get the mentored classes done.

Wade Walling – No, as long as they are being mentored by another Instructor 2/3 and the form has been completed.

Rob Lund – Can they be mentored by someone in their district, or does it have to be someone from outside their district?

Wade Walling – As long as it is not considered nepotism. They also cannot mentor each other. We are not asking the Board to remove their Instructor I so they can still teach.

Rob Lund – Is there a reason why both individuals are not being given the same punishment?

Wade Walling – We recommended the Instructor be given 6 months since he was not involved in the cheating. He was not paying attention to what was going on.

Eric Drieman – My question is why staff did not include Bryan Husband and Doug Curry. In the statements made by Mr. Gobel both were aware that this had taken place and

neither made it aware that this was not allowed. Also, both Shawn Husband and Doug Curry asked for copies of Mr. Gobel's notes.

Zach Westfall – Doug Curry did notify me the same evening he received a copy of the notes. I cannot confirm or deny if Shawn Husband and Doug Curry asked for copies of Mr. Gobel's notes.

Eric Drieman – Would like to hear from the other parties involved. I would recommend another investigation be done to include them.

Wade Walling – I did not include Mr. Curry because he reported this the same day it happened. My understanding was he requested the notes to report it to us.

Eric Drieman – Based on the quote from the statement provided by Mr. Gobel.

Tim Smith – Clarification on why staff recommended mentoring as punishment. How does mentoring fix cheating.

Wade Walling – We are also recommending that Mr. Gobel not receive his Vehicle Rescue Operations and Technician certification. He would also not be able to test for these certifications for one (1) year. Mentoring was recommended since both individuals are Instructor 2/3, they should be aware of the rules.

Tim Smith – I am still not sure how mentoring could fix cheating.

Elizabeth Westfall – I believe mentoring was recommended as a path to redemption.

Wade Walling – We the Academy wanted to show that we are willing to work with individuals even though we do not condone cheating.

Rob Lund – Will his skills still be good, or will they expire?

Wade Walling – No, he would need to complete everything that has to do with this course again.

M. Burke Jones – Instructors are our number one source of integrity out in the field. They can be the ones that make the difference in line of duty deaths. Instructors need to make sure individuals are training like their life depends on it. These two individuals let the Board, the State, and the class down when they did this.

Eric Gentry – Mr. Drieman, have we ever not given a punishment as the Board to someone who has not upheld the Board rules? I do not see this as a punishment.

Eric Drieman – In my tenure I cannot remember where we have not. I can remember incidents that are parallel to this we have suspended the individuals Instructor certifications. I am concerned with the lack of inclusion of Mr. Curry. Based on the documentation included for us to review Mr. Curry asked for the notes.

Wade Walling – My intentions tonight is not to save Mr. Curry, when we first conducted the investigation, we looked at it as Mr. Curry was bringing the information to our attention. I can see where Mr. Curry could have more involvement. I take the blame as not to have Mr. Curry at the meeting tonight.

Eric Drieman – I would ask that a farther investigation be conducted as to Mr. Curry's involvement in this matter. At least have him attend the next meeting so he can clarify his involvement.

John Smith – From the information provided in this report I believe these individuals knew what they were doing, and they choose to do it anyway. I believe redemption is not what they need it is punishment.

Joel Thacker – It is clear we need to work on discipline for when you violate the board rules no matter the title you hold. This is an honorable profession and people trust us and we in turn must extend trust to our Instructors, Proctors, and Lead Evaluators. When you cut corners, you cheat everyone. We need to send a clear message that this is unacceptable.

Tom Hanify – I agree with everybody, but we need to approach this cautiously but not leniently. We need to clearly establish the standards. I do not want these individuals to pay for the last twenty (20) years for the lack of clear definition. Changing behavior and setting standards is what we need to do here.

Elizabeth Westfall – I believe we have reached our duration into the investigation into Mr. Husband and Mr. Gobel's involvement. I would need additional time to conduct an investigation into Mr. Curry.

Walt Gobel – Apologized for the situation. He did admit to taking the notes during his test attempt. Mr. Gobel explained how he was advised to take notes because this was the first time this test would be given by the Instructor for the class. This statement was made in front of the whole class. He stated the question was brought up if note taking was allowed and was advised it was ok that it could be used to challenge his score if he were to fail. The notes were taken because there had been problems with the class meeting. His notes were to help his classmates' study. Mr. Gobel and Mr. Curry had a conversation about Mr. Gobel taking the test on a different night. Mr. Curry asked if Mr. Gobel would be open to sharing notes with classmates and that if Mr. Gobel had any he could send them to him and he would forward them on to the other students. The reason he took the test on a different date than the other students is because he would not be available for the rescheduled test date. After he took the notes Shawn Husband asked him to give him what he had. Looking back, he isn't sure if Mr. Husband meant that the topic of the questions is what he wanted notes on. Mr. Gobel stated his handwriting is not the best and that is why he typed his notes out. When he went to email the document, he inadvertently included Bryan Husband as a recipient. After he sent the email, he called Mr. Curry. Mr. Curry stated that he should not be sending him things like that, that it could cost him his Instructor certification. Mr. Curry stated he would delete the email and it would end there. He apologized for sending the email and thought it was over after that conversation. Then he was contacted by the state about the investigation. He fully admits that he was wrong for taking the notes and sharing them. He did not fully think about how the actions he had taken could have this outcome. He understands he has let everyone down. He really likes being an Instructor and understands that his actions will cause a disciplinary action.

Eric Gentry – Asked for clarification about being told he could write the questions down after the test. Did the Instructor make this statement?

Walt Gobel – Yes, he even asked if that was allowed.

Eric Gentry – Have you ever been told to do this for any other test? Walt Gobel – Never, I have never seen anyone take notes during a test.

Eric Gentry – If you were in our position how would you handle this?

Walt Gobel – Maybe probation at the minimal. Suspension of my Instructor certification and mentorship of any course I would like to teach in the future.

Joel Thacker – Thank you for coming in front of us to make a statement it takes a lot of courage to do this.

Wade Walling – we do advise Instructor to inform their students to write down as much of a question that they feel should not be included on a test. This way we can review the question. This is to be done after the test not during,

Walt Gobel – Would also like to state that Shawn Husband did not know what he was on his notes. He feels that Shawn Husband trusted him to do the right thing and he betrayed his trust. Mr. Gobel offered to give up his Instructor certification if need be, but Shawn Husband had no involvement in this. He stated that he feels bad for the negative stain being put on Shawn Husband for Mr. Gobel's actions.

Eric Gentry – withdrew his original motion to approve the State's recommendation.

Wade Walling – Would the "table" motion allow Shawn Husband and Walt Gobel to continue to Instructor courses until a decision is made at the next meeting?

Eric Drieman – Yes, Mr. Husband and Mr. Gobel can continue to Instructor until then.

*This item has been tabled until the next meeting.

2. Ice Rescuer-Operations and Ice Rescuer-Technician certifications – District 1,
Michael Parks

- a. Request for approval of Ice Rescuer-Operations and Ice Rescuer-Technician training and education program pursuant to IC 22-14-2-7(c)(1) and Emergency Rule 19-180(E).
- b. Request for issuance of Ice Rescuer-Operations and Ice Rescuer-Technician certifications pursuant to IC 22-14-2-7(c)(5), 655 IAC 1-1-5.1(a)(2), and Emergency Rule 19-180(E).

Motion to approve 1st by M. Burke Jones, 2nd by John Smith, 1 member voted nay all other voting members voted to approve. Motion carries.

Elliot Anderson – stated that there was some decision as to if this could be treated as a variance.

Elliot cited that sections under the IAC rules for this standard.

Eric Gentry – We do not currently have a curriculum or cognitive test developed for this program. I thought this would be viewed as a variance.

Elliot Anderson – In this case the Board is being asked to certify a program to the standard.

Zach Westfall – After viewing the documents submitted by Michael Parks. The students did complete everything required in the standard.

John Smith – Are we granting a variance or are we approving what has already been

done? Elliot Anderson – it is my recommendation that the Board certifying the program that has been done.

John Smith – Do you have all the information to know if the program completed

what was required in the standard.

Wade Walling – I believe we could use most of the information in the program Michael Parks created to a curriculum and cognitive test.

Elizabeth Westfall – How would the Board like us to handle this in the future? So that no one attempts to earn certification this way going forward.

Eric Drieman – I have concerns with the course syllabus. Since simulation is not allowed how were the skills conducted without any ice? Also, in the past Beta testing courses were brought to the Board prior to the classes being conducted. I do not recall this being done. There also is not a reference to a cognitive exam how were students evaluated on proficiency?

Michael Parks – We did not take this to the Board as a beta course because our understanding was that these certifications would be issued through a variance based on the emergency rules that were passed in December. The skills for this course cannot be done on solid ice because you cannot practice unstable ice rescues on solid ice. We have been doing this course for a few years. We were happy to see it offered as a certification in the December emergency rule update. A cognitive test was not done before there is not one available.

Wade Walling – We will work on making sure all Beta courses come to the Board prior to it starting.

Eric Drieman – that was my concern that we were not able to work out the problems with this course beforehand.

Joel Thacker – Is there any established curriculum out there?

Michael Parks – Not that we could find. We did not complete this course as a beta course. We may have got ahead of ourselves.

Eric Gentry – Can we extend the skills out 6 months so a cognitive test can be established?

Wade Walling – we are currently understaffed and already have several programs being worked on.

John Smith – Eric Gentry would you be willing to vote on a year extension?

Eric Gentry – I do not have a problem with a year.

Wade Walling – I think a year would fit better into a plan we could work with. There also is not a textbook we can use to create a cognitive test from.

Eric Drieman - asked did anyone else have any questions or concerns before the Board conducts a vote. * None were given.

Elliot Anderson – asked for clarification on if the Board was voting on accepting the course that was put on or if the Board was voting on both the course and the certifications being issued.

Eric Drieman – stated he read both items together so they could do one vote. He asked did the other Board members understand that was the case.

Tom Hanify – stated he understood that he was voting on both items together.

G. Open discussion, comments, questions?

H. Adjournment

Next meeting: April 12, 2021 Electronic Meeting