

State Emergency Response Commission
Friday, April 19, 2024
New Jersey Forensic Science Technology Center
1200 Negron Drive
Hamilton, NJ 08691

Minutes

The New Jersey State Emergency Response Commission (NJSERC) was called to order on Friday, April 19, 2024, at 10:00 AM EST, at the New Jersey Forensic Science Technology Center 1200 Negron Drive, Hamilton, NJ 08691. The meeting was held in accordance with Chapter 231 of the Public Laws Act of 1975. Notice of the meeting was sent to news media outlets via a press release on April 1, 2024, and posted on the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management (NJOEM) and NJSERC Websites (<https://nj.gov/njoem/serc/index.shtml>).

Call to Order by Director Van Fossen

The meeting commenced promptly at 10:00 AM EST.

Roll Call:

The Secretary called the roll.

Present in the room:

DR: Designated Representative; ADR: Alternate Designated Representative

- James Bruncati, ADR for Christine Guhl-Sadovy, President, New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (NJBPU);
- Robert Burd, DR for Francis O'Connor, Acting Commissioner, New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)
- Robert Van Fossen, DR for Commissioner Shawn LaTourette, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP), NJ SERC Co-Chairperson;
- Lieutenant Colonel Christopher DeMaise, DR for Colonel Patrick J. Callahan, State Director of Emergency Management and Superintendent, New Jersey State Police (NJSP), NJ SERC Co-Chairperson;
- Christina Brandt-Young, DR for Attorney General Matthew J. Platkin, Office Attorney General (OAG);
- Charles Ambio ADR for Laurie Doran, Director, New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness (NJOHSP).

Not present in the room:

- No SERC Member present for New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (NJDCA)
- No SERC Member present for New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH)
- No SERC Member present for New Jersey Department of Military and Veteran Affairs

***[Note: 6 of the 9 voting members were present in the room for a quorum]**

Members of the Public in Attendance:

Please refer to sign-in sheets on file

SERC Member Roll Call Confirms Quorum (As listed above)

Quorum confirmed by Director Van Fossen.

Consideration of Minutes of October 27, 2023

Consideration of minutes from the last meeting were provided to SERC in advance of this meeting on April 1, 2024.

- Director Van Fossen inquired as to whether there were any changes or questions regarding these notes.
- Hearing none, Director Van Fossen asked for a motion to approve minutes.
 - Motion – Christina Brandt-Young, OAG
 - Second – Charles Ambio, NJOHSP
 - In favor – All
 - Opposed – None
 - Motion carried unanimously
- Six (6) members of the SERC approved the minutes, with none opposed.

Co-Chair Reports:

Director Van Fossen, NJ Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) Emergency Management (EM) Program indicated that the SERC has been very active over the last 6 months.

- Members of the SERC worked with USEPA and their contractors to conduct three EPCRA Tabletop Exercises in Burlington, Middlesex, and Gloucester counties. Josh Matorin from NJOEM Training and Exercise Unit will provide a briefing. The SERC will coordinate with three additional counties to establish the next round of tabletops to exercise their Off-site ERPs.
- NJDEP has made modifications to the State’s existing Right-to-Know Portal platform for EPCRA facilities which allows users to export customized reports regarding the 302 ERP requirements. Work will continue with NJDOH over the next few months to modify their database.
- The SERC co-chairs and team will be presenting at this year’s NJEPA conference in Atlantic City. Discussion will include the challenges and successes of establishing county-based LEPCs.

Lieutenant Colonel DeMaise commented on the remarkable progress of the SERC during the prior year.

- We have continued to make remarkable progress in supporting planning efforts at the county level. Of the 18 SERC-approved districts, 16 have held their first LEPC meeting and approved the Off-site Emergency Response Plan.
- Our designated districts have continued to take the necessary steps toward meeting their responsibilities of holding annual meetings and exercises. Through this process, they further build crucial relationships with public agencies, EPCRA facilities, and the general public.
- NJOEM continues outreach to local OEMs about SERC activities and to educate them about Executive Order 284.

- Contractors continue to finalize FAQs and a job tool to assist LEPCs with the planning process and maintenance of their Emergency Response Plans going forward.
- The contractors hired by the USEPA will be developing a set of exercise materials based upon the prior three county exercises. The NJSERC will make the materials available as soon as we receive them.

There were no initial questions from the other SERC members after the completion of the co-chair report.

Presentation:

Director Van Fossen introduced Mitzi Kaiura and Chris Mechan from NJDEP who presented on the Right-to-Know Database updates. These updates will increase the efficiency of the LEPCs to identify EPCRA facilities.

Old Business:

1. Report from Planning Working Group (PWG) – Captain James Dunham, Emergency Response Bureau (*See Notes*)
2. Report from Training Working Group (TWG) – Joshua Matorin, Training and Exercise Unit Head, NJOEM (*See Notes*)

New Business:

- Lieutenant Colonel DeMaise – Tasking for the Planning Working Group (to report back at the October 25, 2024 meeting)
 - Continue working with the newly created districts to ensure LEPC and off-site ERPs are approved within 180 days of being designated a district
 - Continue to work with DEP and DOH on the Community Right-to-Know database functionality
 - Finalize and publish FAQs and other job tools for the LEPCs to assist with plans and planning.
 - Finalize development of LEPC survey and create compliance tracking dashboard.
 - Provide assistance and guidance to any existing or new planning districts for compliance purposes.
- Director Van Fossen – Tasking for the Training Working Group (to report back at the October 25, 2024 meeting)
 - Coordinate with USEPA to identify three additional counties for the next series of EPCRA Tabletop Exercises that assess their Off-site ERPs.
 - Continue to deliver training to emergency managers that includes EPCRA requirements.
 - Approach League of Municipalities (LOM) for opportunity to deliver an EPCRA presentation/training at one of their league meetings.

None of the SERC members had any additional comments/questions for new business.

Items Scheduled for Voting:

1. Approval of county-based Emergency Planning Districts

Lieutenant Colonel DeMaise discussed the approval process for the county-based emergency planning districts which has been done in collaboration with county and local stakeholders. He noted that the full text resolution would be read for each county followed by a request to the SERC to make a motion to approve the three (3) counties ready to be designated as emergency planning districts:

- Essex County – with the exception of the City of Newark
- Passaic County – with the exception of the City of Clifton
- Bergen County

An opportunity for open discussion and debate was provided to the SERC members; no further questions or comments were made. Accordingly, the SERC proceeded with the voting.

Vote:

1. County-based Emergency Planning Districts

Lieutenant Colonel DeMaise read the full text resolution for Essex County with the exception of the City of Newark.

- ESSEX COUNTY – WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE CITY OF NEWARK
 - Motion – Robert Burd, NJDOT
 - Second – Chrstina Brandt-Young, OAG
 - In favor – All
 - Opposed – None
 - Motion carried unanimously

Lieutenant Colonel DeMaise read the full text resolution for Passaic County with the exception of the City of Clifton.

- PASSAIC COUNTY – WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE CITY OF CLIFTON
 - Motion – Charles Ambio, NJOHSP
 - Second – Chrstina Brandt-Young, OAG
 - In favor – All
 - Opposed – None
 - Motion carried unanimously

Lieutenant Colonel DeMaise read the full text resolution for Bergen County.

- BERGEN COUNTY
 - Motion – Robert Van Fossen, NJDEP
 - Second – Chrstina Brandt-Young, OAG
 - In favor – All
 - Opposed – None
 - Motion carried unanimously

Public Comment:

None.

Next Meeting:

The SERC meeting is scheduled Friday, October 25, 2024, 10 AM EST, at New Jersey Forensic Technology Center, 1200 Negron Drive, Hamilton, NJ 08691.

Adjournment:

- Robert Van Fossen requested a motion for Adjournment
 - Motion – Charles Ambio, NJOHSP
 - Second – Chrstina Brandt-Young, OAG
 - In favor – All
 - Opposed – None
 - Motion carried unanimously

The meeting was adjourned at 10:45 AM EST.

Respectfully submitted,
Alex Ruffalo
Acting Recording Secretary