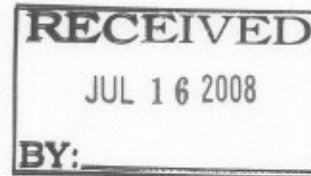




WISCONSIN STATE REPRESENTATIVE  
**Jennifer Shilling**  
95TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

July 15, 2008

Senator Bob Jauch  
State Capitol  
Room 118 South



HAND DELIVERED

Dear Senator Jauch:

I would like to take this opportunity to share a matter of concern with you that has come to my attention as a result of the recent flooding in Wisconsin and ask that the Legislative Council Special Committee on Wisconsin Emergency Management and Continuity of Government to address this issue.

I have been contacted by the City of La Crosse Fire Chief Gregg Cleveland who expressed frustration with the lack of assistance his department was allowed to provide to victims of severe flooding in August 2007 and June 2008. As a member of Wisconsin Heavy Task Force 2, the La Crosse Fire Department has undergone unique and intensive rescue training and is equipped to respond to a wide range of hazardous situations.

However, as a result of compensation and liability issues that have yet to be resolved with the State of Wisconsin, these emergency responders have been unable to provide this specialized assistance. Wisconsin's Heavy Rescue Task Force units have been engaged in discussions with the state regarding these issues, but have seen little progress.

I have included a copy of the letter from the La Crosse Fire Department for your information, and respectfully request that the Special Committee on Wisconsin Emergency Management and Continuity of Government to examine this problem and address the concerns of liability coverage and compensation. These Heavy Rescue Task Force units are an invaluable state asset in times of need, and it is disappointing that we have left these dedicated emergency responders on the sidelines during severe natural disasters.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter. If I can be of further help in resolving these issues, please do not hesitate to contact me personally.

Sincerely,

Jennifer K. Shilling  
State Representative  
95<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

ENCLOSURE

JKS:amp





Office of the Fire Chief Gregg A. Cleveland

## La Crosse Fire Department

726 5<sup>th</sup> Ave South, La Crosse, WI 54601 ■ (608) 789-7260 Fax (608) 789-7276  
<http://www.cityoflacrosse.org> ClevelandG@cityoflacrosse.org



*Serving La Crosse and Southwestern Wisconsin Quality Emergency Services Since 1896*

June 30, 2008

Rep. Jennifer Schilling  
State Capitol  
P.O. Box 8953  
Madison, WI 53708

Dear Representative Schilling:

During the last year Western Wisconsin has received record rains and, in turn, record flooding that has caused millions of dollars in property loss as well as pain and suffering among our citizens. Wisconsin has used a variety of resources to deal with this emergency; however, there is one resource that has not been utilized.

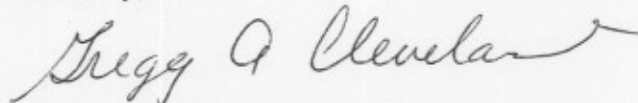
For the last several years Wisconsin has been developing Heavy Taskforces to deal with numerous hazards involving collapsed buildings as a result of explosions, dilapidation, tornados, landslides, and other natural and man-made disasters. These Taskforces consist of trained and equipped fire fighters that are capable of shoring partially collapsed buildings, conducting search and rescue operations, trench rescue and other specialized hazardous operations. These Taskforces have been developed through grant assistance from Federal Homeland Security and include fire departments such as La Crosse. Currently there are four (4) Heavy Taskforces in Wisconsin.

As fire chief it has been disappointing to have trained and equipped staff and witness the destruction from the heavy rains of August 2007 as well as the recent rains. In the La Crosse area alone the La Crosse Fire Department (as a member of Taskforce 2) could have provided assistance in the shoring of homes that were in danger as a result of mudslides and provided other technical assistance during these floods. However, because of compensation and liability issues that have not been resolved with the State of Wisconsin we could not provide this assistance. The Taskforces have been working with the State to resolve these issues for the past several years; however, we have not been successful. As a result of the lack of progress we have trained and equipped personnel who cannot provide this much needed assistance.

Resolving these issues should not be difficult. Wisconsin has successfully used a model to deal with these issues through the Regional Hazardous Materials Response Network. Wisconsin has already partnered with local fire departments to provide regional Hazardous Material Response. The La Crosse Fire Department provides regional Hazardous Materials response services to eight counties surrounding La Crosse.

It is my desire that you assist the Heavy Taskforces and address the primary issues of liability coverage and compensation while serving as a state asset. I would be more than happy to provide additional information or assistance in getting this matter resolved so that we can assist our fellow citizens in their time of need.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gregg A. Cleveland". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Gregg A. Cleveland, Fire Chief  
La Crosse Fire Department