

Testimony Notes For Fire Chief David Berousek

North Shore Fire Department

Special Committee on Emergency Management and Continuity of Government

October 1, 2008

- **Chairperson: Senator Jauch**
- **Vice Chair: Representative Ballweg**
- **Members: Representative Kerkman, Representative Schneider, Mr. Dalton, Dr. Hamedani, Chief Hartje, Mr. Kessler, Mr. Ritger, Sheriff Roland, Administrator Smith**

I would like to thank the Committee for allowing time for me to speak to you today. I am here today representing the Milwaukee County Association of Fire Chiefs and the North Shore Fire Department. The Milwaukee County Association of Fire Chiefs is composed of the Fire Chiefs of the all communities in Milwaukee County and the County Airport Fire Department. We collectively protect 921,654 residents of the State on a daily basis.

Over the past several years, State and Federal funding had been allocated for several fire departments in the State to develop Task Force Teams to respond to Urban Search and Rescue Type Incidents throughout the State. As I understand, the Teams were formed following the State's Regional Hazardous Materials Teams as a model. The regionalization of these teams made sense at the time and still makes sense today since these events are not, thankfully, daily occurrences, and the infrastructure to support these teams is quite large.

Throughout the past several years, Milwaukee County and the adjoining Counties have enjoyed the availability of Task Force 1 to our communities. Task Force 1 is managed by the City of Milwaukee Fire Department. We, the Fire Departments in Milwaukee County collectively knew that in the event of a Urban Search and Rescue type incident requiring a Type 1 Team, Task Force 1 was available to us.

While the funding to initiate these teams was provided by the State, of major concern to our Association today is the looming issue of sustainable funding for the Task Force Teams in the State of Wisconsin. My message today is similar to that of the one that was presented to this Committee by Fire Chief Cleveland, Division Fire Chief Martinez and Attorney Milsap at your September 10, 2008 Meeting; There is an urgent need to develop a sustainable funding program for the Task Force Teams in the State of Wisconsin. Local communities cannot self-fund these teams and be expected to provide service to surrounding communities and the State without an agreed upon sustainable funding source. To ensure

the funding source is standardized throughout the State, I would ask that language be placed in State Statute Chapter 166 which will provide annual sustainable funding from the State for the Task Force Teams. Additionally, to ensure the Task Force Teams are standardized throughout the entire State, I urge the Committee to consider language in the Statute and/or Administrative Rules that will define:

- Response standards
- Training standards
- Rules for reimbursement for responses from responsible parties
- Civil liability exemptions for teams, members and sponsoring agencies.

Providing urban search and rescue services is a labor intensive process that requires a significant investment in training and equipment. To sustain these services, a funding mechanism is needed to ensure these services are available to the entire State without requiring each provider to negotiate contracts with local municipalities.

I would like to thank you for your time and dedication to the State of Wisconsin and emergency management in our State.

DRAFT