

Title 35
Don Konkle
PA Fire and Emergency Services Institute
September 2, 2015

Good morning Chairman Vulakovich and members, thank you for the opportunity to testify.

My name is Donald Konkle. I am the Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Fire and Emergency Service Institute and the Law and Legislative Chair of the Fireman's Association of the State of Pennsylvania. I have been involved in the fire service since 1967, including 37 years as a member of the Harrisburg Bureau of Fire; 27 of those years as Chief and Emergency Management Coordinator. During my tenure I managed Harrisburg's response and recovery from numerous disasters.

Additionally, I served as Sponsoring Agency Chief of Pennsylvania Task Force 1; a FEMA certified Urban Search and Rescue Team. PA TF1 was deployed to the 9/11 World Trade Center attack, Hurricane Katrina, and many other federally declared disasters.

I also served as a team leader on the South Central Incident Management Team. The team and I were deployed to the Nickel Mines School shooting in Lancaster County.

This experience has given me an opportunity to both write plans and operate at various levels within the emergency management system.

My first concern is the current compensation available to injured or killed volunteers. Currently, Title 35 provides for the payment of \$20,000 if a volunteer is killed in the line of duty, a maximum of \$15,000 for the reimbursement of hospital and medical expenses and \$200 weekly if a volunteer is unable to work. Volunteer Emergency Management personnel should be covered by the workers compensation law.

Counties and municipalities within a 10 mile radius of a nuclear power plant are required to participate in a supervised and graded exercise every two years. Speaking from my experience this provides valuable experience for all members of the emergency management team. It should be mandatory for every municipality and county to participate in regularly supervised drills. This will be a large undertaking but if we are serious providing a quality effective system at all it is important to train and test it.

The law at both the federal and state level should allow block grant funding for some disasters. As an example large snow falls are sometimes declared presidential disasters. A formula should be developed that would pay local and state governments a predetermined amount for removing a given amount of snow from a mile of road. This would save hundreds of hours of labor and provide more timely payment. Of course, there should be an appeals process for unusual conditions such as repeated drifting.

Volunteers who are deployed for more than 5 days in a calendar year should be compensated for lost wages or their employer be given a tax credit if the volunteer continues to be paid while deployed.

Thank you I will be happy to answer questions.