



BERRIEN COUNTY FIRE CHIEF'S ASSOCIATION

BERRIEN COUNTY, MICHIGAN

Call to Order: By President Myers @ 0834hrs

Date: October 15th, 2025

Presentation(s):

- None

Old minutes:

- Minutes from September no available to approve.

Treasurer's Report:

- None

Bills:

- None

Communications:

- Get signed up for the Blue Card ICS training!!
- Facebook group – Berrien County Fire Department Info – has only 71 members. Get the word out!

New Chief/Visitor:

- Bryant Miller – Interim Fire Chief for Galien
- HIEBA rep

Medic 1/SMCAS:

- No business

Dispatch/911:

- HIEBA is more expensive than previously quoted. \$10,800 / yr (~\$400 / dept) due to the number of departments in Berrien County. 2026 (first year) would be free with first payment in 2027.
- Phone system switchover is coming soon.
- 800 MHz simulcast upgrade going through the final phases of testing.

Communication Committee:

- Did not meet

CAD Committee:

- **CAD Update** – County is moving forward with rolling out MOUs for each municipality. Initial cost per department will be approximately \$800 and then \$100 / device / yr.

SOG Committee:

- **Mutual Aid Agreement** – take to your municipal leaders for approval.
- **High-Incident Policy** – on agenda for November approval.

HazMat Committee:

- Draft plan was sent out. Need feedback.

BCFFA:

- **Next Meeting** – November 5th at Buchanan City. Plan is someone from the “K9 group” to present



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Training:

- **Training Update** – AAIR course happening this week. Could have used better fire participation. Dispatch was represented well.

Emergency Management/Sheriff's Office:

- **Crash Reconstruction** – Do NOT cleanup items at the scene prior to accident investigator (AI) approval. Thad Chartrand leads the AI team.

MABAS:

- HIEBA rep spoke on behalf of MI-MABAS. Working to develop guidelines on how to develop box cards. There is a standardized template available on the MI-MABAS website which all departments are asked to utilize.

Other Communications:

- Upcoming October 27th webinar on NERIS.
- October 25th Buchanan Twp fish fry.

Old Business:

- **Scene Watcher App:**
 - Laporte County 18 License Purchase
 - Met with Cass County.
 - Plans to attend Elkhart, Kalamazoo, St. Joe, Allegan, Marshall Counties as well
 - Have a Scene Watcher App Facebook Page
 - Current proposed changes are quoted at \$700 to implement
 - App is still being offered at \$5 / install
 - Log all app issues on this Google Doc:
<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1JaXuz6lbnKh1PRJuWx1sG0SMcrEs3uFTbMazjbbBd14/edit?usp=sharing>
- **Non-emergent Scheduled/Transfer/Wheelchair lift assists:**
 - Two meetings between Fire Chiefs and EMS representatives. Recommended that the departments experiencing issues with these types of calls sit down with the EMS agency individually.
 - Motion by Phelps, Second by Flick to rescind the letter sent to EMS agencies. All ayes.

New Business:

- **Bylaws**
 - Must be reviewed every 3 yrs – already time to review them.
 - Bring ideas to next meeting on changes to be considered.
- **Dispatch**
 - Updating LEIN agreements with agencies.

Next Meeting:

- Wednesday November 19th, 2025, 0830hrs, Lake Twp. FD

Adjourn:

- Motion to adjourn by: Chief Harper
- Seconded by: Chief Phelps
- None opposed. Meeting adjourned @ 0914

BERRIEN COUNTY INCIDENT COMMAND
STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINES (SOG)

<i>Topic:</i> High Incident/Storm Protocol	<i>Policy Number:</i>	<i>Risk/Frequency:</i> HR/LF
<i>Section:</i> FIRE OPERATIONS		<i>Distribution:</i> ALL
<i>Standard(s):</i>		<i>Issue Date:</i> 7/16/25
<i>Authority:</i> BERRIEN COUNTY FIRE CHIEF'S ASSOCIATION		<i>Revised Date:</i>

Purpose

To establish guidelines for handling high call volumes or all-call situations initiated by Berrien County Dispatch and Berrien County Fire Departments during high call volume, severe weather events, or other emergencies, ensuring efficient communication, accountability, and resource deployment.

Scope

This SOP applies to all Berrien County Fire Department personnel during the High Call Volume/Storm Protocol activation.

Procedure

1. Activation

- **Authority:** The on-duty supervisor for the Berrien County Dispatch Center shall have the authority to enact the High Call Volume/ Storm Protocol.
- **Triggering Events:**
 - High call volumes due to storms
 - Rollover calls from other counties' 911 centers trigger excess use of the 911 system.
 - Active Violence Incident
 - Other incidents as determined by Berrien County Dispatch.

2. Communication Protocols

- **Primary Talkgroups:**
 - **Proprietary Talkgroups:** All Fire Department units will operate on their assigned proprietary channels. Units only communicate with the predetermined communications representative, who will in turn be the only unit to talk to dispatch. The communications representative can be a firehouse, area

commander, chief officer, or designated by the fire department to be the communications hub during this emergency.

- **11F911:** Each department will maintain contact with Berrien County Dispatch. Radio traffic will be triaged and should be kept to a bare minimum whenever possible.
- **Fireground Talkgroups:** Reserved for structure fire or multi-agency events only!
- **Lines Down:** AEP should be contacted directly; do not ask dispatch for ETAs from utility companies. AEP Fire & Police Hotline is: 1-888-237-2221.

3. **Recommended Dispatch Operations at Fire Department:**

- Maintain a sterile environment in the radio room to ensure uninterrupted communication.
- Dispatch units to assigned locations, keeping accurate times and accountability for all department units.

4. **Emergency Traffic and Fireground Channels**

- **Emergency Traffic:**
 - Units may contact Berrien County Dispatch on 11F911 or the designated fire ground channel in emergencies.
- **Mayday Traffic**
 - In the event of a Mayday situation, if called out on proprietary talkgroup, the fire department shall immediately acknowledge Mayday and initiate Mayday procedures with Berrien County Dispatch.

5. **Termination of Storm Protocol**

- Once all calls are cleared and the all-call event is resolved, each fire department will:
 - Notify Berrien County Dispatch of the High Call Volume/ Storm Protocol termination.
 - Request department tones for any subsequent emergency requests.
 - Return operations to routine procedures.

FIREFIGHTER & OFFICER DEVELOPMENT!



AGGRESSIVE STREET SMART FIREFIGHTING - Strategy & Tactics Online

**8 TUESDAY'S 1800-2100 - JAN. 6 - FEB. 24, 2026
24 HOURS - \$300/DEPARTMENT**

TOPICS INCLUDE:

**Incident Command & Size-Up
MayDay Operations
Commercial Fire Tactics
Residential Fire Tactics
Fireground Expectations
Firefighter Health & Wellness
Firefighter Close Calls & LODD Case Studies
Fire Dynamics & Coordinated Ventilation**

**ALL TOPICS WILL BE DELIVERED ONLINE AND RECORDED
FOR THOSE WHO CAN'T ATTEND LIVE**

TO REGISTER: bkazmierzak@bhcity.us or 269-443-1027

IMPROVING FIRE SCENE EFFECTIVENESS



BENTON HARBOR DEPT. OF PUBLIC SAFETY

SPRING 2026



FIRE ACADEMY

MULTIPLE DAYS OF LIVE FIRE!

- TUESDAY FEBRUARY 24, 2026
THRU FRIDAY JUNE 12, 2026
 - TUESDAY & THURSDAY NIGHTS
1800-2200, SATURDAYS 0800-1700
 - CLASS INCLUDE TEXTBOOK & ONLINE CODE
- CLASS COST: \$650 (Cost could increase depending on county funding!)



CLASS LOCATION:
Benton Harbor Firehouse
200 E. Wall, Benton Harbor, 49022

QUESTIONS: Deputy Director Brian Kazmierzak
269-443-1027 or bkazmierzak@bhcity.us

ALL COURSE REGISTRATION WILL TAKE PLACE IN S.M.O.K.E.

HYBRID FIRE OFFICER 2

BCFFTC SMOKE FUNDED

MONDAY NIGHTS

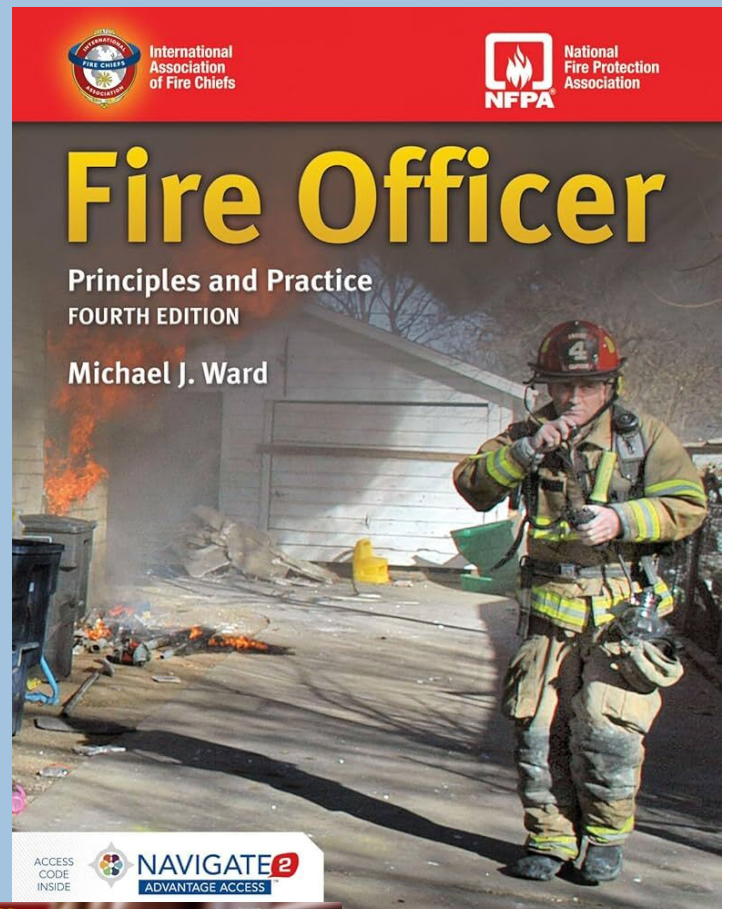
1800-2100

8 Monday Evenings

1/26/26 - 3/16/26

State Testing 3/30/26

REQUIRES BOOK & ONLINE
CODE!



Register in SMOKE

FOR QUESTIONS: bkazmierzak@bhcity.us

269-443-1027

BERRIEN COUNTY FIRE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION

MUTUAL AID AGREEMENT - 2025 UPDATE

Introduction

There are 27 municipal fire departments within Berrien County, Michigan, with adjoining geographical jurisdictions. Each department has a recognized jurisdictional service area and possesses the appropriate response equipment and personnel for its operations within its service areas to the extent possible. There is the potential for emergency or disaster situations that may exceed the response capability of any one department to successfully respond to and recover from these incidents. In such situations, that department may require the aid or assistance of other fire departments.

Purpose

The purpose of this Agreement is to outline the terms and conditions upon which Berrien County Fire Departments will request and render aid to each other with the overriding objectives being life safety, property protection, and environmental conservation.

Terms

Each fire department will perform emergency duties within their jurisdiction or assigned areas as their capabilities permit. An Incident Commander will be identified who will direct and conduct on-scene response and recovery activities. Whenever the Incident Commander deems an emergency or disaster is beyond their response capability and local resources are exhausted, or specialized assistance is required, he/she may request assistance from other fire departments. All the departments entering into this Agreement shall endeavor to render fire suppression or related emergency assistance upon request to all other departments that have likewise signed this Agreement. In general, requests for assistance and the responses to those requests shall be coordinated as follows:

All requests for assistance shall normally originate with the Incident Commander, or designee from the jurisdictional fire department responsible for the response and recovery activities to the incident. That request shall be submitted to the requesting department's Public Safety Access Point (PSAP) dispatch center. This PSAP, if necessary, shall relay the request to the PSAP dispatch center for the department whose assistance is being requested. The PSAP shall then relay the request to the specified department. If an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) has been established due to the nature of the emergency or disaster to assist with the coordination of the response and recovery activities, all requests for assistance will be forwarded to the Fire Services Chief located at that facility. The Incident Commander, or designee, would update the Fire Service Chief who would use this information to prioritize, dispatch, track, and request mobilization of resources as necessary to provide fire services to the affected areas and to accomplish assigned tasks.

The decision whether to respond to that request and if provided, the duration and nature of the assistance requested, shall be within the sole discretion of the responding/assisting department. Criteria used in the determination to respond include all the circumstances of the situation including the department's ability to properly respond to the request, and further, its ability to maintain a response capability for the safety of the residents of its jurisdictional service area.

The department requesting assistance and/or which has direct jurisdictional responsibility shall provide coordination at the scene and shall direct the activities of any responding departments. Because of the many tasks that may need to be accomplished the large area and multiple jurisdictions that may be involved in responding to and recovering from an emergency or disaster, extensive field force coordination and sharing of information is necessary among the responding departments. On-scene operations will be managed through the establishment of an Incident Command/Unified Command structure following the National Incident Management System/Incident Command System (NIMS/ICS) principles and protocols. An assisting department shall remain on scene only until the initial emergency or disaster situation is stabilized, and/or the department having direct jurisdictional responsibility arrives on the scene, relieves the assisting department of command and takes over the response and recovery operations of the incident.

These general guidelines are subject to change, considering the particular facts and circumstances of any given emergency or disaster situation.

No department, whether requesting or rendering assistance, shall be responsible for or assume any other department's costs or liabilities, including any third-party claims for personal injury or property damage. Each department shall be responsible for all its insurance coverage and claims, and this agreement shall in no way be viewed as an agreement to indemnify any other party for any claim, cost, loss, injury, or damage.

It is the responsibility of each fire department participating in this Agreement to train and maintain the capability of its staff using uniform training, qualification, and certification standards including the current NIMS standards and credentialing requirements. Departments shall follow Michigan Public Act 291 and MIOSHA Part 74. Departments shall train on and, when responding as part of this agreement, follow the Berrien County Fire Chiefs Association (BCFCA) Incident Command and Firefighter Mayday Communications Standard Operating Guidelines. Each department will maintain records of all resources used and costs incurred in response to an emergency or disaster situation, including costs of personnel, equipment, and supplies from mobilization to demobilization of the event.

Departments shall institute a standard helmet color system by January 1, 2026, in which Chief Officers wear white, Junior Fire Officers wear red, Firefighters wear black or yellow, and Cadets/EMS only members wear blue. All Non-Certified Members should be designated with a green helmet front piece.

All departments shall utilize the Passport Fireground Accountability System.

All departments should operate on the MPSCS 800 system for scene interoperability.

All departments shall supply the PSAP with Box Cards which have predetermined mutual aid assistance up to the 5th alarm level and are also used in the event of a Firefighter Mayday.

The minimum staffing for mutual aid responses is 2 certified firefighters per engine, ladder, or rescue, and 1 certified firefighter per tanker, grass rig, or utility vehicle.

This Agreement shall not supersede, amend, or replace any inter-department or other inter-municipal agreement, nor shall any collective bargaining or other agreement between a department and its unit of local government, and in all instances, this Agreement be subordinate to any such agreement, whether existing now or in the future. Further, this Agreement does not create a duty to respond to a request for

assistance but rather expresses the intention of each signatory to render such assistance if requested and if reasonable and possible. Each of the parties shall be provided a copy of this Agreement after its execution.

Any department or municipality entering into this Agreement may withdraw upon thirty (30) days written notice to all other parties.

Glossary of Terms

Assisting Agency - An agency or organization providing personnel, services, or other resources to the agency with direct responsibility for incident management.

Disaster - An occurrence or imminent threat of widespread or severe damage, injury, or loss of life or property resulting from a natural or human-related cause, including, but not limited to, fire, flood, snowstorm, ice storm, tornado, windstorm, wave action, oil spill, water contamination, utility failure, hazardous peacetime radiological incident, major transportation accident, hazardous materials incident, epidemic, air contamination, blight, drought, infestation, explosion, or hostile military or paramilitary action, or similar occurrences resulting from terrorist activities, riots, or civil disorders, as defined in 1976 PA 390, as amended.

Emergency - Any occasion or instance in which assistance is needed to supplement efforts to save lives, protect property and public health and safety, or lessen or avert the threat of a disaster or catastrophe.

Emergency Operations Center (EOC) - The site at which the coordination of information and resources to support incident management activities normally takes place. An EOC may be a temporary or permanent facility and may be organized by major functional disciplines (e.g., fire, law enforcement, medical services,) by jurisdiction (e.g., federal, state, regional, county, city, or tribal), or by some combination thereof.

Incident - An occurrence or event, natural or human-related, that requires an emergency response to protect life or property. Incidents can include major disasters, emergencies, terrorist attacks, terrorist threats, wildland fires, floods, hazardous materials spills, nuclear accidents, aircraft accidents, earthquakes, tornadoes, and other occurrences requiring an emergency response.

Incident Command System (ICS) - A standardized on-scene emergency management construct specifically designed to provide for the adoption of an integrated organizational structure that reflects the complexity and demands of single or multiple incidents, without being hindered by jurisdictional boundaries. ICS is the combination of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications operating with a common organizational structure, designed to aid in the management of resources during incidents. It is used for all kinds of emergencies and applies to small as well as large and complex incidents.

Incident Commander (IC) - The individual responsible for all incident activities, including the development of strategies and tactics and the ordering and release of resources. The IC has overall authority and responsibility for conducting incident operations and is responsible for the management of all incident operations at the incident site.

Jurisdiction - A range or sphere of authority. Public agencies have jurisdiction over an incident related to their legal responsibilities and authority. Jurisdictional authority at an incident can be political or geographical (e.g., city, county, tribal, state, or federal boundary lines) or functional (e.g., fire, law enforcement, public health).

Mobilization - The process and procedures used by all organizations (Federal, State, local, and tribal) for activating, assembling, and transporting all resources that have been requested to respond to or support an incident.

Mutual Assistance Agreement - Written agreements between agencies, organizations, and/or jurisdictions that they will assist one another on request by furnishing personnel, equipment, and/or expertise in a specific manner.

National Incident Management System (NIMS) - A system mandated by Homeland Security Presidential Directive - 5 (HSPD-5), that provides a consistent, nationwide approach for Federal, State, local, and tribal governments; the private sector; and non-governmental organizations to work effectively and efficiently together to prepare for, respond to, and recover from domestic incidents, regardless of cause, size, or complexity. To provide for interoperability and compatibility among Federal, State, local, and tribal capabilities, the NIMS includes a core set of concepts, principles, and terminology, HSPD-5 identifies these as ICS; multiple-agency coordination systems; training; identification and management resources; qualifications and certification; and the collection, tracking, and reporting of incident management information and incident resources.

Qualification and Certification - This subsystem provides recommended qualification and certification standards for emergency responders and incident management personnel. It also allows the development of minimum standards for resources expected to have an interstate application.

Recovery - The development, coordination, and execution of services, and on-site, restoration plans for impacted communities and the reconstitution of government operations and services through individual, private-sector, non-governmental, and public assistance programs that: identify needs and define resources; provide housing and promote restoration; address long-term care and treatment of affected persons; implement additional measures for commodity restoration; incorporate mitigation measures and techniques, as feasible; evaluate the incident to identify lessons learned; and develop initiatives to mitigate the effects of future incidents.

Response - activities that address the short-term, direct effects of an incident. The response includes immediate actions to save lives, protect property, and meet basic human needs. Response also includes the execution of emergency operations plans and of incident mitigation activities designed to limit the loss of life, personal injury, property damage, and other unfavorable outcomes.

In witness whereof, the parties have hereunto set their hands and seal.

Baroda	_____	_____
	Signature	Date
Benton Charter Township	_____	_____
	Signature	Date
Benton Harbor	_____	_____
	Signature	Date
Berrien Springs Oronoko Twp.	_____	_____
	Signature	Date
Bertrand Township	_____	_____
	Signature	Date
Bridgman	_____	_____
	Signature	Date
Buchanan City	_____	_____
	Signature	Date
Buchanan Township	_____	_____
	Signature	Date
Chikaming Township	_____	_____
	Signature	Date
Galien	_____	_____
	Signature	Date
Lake Charter Township	_____	_____
	Signature	Date
Lincoln Charter Township	_____	_____
	Signature	Date
New Buffalo City	_____	_____
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New Buffalo Township	_____	_____
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Niles Charter Township	_____	_____
	Signature	Date

Niles City	<hr/>	<hr/>
	Signature	Date
North Berrien	<hr/>	<hr/>
	Signature	Date
Pipestone-Berrien-Eau Claire	<hr/>	<hr/>
	Signature	Date
Royalton Township	<hr/>	<hr/>
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St. Joseph Charter Township	<hr/>	<hr/>
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St. Joseph City	<hr/>	<hr/>
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Sodus Township	<hr/>	<hr/>
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Three Oaks	<hr/>	<hr/>
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Watervliet Township	<hr/>	<hr/>
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Weesaw Township	<hr/>	<hr/>
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