

Virginia Fire Services Board

Fire Education and Training Committee

Thursday, February 19, 2026

Virginia Beach Convention Center

1000 19th St, Virginia Beach, VA 23451

2:00 PM

MINUTES

A meeting of the Fire Education and Training Committee was held at the Virginia Beach Convention Center in Virginia Beach, Virginia. The meeting was called to order by Committee Chair Jess Rodzinka, and a quorum was present.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Jess Rodzinka, Committee Chair – Virginia Professional Fire Fighters
Keith Johnson – Virginia Fire Chief’s Association, ex officio
Abbey Johnston – Virginia State Firefighters Association
James Calvert – Industry (SARA Title III/OSHA)
Kevin Duck – Insurance Industry
Jerome Williams – Certified Fire Service Instructor
Todd King – Virginia Association of Counties
Gerry Maiatico – Virginia Fire Prevention Association

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT

Walt Bailey – Virginia Fire Service Council

AGENCY MEMBERS PRESENT

Jamey Brads, Deputy Director
Greg Cavalli, Policy Analyst

GUESTS PRESENT

Larry Gwaltney Glenn Dean
Lee Williams Glenn Summers

CHANGES IN THE AGENDA

No reported changes in the agenda

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No public comment provided

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CONSENT AGENDA

Motion: Approval of the minutes of the previous meetings (June 2025)

Motion: Johnston **Second:** Calvert

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Minutes approved

REPORT FROM THE VDFP CHIEF OF TRAINING

Virginia Department of Fire Programs (VDFP) Deputy Director Jamey Brads provided a report on Training and Operations. While he has been appointed Deputy Director, he is still holding the position of Chief of Training until the position is filled, which he expects to happen soon. The agency is completing the ongoing realignment of the Training and Operations Branch. The operations side will consist of the division chiefs in the field as well as special operations. The educational services side will include learning development and accreditation.

On special operations, VDFP has signed a ten-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Virginia Department of Aviation (DOAV) to upgrade the Aircraft Rescue and Fire Fighting (ARFF) training simulator. VDFP's special operations and logistics divisions are working on specifications for the upgraded unit. Deputy Director Brads spoke about the high cost of new trainers, and he expects to see the current trainers refurbished instead, as they are both robust chassis.

Representatives of Training and Operations held collaborations on trench safety through the Virginia Department of Labor and Industry. These are national-level events that were held in the spring and again in the fall, and he expects them to be annual events for trench safety going forward, demonstrating that Virginia is one of the national leaders in trench safety. A new marine workgroup has been formed. That group is reviewing what stakeholders with marine assets need and how best to address those needs. They are also analyzing if an attendance-based program and a certification program should be created. Technical rescue programs may be adjusted.

Concerning logistics, Deputy Director Brads noted that, a few years ago, the board approved upgrades to the agency's structural fire trainers. These mobile units provide live fire training to localities that do not have their own structure. Of the three units, two have been refurbished.

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One of them is on display at the Virginia Fire Rescue conference. The other was recently completed and is ready to be picked up from New Jersey. He expects it to be picked up in the next 30 days.

Deputy Director Brads addressed learning development, noting that approximately 19,500 students completed the electric vehicle fire course, representing more than half of registered users. Training will remain available online, and learning development is working to determine if it can be refined and improved. The same workgroup that created the awareness program is now working on an operations level program.

Electronic certificates were launched ahead of schedule in December. To date, about 600 certificates have been provided in electronic format rather than mailed. Moving forward, every class has certifications uploaded to transcripts by staff, with a timeline of 10 days or less from the end of the class.

Deputy Director Brads stated that all programs have been reaccredited with the International Fire Safety Accreditation Congress (IFSAC). The agency is in the process of doing the same with ProBoard, with a site visit being scheduled for January. Technical training levels have been added to existing levels with IFSAC and ProBoard. He also said that additional programs, such as hazmat, are being validated to be added to the list of accredited programs.

In training statistics, Deputy Director Brads noted growth from 2024 to 2025. Individual training sessions increased from 2,182 to 2,735 and the number of students grew from 25,967 to 31,834. Total instructional hours rose from 190,782 in 2024 to 202,358 in 2025. Cancellations also increased, from 245 to 379, while no-show registrations dropped from 757 to 491 in 2025. Related to the number of no-shows, he noted that the number of last-second cancellations where the cancellation, creating vacancies that could not be filled, only rose from 5,669 to 5,760.

COMMENTS FROM THE COMMITTEE CHAIR

Chair Rodzinka thanked Deputy Director Brads for the job he has done as the Chief of Training.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

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NEW BUSINESS

a. Review of the Virginia Fire Education and Training Plan

Chair Rodzinka mentioned that Deputy Director Brads addressed some goals of the plan already. Improving the use of technology in daily operations, as well as program compliance and documentation, for example, are progressing well. Regarding documentation of the membership roster for the Commonwealth, Deputy Director Brads mentioned that the implementation of the National Emergency Response Information System (NERIS) should improve that.

James Calvert thanked the division chiefs for their efforts. Regarding electric vehicle training, he asked how that is going. Deputy Director Brads answered that it still is being offered. He identified as an issue that VDFP cannot track when it is given as group training, which creates difficulties in determining exactly how many have taken that training. There was no enforcement mechanism, so ensuring compliance even though the training was mandated was difficult. Training and Operations is continuing the process of what operational training will be, not just for electric vehicles but for battery storage and other related issues that present potential challenges for the commonwealth. Calvert asked how many firefighters are in Virginia, stating that the number is needed to know the percentage of firefighters who completed the training. Deputy Director Brads replied that the system has 38,000 registered users, which is the best estimate possible at this time, and he noted again that NERIS should help provide a more accurate number.

Calvert asked about National Fire Academy (NFA) training, specifically about programs requiring Incident Command System (ICS) 300 and 400, as those programs have been changed, and what the drop date is. Deputy Director Brads said that those who completed ICS 300 and 400 prior to 2018 are now invalid. The agency is working with the Virginia Department of Emergency Management on developing a bridge program to cover the information that was added, without the need to re-take the entire program. He hopes to implement that later this year. Virginia Fire Services Board Chair Keith Johnson asked if it will be virtual or in-person learning. Deputy Director Brads said that both are being considered. The in-person training has been developed, and the intention is to develop the virtual program.

Johnson mentioned passage of Senate Bill 140, which charges the agency with developing a program of mental health awareness training for firefighters, and asked if Deputy Director Brads had any information to add about that. Brads mentioned that it will likely be developed using a similar method to the electric vehicle training, using a workgroup of subject matter experts.

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ADJOURNMENT

Clerk of the Committee

Greg Cavalli

Minutes completed by

Greg Cavalli

Documents related to this meeting of the Virginia Fire Services Board may be requested by contacting the Government Affairs Division by emailing PolicyOffice@vdfp.virginia.gov

