

ROGER ROTH

PRESIDENT

WISCONSIN STATE SENATE

Thank you Chairman Wanggaard and members of the Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety for taking the time to hear SB 551. This issue was first raised by my local fire departments who participate in the team and brought to light a number of statutory changes needed to keep the team alive and well.

The Wisconsin State Recuse Team was first established in 2005, originally funded by federal dollars from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). DHS determined that in the aftermath of the September 11th attacks, well trained first responders were a necessity to address disaster situations throughout our country. This team mobilizes and provides a 24-48 hour response time to address local disasters, significantly quicker than the response time for other units at the Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs.

Under the current statutory constraints, the team is solely used as a collapse rescue team despite the group's capability to provide a much more diverse set of services to our state. SB 511 responds to the team's desire to scale up its capabilities to a Type 1 task force and cover collapse, trench, confined space, high angle, cave, wide-area search, swift water rescue, and flood response in our state.

The bill also provides increased funding to sustain a full team capacity as well as administration and equipment needs and provides certainty to municipalities in regards to duty death benefits of team members.

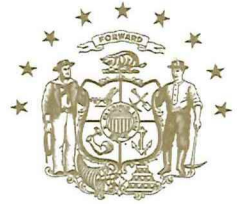
The skills our firefighters develop from this team is taken back to their home departments and provides invaluable techniques that are then applied to their local communities. Making the changes outlined in SB 511 more communities will join this critical state team and we can continue to keep this valuable resource ready to meet the challenges of the future.

I appreciate the work of Representative Rohrkaste and Representative Kolste, the Department of Military Affairs, and the Wisconsin State Fire Chiefs Association on this public safety matter.

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DISTRICT OFFICE: 1033 W. COLLEGE AVENUE, SUITE 19 • APPLETON, WI 54914



To: Senator Wanggaard and members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety

From: Representative Debra Kolste, 44th Assembly District

Date: January 22nd, 2020

Re: 2019 Senate Bill 551

Thank you, Chairman Wanggaard, Vice-Chair Jacque, and fellow committee members, for holding a public hearing on Senate Bill 551.

The Wisconsin State Collapse Rescue Team consists of members of municipal Fire Departments around the state, and has been in operation since 2005. The team responds to incidents within the state of Wisconsin, as well as deployments to other states and Canadian Provinces during FEMA emergency declarations.

Under current law, the 11 departments that participate in the team may respond only to incidents of structural collapse, though it does have All Hazards Urban Search and Rescue capacity. Senate Bill 551 changes the team's designation from a structural collapse team to an urban search and rescue task force, as designated by the National Fire Protection Association and Emergency Management Accreditation program standards. This change in designation allows an urban search and rescue task force to operate at its full range of capabilities.

The bill also makes changes regarding the limitations on reimbursement the team currently experiences. As previously mentioned, the Wisconsin State Collapse Rescue Team has participated in rescue operations outside Wisconsin when deployed for FEMA operations. However, reimbursement from other states and the federal government can take too long – sometimes up to several years. Under the bill, the Department of Military Affairs will be required to reimburse a qualifying municipality within 60 days if agencies apply for reimbursement within 45 days of the conclusion of the deployment.

The bill addresses another important issue as well: in the event that a team member is injured in the line of duty during a state deployment and forced to retire, the state will be responsible for paying the increased premiums based on that injury. Wisconsin should take responsibility for team members deployed on state business.

This bill makes the necessary updates that will remove the barriers the Wisconsin State Collapse Rescue Team experiences. I thank Senator Roth, Representative Rohrkaste, the Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs, and the Wisconsin State Fire Chiefs Association for their work on this legislation. Thank you for your consideration of Senate Bill 551 and I respectfully ask for your support of this legislation.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Debra Kolste".

Deb Kolste
44th Assembly District



MIKE ROHRKASTE

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 55TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

To: Senator Wanggaard and members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety
From: Representative Mike Rohrkaste, 55th Assembly District
Date: January 22, 2020
Re: 2019 Senate Bill 551

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of Senate Bill 551, relating to a disaster response team at the Department of Military Affairs (DMA). This team is at a crossroads and our state statutes must change if we wish to see the program continue.

Following the attacks on September 11th, 2001, the federal government supported the need for well-trained local first responders with billions of dollars in homeland security grants. Support for training, exercising, and equipment for Task Force 1 has come from these homeland security grants – beginning with \$3.6 million in Fiscal Year 2004 and reducing gradually to today's level of roughly \$700,000 per year. Currently, 11 fire departments participate on Wisconsin Task Force 1, sending personnel to partake in trainings and any deployments that may be requested through the Division of Emergency Management at the Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs.

This framework has benefits for both local governments throughout the state, whether they participate in Task Force 1 or not, and the state of Wisconsin as well. However, it needs some significant alterations in order to continue working for both sides of the partnership. The contract signed by the 11 departments has lapsed and current law must be updated. Specifically, the 11 departments wish to accomplish four main objectives:

- 1) Update statute to allow the team to be utilized to its fully trained potential. This includes All Hazards Urban Search and Rescue Capability, including but not limited to collapse, trench, confined space, high angle, cave, wide area search, swift water rescue, and flood response.
- 2) Increase funding to sustain full team capacity of 250-750 members, providing for the administration, training, emergency exercises, and equipment needs of the program.
- 3) Provide certainty to municipalities that participate by designating the state of Wisconsin as the responsible party while awaiting reimbursement from other states or Canadian provinces.
- 4) Assume responsibility during state deployments for any duty disability that may arise.

(next)

Senate Bill 551 accomplishes these four items. First, sections six and seven amend statutory authorization for when the team may be deployed. Second, the bill appropriates \$500,000 GPR annually to augment and grow the team and provide funding certainty, even as homeland security grants are diminishing. The third and fourth points are interrelated, and addressed by creating an account at DMA from which payments to municipalities may be made in the event of a reimbursement or of a duty disability claim. The bill as amended authorizes DMA to seek funding from the Joint Committee on Finance for these purposes through a passive review process.

Without these changes, the participating departments are unwilling to renew a contract. The current system is untenable and must be updated. These changes would also make it more palatable for non-participating fire departments, especially those in our largest cities, to become a part of Task Force 1.

I would like to thank Senator Roger Roth, Representative Deb Kolste, the Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs, and the Wisconsin State Fire Chiefs Association for their work on this bill. I believe that SB 551, as amended, presents a creative way to maintain our existing partnerships, address the needs of local departments, and opens up this Task Force 1 to serve our communities at even greater levels. I appreciate your Committee's consideration and would be happy to take any questions.



SUPERIOR

WISCONSIN

Living up to our name.

Superior Fire Department

*Scott Gordon, Fire Chief
Superior Fire Department
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I am writing today in full support of bill SB 551. As a Fire Chief in one of the municipalities that is part of Wisconsin Task Force 1 I cannot stress enough the importance of having a well-trained and coordinated all hazard team that can stand up in a short period of time for emergency responses. The bill would broaden the statute to allow the team to fully utilize the training we have in structural collapse, trench, high angle rope, confined space, and swift water rescue, flood response as well as cave and wide angle search. The funding provided by this bill is crucial for the team for several reasons. Currently this is funded through Homeland Security but that is not guaranteed. WI should be preparing for the inevitability that this funding will not be in place forever. The additional \$500,000 in the bill would enable WI to support a Type 1 Urban Search and Rescue team. The combination of the current Homeland Security funding and the support from this bill will enable the Team to be properly trained, staffed and equipped to continue performing the skills that we are trained to do. This bill will enable supporting agencies to be reimbursed for their responses alongside the team within the calendar year to make them whole after their operations. This bill is also necessary to allow for the classification of the team members as Protective Occupations Participants. It will ensure that the men and women who respond to the disasters will have the protection necessary should they are injured, disabled or killed in the line of duty. It would afford them the protections of the Public Employee Trust Fund.

There is an additional and significant benefit to the residents of the State of WI as a result of the team maintaining a state of readiness. Team members are very highly trained and most all of the members are firefighters. The training and skill set they work for and acquire as a team member is brought back to their communities. Through their day to day responsibilities on their home departments and mutual aid agreements to surrounding communities Team Members protect most all of the residents of the State of WI. This is crucial especially for communities that have limited emergency response. Without the training received through participation in the team thousands of Wisconsinites would not have access to these critical resources when needed.

I urge to vote in support of this critical legislation for all of Wisconsin. Thank you

Scott Gordon
Fire Chief
City of Superior



SUPERIOR

WISCONSIN

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Incidents

- Four separate high angle rescues from ship holds while in berth at Fraser Ship Yards in the past 10 years.
- Technical rescue of an injured man from the top of a rail can in a grain silo shipping slip.
- Performing technical rescues of suicide attempts off the two interstate bridges we share with Minnesota.
- Technical rescue of an injured man off of an elevated industrial platform at the Burlington Northern Santa Fe taconite processing facility.
- Trench rescue of a construction worker after a foundation wall collapse.
- Rescue of bulldozer operator after the dozer was engulfed in a large pile of moving coal at Midwest Energy Resources.

Training/Preplanning

- Confined space entry and preplanning incidents at Enbridge Energy Superior Terminal where they make over 250 confined space entries per year.
- Confined space training and preplanning at Superior Water Light and Power facilities.
- Confined space and high angle rescue training and preplanning with Midwest Energy Resources at their coal handling dock and rail off-loading facility.
- Confined space and high angle training and preplanning at Graymont/Lafarge Industries limestone processing plant.
- Confined space and high angle rescue training at Amsoil on their rescue training props.
- Confined space training and preplanning at the University of Wisconsin, Superior.



FIRE DEPARTMENT

700 North Drew Street • Appleton, WI 54911-5000
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January 21, 2020

Dear Wisconsin State Legislators:

I'm writing to express my support of Wisconsin's Urban Search and Rescue Team, known as Wisconsin Task Force 1 (WI-TF1) which operates under the umbrella of Wisconsin Emergency Management (WEM) as a regionally deployable emergency response asset.

Members of the Appleton Fire Department were involved in the concept planning and efforts to stand up the team back in 2005-2006. We continue to be deeply involved with the team today. We find significant value in having a specialized resource that can respond to technical rescue incidents locally, regionally and throughout the State of Wisconsin.

The City of Appleton has benefited greatly from the technical knowledge obtained by our team members. Moreover, we have lent our resources to assist other municipalities through mutual aid, automatic aid, Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS) and by special request. Below is a snapshot of how the WI-TF1 training has impacted the City of Appleton and abroad:

- Car impacted a two-story, ordinary constructed commercial building. Incident required vertical shoring and wall tieback system.
- Medical condition resulted in a vehicle to impact a non-combustible building, patient was entrapped. Vertical shoring and extrication were required.
- Vehicle impacted a five-story, ordinary constructed commercial building. Vertical stabilization required.
- Two commercial structures requiring shoring for internal fire investigations.
- Multiple vertical shoring and wall stabilization post structure fire to allow for scene safety during fire investigation.
- Performed a technical rope rescue in downtown Appleton in a sub-basement of a local establishment after a stairwell collapsed.
- Performed structural evaluations on over two-dozen buildings resulting from accident, snow loading or storm events.
- Performed nine water rescues in the City of Appleton.
- Assisted Department of Criminal Investigations during the fatal fire in Princeton and other local incidents.
- Assisted in the Iron Ridge mine where three minors were missing.
- Assisted the City of Manitowoc in a tower rope rescue incident.

The City of Appleton is dedicated to the WI-TF1 response model and we continue to support it with local training. In 2019, the Appleton Fire Department logged more than 1,400 hours of training to maintain and improve our technical rescue skills.

"Appleton Fire Department...serving with P.R.I.D.E."

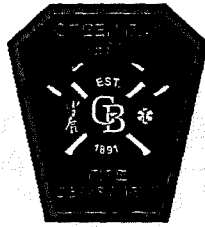
The potential loss of the WI-TF1 state assets is very troubling. This resource was developed to benefit all communities, especially the smaller towns, villages and cities that are unable to provide a enough trained emergency responders in the disciplines of structural collapse, trench rescue, confined space rescue, high angle rescue and water rescue. Utilizing a team that is comprised of assets taken from across the entire state, like WI-TF1, this is the only way to guarantee that highly trained men and women can respond to every natural or man-made disaster.

In closing, I am urging all Wisconsin State Legislators to support the continuation of Wisconsin's Urban Search and Rescue Team know as "Wisconsin Task Force 1".

Respectfully,



Jeremy J. Hansen, M.S., EFO, NRP
Fire Chief, City of Appleton
jeremy.hansen@appleton.org
(920) 832-1703



"BETTER BY THE BAY"

Metro Fire Department

David Litton
Fire Chief

January 22, 2020

To: Chairman Wanggaard, Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety
From: Assistant Fire Chief Robert Goplin
Ref: Senate Bill 551

Chairman Wanggaard,

On April 21, 2014, Green Bay Metro Fire Department Units were dispatched to 1075 Hurlbut Court, which is a petroleum tank farm, for a report of a worker down inside one of the half million gallon gasoline storage tanks. On arrival, the first arriving fire engine reported that they could see a single individual who was down and not moving and not responding verbally inside the tank. The worker was approximately 15 feet below the tanks permanent roof and on top of an internal "floating roof", which floats on top of the gasoline. Workers at the facility stated that the individual had been missing for over an hour before they realized he was unconscious inside the tank.

I was the incident commander for this incident. Initially, I made the decision that I was not going to risk the lives of my firefighters to enter the tank and retrieve a person that I believed was most likely not salvageable after being exposed to an environment full of toxic, flammable fumes and possibly limited oxygen for over an hour. Sending people in to that environment meant the risk of being overcome by toxic fumes, or the smallest spark setting off a vapor explosion and an inferno. If the floating roof tilted, my personnel and the victim could have been wedged between it and the tank wall or even slip underneath it and drown in pure gasoline.

But then, one of my Captains reported seeing him move his arm. The incident now had the potential of being a viable rescue instead of a recovery.

My next radio transmission was simple, but life altering for one person. All I said was "Go get him."

I knew that several of the personnel that I had on site were members of Wisconsin Task Force 1, the statewide urban search and rescue team that you are being asked to fund today. In the early formative days of that team, I had also been part of it. I knew the training they had received as part of Task Force 1. That training was only made possible because they were part of Wisconsin Task Force 1. We could not have provided the same

training, for many, many reasons. The benefit of a team like Wisconsin Task Force 1 is real. It is tangible, and it is CRITICAL. It not only provides a statewide asset that could not be delivered in any other way, it provides localized pockets of expertise that can provide rapid assistance and literally save lives.

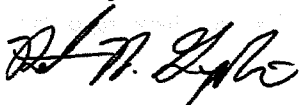
My decision that day was to risk many lives to save one. If it went wrong, I had to live with the consequences of my decision. But if we did not go in to attempt the rescue, I also had to live the consequences of that decision. Ultimately, the decision was not without some peril. During the rescue the floating roof did tilt heavily to one side under the weight of the rescuers, allowing gasoline to flow up and over the top of it, soaking both the responders and the victim in gasoline and ultimately destroying most of the equipment used in the rescue. The only reason we were able to do what we did that day was because of the training and expertise we gained by being part of WI Task Force 1. These personnel had been trained to rig complicated rope rescue systems, utilize specialized rescue equipment and techniques, and deploy and monitor explosive vapor detection equipment as part of Wisconsin Task Force 1. On this day, in this one incident, they needed to do it all while wearing cumbersome and complex personal protective equipment and providing Advanced Life Support to the patient.

The existence of Wisconsin Task Force 1 means that people trained to do these things are not only available statewide, but are also rapidly deployable regionally to ensure that rescues such as this are possible. Without Task Force 1 and the training and equipment and capability that it provides on many different levels, Mykel, the man in the tank that day, would not have survived. He would not have become a father just a few months later, and his child would not have a father.

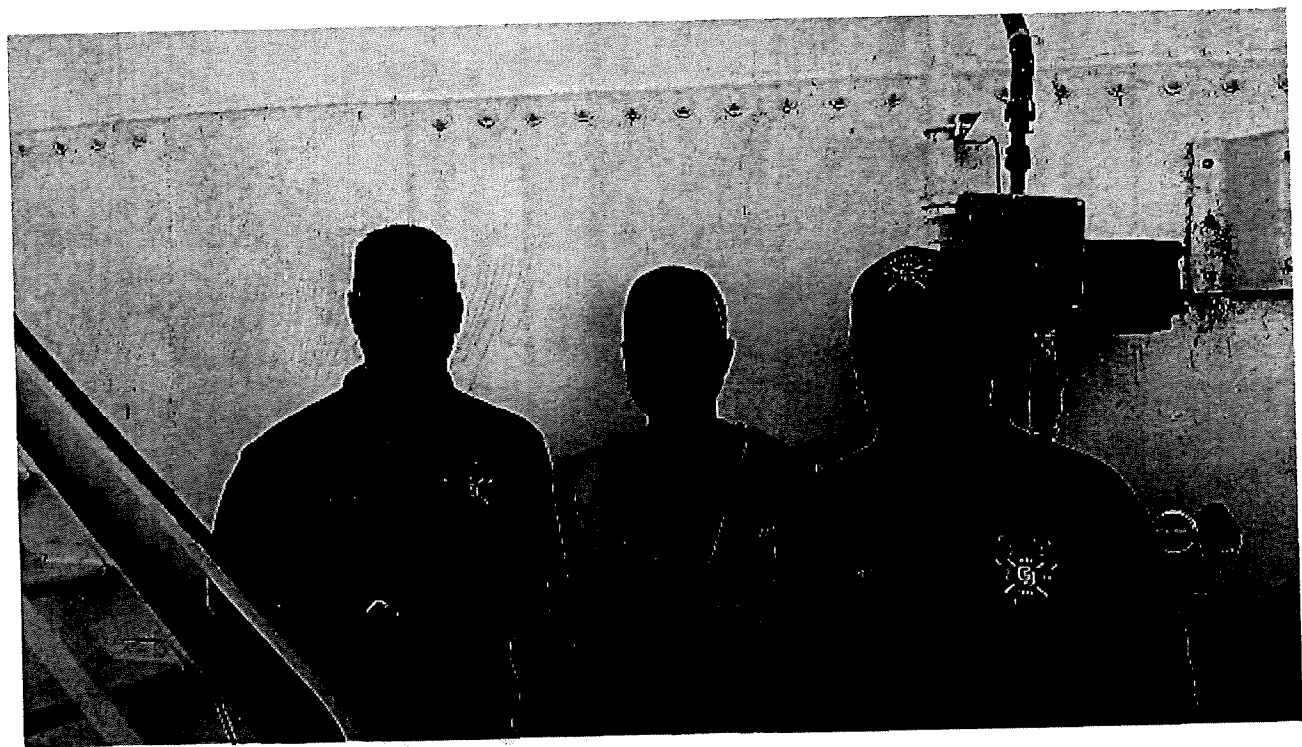
Today, I ask you to consider that the events I have just related to you are not dramatized Hollywood events or a "what if" scenario. This is a real incident, involving a real victim, who was saved by highly trained personnel as a direct result of Wisconsin Task Force 1 existing. Without funding in the future, Mykel's story might not end the same way.

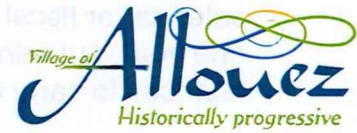
Thank you for the opportunity to testify in front of you today and voice my support for the passing of bill Senate Bill 551.

Sincerely,



Robert Goplin
Assistant Fire Chief
Green Bay Metro Fire Department





"BETTER BY THE BAY"

Metro Fire Department
Administration

David W. Litton
Fire Chief

January 22, 2020

The Honorable Van Wanggaard, Chair
Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety

Dear Committee Members

First let me thank the Chair, Senator Van Wanggaard and all of the members of the committee for holding this hearing and allowing us to address you today. My name is David Litton and I am the Fire Chief for the Green Bay Metro Fire Department as well as the 2nd Vice President of the Wisconsin State Fire Chief's Association.

We are here to offer our support for Senate Bill #551 regarding legislation that will allow the amendment of the contract between the State of Wisconsin (Wisconsin Emergency Management Agency) and the member fire departments that provide personnel for the Wisconsin Urban Search and Rescue Team, commonly referred to as Wisconsin Task Force 1 (WI-TF 1). The member departments include Antigo, Appleton, Beloit, Chippewa Falls, Green Bay, Janesville, La Crosse, Menomonie, Neenah-Menasha, Oshkosh and Superior. As you can see from this list, we have the state covered from north to south, east to west and every area in between.

WI-TF 1 was initially authorized through legislation in 2005 as a "Structural Collapse Rescue" team. Over the years, the team's abilities have grown through extensive training and equipment procurement to become an "All Hazards" team. This means that along with structural collapse, their knowledge, skills and abilities have expanded to include trench, high angle, confined space, swift water, flood, cave and wide area search and rescue.

Since the team began in 2005, we have identified several issues with the current contract. These issues were born from experience. Specifically, the legislation seeks to remedy four (4) issues:

1. Scope – As was already stated, the team's capabilities are greatly enhanced and they are more than a structural collapse team. Our concern is that if they operate outside of the authorized legislation, then we may be placing our individual agencies and our personnel in a position of liability.
2. Timely Reimbursement – As the team has been deployed, the individual member municipalities have waited as long as 18 months to be reimbursed for their personnel costs for salary and other expenses. This has placed an undo-

burden on the local fire departments because we all operate on either a calendar or fiscal year budget cycle. Because our expenses are incurred in one year, but reimbursed in another, this leaves a serious gap in our local finances to carry out our mandate to our taxpaying citizens.

3. Funding – The team currently receives funding through a grant from the Federal Department of Homeland Security. The grant is managed by the Wisconsin Emergency Management Agency. Over the years, the funding has dropped from \$3.6 million to a current level of \$700,000. We are asking that the State fund \$500,000 annually to support the training, and equipment necessary to keep the team in a state of readiness.
4. Disability/Line of Duty Death to our personnel – The legislation seeks to clarify that the team members, (once activated for a response by Wisconsin Emergency Management), become an asset of the State for purposes of disability and line of duty death while deployed as a team member. We owe it as leaders to insure that the firefighters and their families are protected should an unfortunate accident occur that would render them unable to work and support their loved ones.

The eleven member departments have been working on these contract issues for well over 18 months and the team is not currently operational. It's not operational because we are unable to sign a contract that we have identified as having the above issues. These issues were called out in advance of the last contract expiring. Having said that, we are not here to point fingers but rather to get this team back up and operational so that the citizens of Wisconsin have this very important public safety asset! We've spent hundreds of hours collectively visiting the Capital, meeting with legislators, and making phone calls to move this legislation forward. Make no mistake about it; all eleven members are committed to this team because it is, in our estimation, the most important public safety issue facing the state. Without this team, our citizens could endure suffering and long hardships until the necessary technical expertise and equipment arrives to start making things better for them. Without this team, this help will have to come from out of state.

As you will hear in following testimony, the team is not only important on a statewide basis, but also to our local Municipalities, Townships, Towns and Counties. Because the team membership is spread around the state, these highly trained technical experts are available locally to solve emergency incidents that may not rise to the level of a statewide deployment. We are close, therefore more readily available on a time sensitive basis. Time is critical in limiting damage and loss of life in many circumstances. All of the other 10 members provide the same service in their areas.

Along with the chair and co-chair of this committee, we have 8 additional Senators and 21 Representatives from both sides of the aisle as sponsors or co-sponsors of this bill. This is not a partisan issue, but rather the most important public safety issue facing the state today.

Thank you for your time. We ask for your support to move this bill out of this committee and to gain the support of your fellow legislators in a vote on the floor.

Respectfully

David W. Litton, Fire Chief



WISCONSIN STATE
FIRE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION

Together We Make A Difference

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Committee Members,

Good Morning. As the President of the Wisconsin State Fire Chiefs Association, I want to thank you on behalf of our state's fire and emergency services leaders for allowing us the opportunity to speak, and hopefully provide some clarity and insight on the uncertain future of Wisconsin's Urban Search and Rescue Task Force, known as Wisconsin Task Force 1. The issues threatening the Task Force's current viability, ongoing sustainability, and most importantly, the impact on safety and the quality of life for Wisconsin's residents which will be realized in the absence of addressing these lingering issues.

As you likely know, since 2005 the State of Wisconsin has been fortunate enough to have Wisconsin Task Force 1 operating under Wisconsin Emergency Management (WEM) as a regionally deployable response asset within the State for complex technical search and rescue incidents. This team which is currently capable of responding to and operating entirely self-sufficiently for 12-hours to these types of disaster incidents is comprised of nearly 150 highly trained emergency response personnel from eleven participating fire departments including Antigo, Appleton, Beloit, Chippewa Falls, Green Bay, Janesville, La Crosse, Menomonie, Neenah-Menasha, Oshkosh, and Superior. WI-TF1, their specialized personnel, and more than 120,000 pounds of equipment has been an instrumental resource in responding to and providing highly complex operational support to local jurisdictions during notable incidents in Wisconsin including the Cambria Mill Explosion.

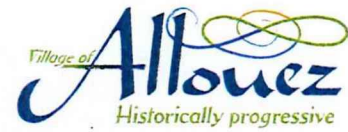
With the vast majority of Wisconsin's fire and emergency responders being comprised of volunteers who selflessly serve their neighbors and communities, I want to reinforce just how critical this response capability is to our entire state. As many fire and ems departments continue to struggle with member recruitment and retention issues, it is simply unreasonable to expect most, if any of these already "lean" agencies to possess the level of proficiency and specialized equipment required to mitigate complex incidents ranging from high-angle rope rescues to building collapses. Wisconsin Task Force 1's regionally distributed personnel help to supplement that gap through their ability to quickly get these resources on scene within the state in the critical early hours of an incident, giving those in need the best chance of being rescued as opposed to recovered.

As Wisconsin continues to experience both natural and man-made disasters which can quickly overwhelm the capabilities of even the largest and most well-staffed fire and emergency services departments, while in an increasingly vulnerable position without the current ability to deploy this highly skilled and equipped team to provide lifesaving services at these incidents I implore you to partner with your emergency services community to ensure that Wisconsin Task Force 1 continues to stand ready to serve the needs of the people we swore to protect. Without the ongoing sustainability of Wisconsin Task Force 1 and the services they provide, the tragic nature of these events will only be magnified as those in need "wait" for help to arrive.

Yours in Public Service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Timothy Bantes". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Timothy Bantes, WSFCA President



"BETTER BY THE BAY"

Metro Fire Department

David Litton
Fire Chief

January 22, 2020

To: Chairman Wanggaard, Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety
From: Assistant Fire Chief Ryan Gibbons
Ref: Senate Bill 551

Chairman Wanggaard,

Hello, my name is Ryan Gibbons I am an Assistant Chief at GBMFD. I have been involved with WI-TF for the last 13 years, a majority of that time as a Logistics manager. This position has provided me with training on how to manage a multi-million dollar cache of USAR equipment, including purchasing, maintenance, storage, loading, moving, rehab of that equipment, and supplying the basic needs of our personnel in a remote location. Being part of the team has allowed members of the GBMFD to hone their skills in High Angle Rope Rescue, Confined Space Rescue, Trench Rescue, and Structural Collapse. Our members bring this training back to our department helping to train our local department Technical Rescue Team. Due to the high quality training that our department has been able to receive GBMFD members have used this training on multiple emergency scenes in Green Bay and the surrounding area.

Some of the emergencies that the Technical Rescue Team has been able to mitigate are:

A Confined Space Fire at Green Bay Metro Sewage District – There was an electrical fire in a below grade vault and tunnel. The fire was in a confined space with limited access. The Technical Rescue Team responded to provide oversight and technical decision making for the suppression efforts. Had this emergency not been mitigated in a timely manner, limiting damage and down time, sewage processing could have been affected for the entire Bay area.

A Farm Rescue in Ledgeview - A large tractor rolled down an embankment trapping the driver under the wreckage. The Green Bay Technical Rescue Team responded along with Ledgeview FD, and De Pere Fire & Rescue. Training had been done with De Pere prior as they had personnel trained in technical rescue. We also had trained with Ledgeview FD giving them a basic understanding of our capabilities. All of the entities worked together to free the survivor. He is alive today because of the training that was received through the State Task Force.

Fire investigations – The Technical Rescue team has been called to numerous fire investigations. After the fire is extinguished the fire investigation continues. On frequent occasions the building has suffered significant structural damage that makes it unsafe to allow investigators access to the structure. The technical rescue team is able to shore areas of the building making it safer for the fire investigators to work. On August 13th, 2006 Lt. Arnie Wolf perished in a house fire on Edgewood Dr. The floor collapsed, and he was buried under the upper floors of the home. After the fire was extinguished, parts of the structure were hanging over the area in which Lt. Wolf was suspected to be. At that point we had 2 options. Make the area as safe as possible, with the ability to bring him home in the best condition we could, or use a backhoe and sift through the debris as it was brought out. We were able to shore the building using the skills of WI-TF 1 members bringing Lt. Wolf home.

Following an apartment fire in Green Bay, investigators were unable to complete their investigation due to the instability of the structure. Our team was able to shore up the building allowing the investigation to be completed. This led to a conviction of the arsonist who had started the fire.

There have been several building collapses in neighboring communities during construction or from snow loads. The local Technical Rescue team has been called for potential rescues and technical advice to provide the safest working environment for rescue crews.

Our Technical Rescue Team continues outreach to business owners and neighboring communities that have potential technical rescue scenarios. This has included the following: Georgia Pacific with confined spaces, Graymont and St. Mary's Cement with machinery, high angle, and confined spaces, De Pere Fire and Rescue with agricultural rescue areas in manure pits and silos, Ledgeview Fire at Fonferck Glen with high angle rescues, and Allouez Water Department with confined spaces. Bay Beach with multiple rides with the potential for high angle rescues. We also do trench training at NWTC using their gas field with the ability to work in a live trench. We are then able to show the students of the program what a trench rescue entails if necessary precautions are not taken while working in a trench.

WI-TF 1 the State Urban Search and Rescue Team has the ability to provide many services to the citizens of Wisconsin and the surrounding area. The state USAR team was a fully functioning USAR team when the contract ran out at the end of 2018. The team has the ability to bring a cache of equipment with highly trained technicians to a stricken community. WI-TF 1 was able to provide 12 or 24 hour continuous rescue services without putting more of a burden on the stricken community. 35 or 70 personnel would arrive on scene with the ability to be completely self-sufficient for 72 hours. This means the community in need would not have to provide food, water, shelter, or fuel for the crews. This is a huge benefit to these communities on their worst day. The last thing they need to worry about is how to house 70 rescuers, feed them, or supply them. The Task Force responds with climate controlled tents, showers, toilet facilities, water filtration systems, food, communications, electrical power, transportation, K9 search dogs, medical doctors, search cameras, shoring materials and equipment, torches, jackhammers, lifting and moving equipment, lighting, GPS, computer systems for mapping, WIFI, HAZMAT detection, boat assets, and fuel to name a few.

The response model for an activation of WI-TF1 is as follows:

A major collapse is reported at Bay Ship in Sturgeon Bay. The Sturgeon Bay Fire Department responds to the incident. They realize that they are not able to rescue or recover victims from the collapsed structure with the equipment and personnel that they have. They request interdivisional MABAS assets that will respond out of the Green Bay and Fox Valley area. The responders coming out of these areas will be able to get rescue efforts started for the first several hours. WI-TF 1 is requested and approved through the WEM Duty Officer. Responders from around the state respond to Volk Field to muster and retrieve equipment. A representative of WI-TF 1, likely from Green Bay because of the proximity, will respond to the scene to start gathering information on the situation, and relay information back to Volk Field for briefing the responding members. The Goal of the Task Force is to be on the road in 6 hours from the time of activation with no prior notice with a four hour travel time to Sturgeon Bay. WI-TF 1 arrives 12 hours after the activation with a 2.5 million dollar cache of equipment and highly trained rescue technicians. After arrival crews would be able to continue operations for the next 72 hours with minimal resources needed from the affected City of Sturgeon Bay.

Members of the committee I thank you for your time today and urge you to support Senate Bill 551.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ryan Gibbons". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Ryan Gibbons
Assistant Fire Chief
Green Bay Metro Fire Department