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Commissioner

State of New Hampshire

DEPARTMENT OF SAFETY

Division of Fire Safety

Office of the State Fire Marshal

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www.nh.gov/firesafety



Paul J. Parisi
State Fire Marshal

NH State Fire Marshal's Office – June 2020 Report

(For the period of May 1 through May 31, 2020)

ADMINISTRATION:

State Fire Marshal Paul Parisi is back from his assignment at the State of New Hampshire Unified Command supporting the state's response to Covid-19.

The State Fire Marshal's Office has initiated its COVID-19 Reconstitution Plan. This plan provides an ongoing, careful strategy that will ultimately return the organization to normal operations, keeping employee and customer safety concerns as a priority.

Deputy Rodenhiser remains assigned to the state emergency operations center to oversee the health and safety branch for the Department of Safety, making sure all of our employees are safe. This includes creating and implementing new initiatives for employees at all DOS facilities including, checkpoints, contact tracing teams, cleaning teams, decontamination teams in the buildings, as well as a personnel-screening program. He has delegated his Bureau of Investigations responsibilities to District Chief Stacey Dubois until he is able to return.

Deputy Danielle Cole has been continuing to oversee SEOC ESF-4 desk operations. This emergency support function is dedicated to supporting first responders and healthcare workers in providing unprotected exposure information, member testing location information, transportation of specimens, alternative lodging requests and inquiries of specimens at the Public Health Lab.

Since the beginning of the state of emergency, the ESF-4 (Firefighting) desk has:

- Answered 609 calls for assistance
- Assisted 200 front line workers with alternative lodging accommodations
- Provided 638 front line workers with exposure/quarantine/testing guidance
- Documented 1362 activities performed in WebEOC. These activities include, fulfilling requests for PPE from first responders, answering questions related to exposures, quarantine, housing, code related questions and more
- Produced and distributed (14) first responder informational documents

The ESF-4 desk phone number is 223-3718 and is answered 24/7 during the State of Emergency.

2020 Legislation:

Legislation has resumed. On June 11th, the House will be in session at the Whittemore Center at UNH. The Senate is having remote public meetings at this time.

Personnel:

Open positions:

The Governor has put all hiring on hold.

BUREAU OF INVESTIGATIONS:

New/Active cases: 19 Calls for Service in the month of May; our 6 investigators and 2 district chiefs are actively working 28 Criminal Cases.

On May 23, 2020, investigators responded to the Portsmouth Middle School to assist the Portsmouth Fire and Police Departments with an incendiary fire. It appeared that somebody had broken into the school and placed a propane cylinder in the foyer area and started a fire with an ignitable liquid. The school sustained moderate damage and Portsmouth PD has since arrested an individual for the arson. ATF also responded to the scene and assisted in the investigation.

On May 29, 2020, investigators responded to Lebanon to assist the Lebanon Fire and Police Departments with an incendiary motor vehicle fire. ATF and NHSP EOD also responded to the scene to assist with the investigation. Lebanon PD has made two arrests in connection with the arson.

Fatal Fire/CO Incidents: On May 5, 2020, investigators responded to a fire at a single-family dwelling in Claremont where a deceased female subject was discovered by emergency responders. The cause of death was determined to be carbon monoxide toxicity due to smoke inhalation. The cause of this fire is still under investigation at this time.

On May 10, 2020, investigators responded to a fire in a single-family dwelling in Salisbury where a husband and wife were found deceased by first responders. The cause of death was determined to be inhalation injuries. The cause of this fire is still under investigation.

On May 12, 2020, investigators responded to a carbon monoxide fatality in New London where a victim was found deceased in his home. The cause of death was carbon monoxide poisoning and the manner of death was suicide.

On May 26, 2020, the Bedford Fire Department responded to a motor vehicle fire at a residence. After the fire was extinguished, a deceased subject was found inside the vehicle. It was determined through the autopsy that the male victim did not perish from fire related injuries.

Court Actions: On May 29, 2020, Phillip Nash pleaded not guilty by reason of insanity to a charge of second-degree murder in Merrimack Superior Court. Nash admitted to stabbing and killing his mother in Canterbury in May 2018. Her body was found in a swamp and she had been burned. Nash will spend the next five years at the Secure Psychiatric Unit at the Men's State Prison in NH and will then appear before the court in five years to assess if he is still a danger. The NH FMO assisted the NH State Police's Major Crime Unit with this investigation.

Accelerant Detection Canine Teams: Our two Accelerant Detection Canine (ADC) Teams were deployed at four fire scenes in the month of May. No demonstrations were performed and our regional monthly training was canceled due to the pandemic.

Public Outreach: BOI investigators assisted with two youth firesetter assessments in the state.

Training: Each May, investigators from our office attend the one week New England Fire Investigation Seminar held at St. Anselm's College. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, this year's seminar had to be cancelled. To maintain certifications and keep up-to-date in this ever changing field, BOI members began attending virtual training sponsored by the International Association of Arson Investigators (IAAI). This is a live monthly training that started in May and runs through November and touches upon various aspects of fire investigations to include: NFPA 921 updates, fire patterns, safety, cause determination/classification, physical evidence/K9 handler teams and basic methodology/basic fire science. If anybody is interested in attending these trainings the information can be found at www.firearson.com. There is a nominal fee associated with each class and they can be taken as tested or untested.

Our two investigators that are paramedics received continuing education training to maintain their certifications in May. The BOI also had an investigator participate in a two-day training on Basic GPS Foundations from CovertTrack.

The BOI has made adjustments to their in-service training calendar due to the pandemic and had their first session on Report Writing Best Practices virtually in the month of May.

A new group of personnel from our office (inspectors and other support staff) have taken the primary lead on the ESF 4 desk while the two district chiefs have transitioned to remote supervision of this function.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to our district chiefs and/or investigators for any needs or concerns that arise in your communities. We are always available to you as a resource regarding fire, carbon monoxide and building collapse investigations as well as inspection related questions and issues.

BUREAU OF BUILDING SAFETY AND CONSTRUCTION:

State Building Permit System: We processed 105 permit applications in the month of May. The State Building Permit program remains busy.

Technical Assistance, Educational & Healthcare Reviews: Our staff remains available for technical code assistance. We initiated 7 educational plan reviews and 3 healthcare plan reviews in the month of May.

Periodic State Owned Property Inspections: We have started inspections in some of the currently vacant college facilities, the remainder of the program is on hold at this time due to the pandemic.

Variance Requests: We processed 4 variance requests in the month of May.

Training: All scheduled inspector training programs have been cancelled and will be rescheduled for a future date. We are starting to explore online learning platforms and deliveries, if you require training in a specific area please reach out to the office.

BUREAU OF PLANNING AND SUPPORT SERVICES:

Hazardous Materials: Hazardous Materials coordination and coverage remains a priority despite the state of emergency and personnel are ready to deploy if needed and may be contacted through the on-call FMO supervisor for consultation purposes.

North Country Hazardous Materials Coverage: Our part time Hazardous Materials Coordinator (Jim Stone) will be available in a response capacity to advise the North Country area chiefs should there be an incident. In the event that an asset response is required in that area the FMO on-duty supervisor will contact an established team to respond. The FMO will cover the cost of the response. There is currently an MOU that is being prepared that addresses this.

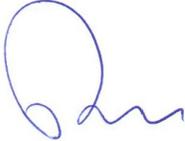
Public Education: At this time, we have suspended public education efforts and diverted resources to essential services due to the pandemic.

Fireworks: During the state of emergency, the fireworks industry has been challenged with stores being closed, as well as licensed shooters not being about to work due to the emergency orders. In response to this, we have drafted an emergency order for the governor's consideration to delay the payment of the annual store licensing fee, as well as delaying the payment of the renewal of a shooters license, until 90 days after the end of the state of emergency. For those shooters who license expired during the state of emergency, this gives them time to generate some revenue through business to cover the cost of the license renewal. We have also seen recent suspicious activity at the now open fireworks stores to include a theft of products, a suspicious package left in front of a store and smoke bombs that were set off in the parking lot of a store.

As we close out the month of May, we are also watching a number of rallies (the vast majority of which have been peaceful) across the state related to the murder of George Floyd from Minneapolis. The State EOC has been opened in support of municipalities that need anything during these events, and the ESF-4 desk has been staffed.

Also for anything COVID-19 related, please reach out directly to ESF-4, 24 hours 7 days per week at 603-223-3718. This line is answered by the on-call Deputy State Fire Marshal after-hours. Be careful out there.

Yours in Safety,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Paul J. Parisi', with a large loop at the start and a wavy tail.

Paul J. Parisi
NH State Fire Marshal