



**Cuyahoga County
Local Emergency Planning Committee
January 12, 2026, Meeting Minutes**



1. Roll Call – Scott Broski conducted roll call and led the meeting.

- **LEPC Members in Attendance:** Wade Balser, Justin Bechtel, Johnny Brewington, Scott Broski, Robert Butler, Ellen Dempsey, Dan DeRoos, Alan Finkelstein, Rob Howerton, Bryan Kloss (Emily Smith-Sherlock, proxy), Sheldon Lustig, Tracy Pate, Matt Schneider, Randy Solganik, Fred Szabo, Dave Telban, Allen Turner, Bob Tulevski (Gary Bolton, proxy), Mark Vedder, Ingrid Wagner, Jason Wheeler, Jay Womack
- **Non-Voting Members in Attendance:** Greg Laurenson – CCOEM, John Rhoades – NEORS (Spills Subcommittee), Michelle Sowers (Ohio EMA)
- **Guests in Attendance:** Brian Baer – FirstEnergy, Dave Conley – FirstEnergy, Sonji Deal – CCBH, Greg Fondran – USCG, Tim Forthofer – IMCD, Richelle Gibson – MP Bio, Omari Mays – CCOEM, Matt Reinke – Cleveland OEM

2. Elections – Scott Broski opened the floor for nominations.

- Alan Finkelstein motioned to elect the Chair and Vice Chair as a slate consisting of Scott Broski and Dave Telban. Motion seconded by Sheldon Lustig. The motion was unanimously approved by the committee.

3. LEPC Member Spotlight Series: Fred Szabo/Matt Reinke – Cleveland EMA

- Fred Szabo and Matt Reinke provided an introduction and overview of the Cleveland Office of Emergency Management and their staff. The presentation included information regarding the physical layout and location of their office and EOC, their responsibilities and scope during “blue sky” days and planned/unplanned events/activations, and their role in emergency planning and coordination. Fred and Matt also gave a summary of previous significant events such as the 2016 RNC, the 2019 MLB All Star Game, and the 2024 Total Solar Eclipse. Additionally, Matt discussed Cleveland’s Emergency Operations Plan and its structure regarding Functional Annexes and Hazard Specific Appendices.
- After their presentation, Fred and Matt opened the floor for questions and explained the relationship between the Cleveland OEM and the County OEM and challenges and lessons learned from the 2016 Cavaliers NBA Championship parade. Matt Reinke discussed how Cleveland OEM plans for emerging technology and threats.
- The LEPC would like to thank Fred and Matt for their time and willingness to present!
- If any LEPC member would like to provide a Spotlight Series presentation at a future meeting, please contact Scott or Greg.

4. November Meeting Minutes Approval

- A correction was noted in Section 7 under Transportation. It was previously written that Norfolk Southern has an alternate route that runs through Cuyahoga County. This is incorrect and should state that Norfolk Southern has an alternate route that does not run through Cuyahoga County.
- Scott Broski asked for a motion to approve the November 3, 2025, minutes. Johnny Brewington made a motion, Justin Bechtel seconded. Minutes approved pending the noted correct.

***7) EXECUTIVE SESSION MAY BE HELD PURSUANT TO OHIO REVISED CODE (ORC) 121.22(G)**

ORC 121.22(G)(5), a public body may hold an executive session to consider “matters required to be kept confidential by federal law or regulations or state statutes.”

ORC 121.22(G)(6) provides that consideration of “[d]etails relative to the security arrangements and emergency response protocols for a public body or a public office, if disclosure of the matters discussed could reasonably be expected to jeopardize the security of the public body or a public office.” Under this exception, both conditions must be met:

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5. **Financial Report:** Greg Laurenson provided the financial report for December 2025 on behalf of Nancy Veley.
- Two changes since the November meeting. The LEPC paid Bad Day Training \$5,850.00 from FY26 SERC Grant for the DOT Hazmat Awareness class in Fall 2025 (previously approved via resolution #090825-2). The LEPC received \$5,000 as part of the settlement with MADD Trucking. This money has been deposited into the LEPC Discretionary fund.

6. **Resolutions:**

- Approved:
 - ❑ #01122026-1 Accept & File Financial Report Period ending December 31, 2025
 - Alan Finkelstein made a motion, Dave Telban seconded. Resolution approved.
 - ❑ #01122026-2 2025 Ohio Hazmat Teams Conference FY26 SERC
 - Sheldon Lustig made a motion, Alan Finkelstein seconded. Resolution approved.
 - ❑ #01122026-3 CSUTest Online Hazmat Training
 - Johnny Brewington made a motion, Justin Bechtel seconded. Resolution approved.
 - ❑ #01122026-4 LEPC Grant Application
 - Mark Vedder made a motion, Dave Telban seconded. Resolution approved.
 - ❑ #01122026-5 Hazmat Strategy and Tactics FY26 SERC
 - Johnny Brewington made a motion, Dave Telban seconded. Resolution approved.
 - ❑ #01122026-6 First Responder Offensive FY26 SERC
 - Alan Finkelstein made a motion, Dave Telban seconded. Resolution approved.
 - NOTE: Mark Vedder and Jay Womack abstained from this vote and physically left the room during the discussion and vote. Quorum unaffected and resolution approved.

7. **Subcommittee Reports:**

- Management- Scott Broski
 - Met on December 17, 2025.
 - Discussed membership. Megan Koeth from Case Western Reserve University has filled the vacancy left by Paige Herron. Richelle Gibson from MP Biomedicals will be joining as a facilities representative, pending SERC approval in February.
 - Discussed agency presentations for the Spotlight Series. We have outside agencies interested in providing presentations and would like to continue to encourage members to volunteer.
 - Discussed judgements and collections. MADD Trucking case has been settled and resolved. The Dove Express case is still active and in collections.
- Facilities- Ellen Dempsey
 - Held the DOT Hazmat class on November 4-6, 2025. It had 70 attendees from facilities in the area, and the class covered general DOT Hazmat awareness and Cuyahoga County-specific spill procedures and requirements. Positive feedback overall. Facilities would

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like to bring in an additional class for the second half of the fiscal year, likely centered around RCRA training.

- It was noted that the Facilities Subcommittee is currently run by Ellen Dempsey. Scott Broski opened the invitation for others to co-chair or join and Justin Bechtel expressed interest in assisting.
- Transportation- Sheldon Lustig
 - Discussed the East Palestine NTSB report.
 - The NTSB was highly critical of the lack of training by the volunteer firefighters that responded to the incident. Chief Vedder noted that initial mandatory firefighter training consists of 24 hours of hazmat training. In Ohio, it is still possible to take a 36-hour firefighting class and become a volunteer firefighter. It was noted that in East Palestine, there is a part-time Fire Department consisting of firefighters trained well-beyond the 36-hour minimum. Chief Schneider noted that the State Fire Marshal is working to increase volunteer firefighters due to a shortage of personnel in firefighting.
 - The NTSB report also criticized Norfolk Southern for failing to provide information from industry personnel that were advising against the vent-and-burn method and that there was no immediate danger of a polymerization explosion. The NTSB found that the vent-and-burn was a mistake and unwarranted.
 - Norfolk Southern has claimed that the total cost of the East Palestine incident is over \$1 Billion.
 - Reached out to Amtrak regarding instructional classes with equipment, but these classes are currently unavailable due to a shortage of equipment.
 - CSX tunnels on the southeast side of Cuyahoga County have access to roadbeds that are not near the tunnels, which would complicate response efforts during an emergency or incident.
- Spills- John Rhoades & Dave Telban
 - Met on January 12, 2026, immediately before the LEPC meeting.
 - Four outstanding spills from 2023/2024 and have been referred to the prosecutor.
 - One outstanding spill from September/October 2025. A 90-day letter is due to be sent this week.
 - 21 reported spills from November/December 2025.
 - Eight are not reportable.
 - Eight have completed spill reports.
 - Three 30-day letters have already been sent out.
 - Two 30-day letters are due to be sent this week.
- Training and Exercises- Alan Finkelstein & Richard Nickerson
 - Greg Laurenson provided an update on the 2026 LEPC Exercise.
 - An initial planning meeting was held on January 8, 2026, to discuss the TTX scheduled for May 21, 2026.

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- SERT will be the team exercising this year and details were discussed regarding the type of scenario, objectives to be covered, other participants, and the location and duration of the exercise.
- The next planning meeting is tentatively scheduled for March 2026. Specific date and time are TBD.

8. Office of Emergency Management Report

- Greg Laurenson provided the Office of Emergency Management Report.
 - ❑ 21 public records requests since the November LEPC meeting. The final total for 2025 requests was 167.
 - ❑ Tier II reporting officially opened on January 1, and facilities have until March 1 to submit their Tier II report. Several facilities have already submitted, and we are anticipating a steady intake of reports through March.
 - ❑ Omari returned to work in November following his deployment and Sara returned to work in December following her maternity leave. Our office is now fully staffed for the first time since September 2024.
 - ❑ Our office assisted Chief Womack and Euclid Fire and Euclid PD with a full-scale active aggressor exercise at Euclid High School and Middle School. Chief Womack added that feedback was positive, and they are hoping to make this an annual training to continue to better prepare fire and police in Euclid.
 - ❑ We are tracking five full-scale exercises in 2026. Dates are TBD for all five.
 - ❑ ReadyEx Prep workshops and TTXs are still being provided to both public and private partners in the county.
 - ❑ Sam Hudik is updating the ReadyMaps dashboard and is hoping to finalize in early 2026.
 - ❑ EMAP (Emergency Management Accreditation Program) will be on site in early March for an assessment of our office.
 - ❑ Serena Steele would like to pass along some upcoming training opportunities:
 - ICS-300 – January 26-28, 2026 – Cleveland Fire Training Academy
 - ICS-400 – February 23-24, 2026 – Cleveland Fire Training Academy
 - NWS Skywarn Training – March 18, 2026 @6p – Mayfield Village
 - COOP L1301 – March 24-25, 2026 – Location TBD
 - COOP L1302 – March 26-27, 2026 – Location TBD
 - PIO Basics L105 – April 27-29, 2026 – Harvard Ave Garage
 - ❑ SERC Grant application is due February 1, 2026. A meeting is scheduled with Nancy Veley to discuss the application and get it prepped for submission.
 - ❑ The LEPC has coordinated a site visit with MP Biomedicals and the Chagrin/SE hazmat team for February 10, 2026, at 9a. Please contact Greg Laurenson for more information.
- Chief Vedder provided additional information regarding the Hazmat Operations training that was brought to resolution earlier in the meeting. Chief Vedder gave an overview of what an *offensive*

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operation would be in a hazmat situation as opposed to a *defensive* approach that is traditionally taken. Situations for an offensive operation can include incidents involving a rescue and this class discusses the decision-making process and tactics associated with those situations.

9. Bylaws

- Scott Broski provided an update regarding the pending bylaws revisions. The LEPC is still open to comments regarding the bylaws. The timeline for final revisions has been extended because SERC has recently put out pending revisions of their LEPC Handbook, which is the basis for some of the sections within our bylaws. The plan is to wait for SERC to finalize their LEPC Handbook, then make final modifications to our bylaws. After this, we will submit our bylaws to the County Legal Department and to SERC for review of the language, and if approved, we will bring the bylaws back to the LEPC for final review and approval by the committee.
- Scott Broski went through the proposed changes within the bylaws and briefly discussed the following changes:
 - ❑ LEPC Membership will be modified to align with SERC guidelines. There is no change to membership status or privileges, only to how the members are categorized.
 - ❑ Midterm appointments must also be approved by SERC rather than only by the Management Subcommittee.
 - ❑ Guest attendance shall be tracked at meetings.
 - ❑ Subcommittee meeting minutes shall be taken and shall be produced within 21 days of the meeting.
 - ❑ A section regarding Monetary Funds has been built into the bylaws. This is modeled after language from the Ohio Revised Code and other existing LEPC bylaws.
- Justin Bechtel has provided feedback suggesting that the membership limit for the Hospitals section be expanded from one member to three members to include a representative from Cleveland Clinic, MetroHealth, and University Hospitals.
- Tracy Pate advised that the Center for Health Affairs, which was listed as an example agency for the Health section, is now called WellLink Health Alliance.

10. New Business

- Alan Finkelstein took time to recognize Gordie Polendo, retired Captain with the Lakewood Fire Department, who passed away on January 1, 2026. In addition to his service with Lakewood FD, Ret. Captain Polendo was active with the Westshore hazmat team and exercises within Cuyahoga County. The LEPC would like to recognize this loss to our community and extend sympathies to Ret. Captain Polendo's family, friends, and colleagues.

11. Next Meeting: March 2, 2026

Chair Scott Broski asked for a motion to adjourn. Sheldon Lustig motioned, Dave Telban seconded. Meeting adjourned.

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