



KANSAS SEARCH AND RESCUE WORKING GROUP

Sam Dameron, Chair 785-341-1761 2000 Denison Ave Manhattan, Ks 66502

**Testimony of
Sam L. Dameron, Chair Kansas Search and Rescue Working Group
Presented to the Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee
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SB 62 Hearing

SB 62

Specifying the duties of the state fire marshal relating to regional emergency response teams for search and rescue incidents.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with written testimony. My name is Sam Dameron and I am the Assistant Chief of Operations for the Manhattan Fire Department and serve as the Chair of the Kansas Search and Rescue Working Group (KSARWG). On behalf of the KSARWG, I offer this written testimony in favor of SB 62 relating to Kansas Search and Rescue moving under the oversight of the Kansas Fire Marshal's Office (KSFMO).

In April of 2007, a group of individuals passionate about search and rescue met in Topeka to discuss the need for formalized coordination of state search and rescue response. This need for a formalized system was realized on May 4, 2007 when a devastating tornado struck Greensburg, KS. The group gained support from the Kansas Division of Emergency Management (KDEM) and Adjutant Generals office and was formed using the same guidelines as the Incident Management Team Working Group. The KSARWG was formed by selecting one representative from each of the seven (7) Homeland Security Regions in Kansas, KSFMO, KDEM, National Guard/Crisis City, Kansas Fire Rescue Training Institute (KFRTI) and Kansas Search and Rescue Dog Association (KSARDA). The group was formally chartered under the Deployable Resources Committee of the Governor's Commission on Emergency Planning and Response (CEPR) in September of 2008.

This working group established the mission: Improve the overall search and rescue capability and response in the State of Kansas and beyond, thereby ensuring that responders at all levels are prepared to provide a coordinated response to any natural or man-made disaster.

Each of the seven (7) regions established a list of participating agencies and has worked with their Regional Councils to secure funding for equipment and training for each regional team. To date approximately five (5) million dollars has been invested in the regional teams. The teams have worked under the guidance of the KSARWG and without a parent state agency overseeing search and rescue.

The KSARWG reached out to the Kansas State Fire Marshal to see if the organization had interest in becoming the parent agency for search and rescue. The KSFMO seemed like a natural fit for KSAR, since the KSFMO already was operating a state wide hazardous materials response program consisting of regional hazmat teams. Since reaching out to the Fire Marshal, the two groups have worked together to make this partnership a reality.

The KSARWG is in support of this bill and moving forward. The KSFMO has established a very effective statewide Hazardous program and the KSARWG believes the KSFMO will operate search and rescue with the same passion. By moving search and rescue under the KSFMO, we will have a parent agency that can provide a clear direction for all the regional teams and a single point of contact for the deployment of the regional teams in the event of a disaster.

Thank you for your consideration, and I would be happy to answer any questions. I may be reached by mail at the Department of Fire Services, City of Manhattan, 2000 Denison Avenue, Manhattan, KS 66502, by phone at (785) 587-4504 or by email at dameron@cityofmnhk.com.

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