



MONTANA

STATE EMERGENCY RESPONSE COMMISSION

(SERC)

SERC Meeting Notes

Wednesday, November 12, 2025

9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

- I. **Welcome and Member Roll Call**
 - a. **In-Person Attendees:**
 - i. Brett Lloyd (MT DES, SERC Chair), John Rasmann (MT DEQ, Co-Chair), Doug Dodge (Jefferson County OEM / MEMA Representative), Peter Killman (BNSF), Walter (Great Falls HazMat Team), John Gustafson (Helena Fire), Justin Webster (MT DES, SECC Coordinator), Colin Tobin (DPHHS)
 - b. **Online Attendees:**
 - i. Susan McEachern (MDT), Adriane Beck (Missoula OEM – Observer), Allison Broesder (Powder River County DES), Autumn Ashdale (Lewis and Clark County – Observer), David Stamey (Stillwater County Emergency Services / MEMA VP), Desiree Thielen (Fallon County DES – Observer), Ed Malone (Ravalli County DES – Observer), Jim Jess (Powell County DES – Observer), Erin Joyce (EPA Region 8), Mackenzie King (EPA Region 8 – Backup), Justin Russell (Missoula County DES – Observer), Kenneth Parks (Missoula County), Kyle Sturgill-Simon (Lewis and Clark County EM), Nick Holloway (Missoula County EM), Steve Fanning / Diane Broad (Fergus County DES – Observers), Jeff Berger (Tribal EM)
- II. ***** (Voting Items) May Meeting Minutes Approval**
 - a. Minutes approval vote recorded per meeting record.
- III. **Old Business**

a. Incident Reporting and Notification Gaps — Tier 2 / 304 Reports

- i. Justin (MT DES):** Old business from the last meeting. Concern remains that Tier 2 and 304 incident reports are not being submitted correctly or through proper channels. If the state isn't getting notified, we can't fulfill our statutory and operational roles.
- ii. Ash Grove Case Study:**
 - **John (MT DEQ):** After the last SERC meeting (spring 2025), a chemical release occurred at Ash Grove. NRC was notified, but the state was not informed until days later. DEQ's HazMat program eventually resolved it quickly, but the initial reporting and notification breakdown persists.
 - **Justin:** The 304 follow-up report is what tipped us off — it arrived by paper mail after the fact. The initial report never came through proper channels. Ash Grove is one example; the pattern continues. For Tier 2 filers, notification is supposed to start with the DES Duty Officer, then DEQ, followed by a 304 within 30 days detailing response actions, amounts released, and environmental impacts.
 - **Brett:** Most of these gaps aren't intentional — businesses just don't know who to call. Considering pushing outreach to Tier 2 filers reminding them of the DES Duty Officer number and proper notification process. Exploring whether E-Plans can display a pop-up reminder at time of filing.
 - **Doug:** Recommends notifications flow local-first, then up to state. Trying to have facilities make 15 separate calls during an incident is not practical.
 - **Desiree (Fallon County):** Fallon County has many Tier 2 filers. Local EMs must not be left out of the notification process — historically we have been.
 - **David (Stillwater County):** Agrees. Local businesses are generally already dialed in with local EMs. That should be the first point of contact, then pushed up through normal reporting channels.
 - **Walter (HazMat Team):** Regional teams receive many calls

from municipalities and counties even when not deployed. Can begin routing those to the Duty Officer to help close the gap.

- Erin (EPA): Will follow up on EPA actions related to the Ash Grove incident. EPA monitors NRC reports and will contact state if they see reportable incidents.
- **Action Items:**
 - John to confirm and clarify details of the Ash Grove incident from spring 2025 records with Doug.
 - Justin to develop outreach ideas for Tier 2 filers on proper notification procedures, including potential collaboration with E-Plans for automated reminders.
 - Justin to encourage locals to reach out to Tier 2 filers about notifications.
 - Justin to explore using CORE to log incidents and set automated 304 follow-up reminders.
 - Walter to make sure HazMat teams get info to Duty Officers as appropriate.
 - Duty Officer notification process to be discussed further with ESF partners.

b. LEPC Outreach Update

- i. Justin: Continued normal outreach activities since the May meeting. This also includes John's presentations at Mineral, Stillwater, Lincoln, Missoula, and Ravalli County meetings. One-pagers, handbook updates, and newsletter tidbits continue to be distributed.
- ii. Peter (BNSF): BNSF has trained over 400 first responders in Montana this year. Customized HazMat and railroad training is available to communities — encourage LEPCs to invite them.
- iii. Erin (EPA): Staffing challenges exist but willing to participate in outreach and presentations as resources allow. Available for speakers list.
- iv. Speakers List reminder: Best way to coordinate HazMat Team

speakers is through Walter.

- **Action Items:**

- Justin to maintain and coordinate speakers list and scheduling calendar for LEPC outreach presentations.

c. LERA Subcommittee / Workgroup Update

- i. Patrick and Brett: LERA workgroup formed at the last meeting under Patrick Lonergan's chairmanship. Quick summary of issue was given and no significant updates from the workgroup. Statutory language around LERA designation continues to have hurdles at the county level; legal guidance may be needed.

- **Action Items:**

- DES and Patrick to review workgroup recommendations on LERA statutory language, seek legal guidance if needed, and bring updates to the next meeting.

d. NASTTPO Conference Update

- i. Justin: The NASTTPO conference will be held at the DoubleTree in Billings — the first time Montana has hosted the event. Planning is underway. Members are encouraged to suggest session topics. This is an opportunity to increase community awareness and engagement in emergency planning at a national level.

IV. New Business

a. * HazMat Team Recertifications**

- i. Brett: Annual recertification of Montana's six HazMat teams. Each team submitted a template letter certifying team composition, equipment status, and updated rosters. Certifications are valid from December 1 through November 30.

- **Vote:** John gives Motion, Dough seconds, to recertify all six HazMat teams. Motion carried — all in favor, none opposed.

- ii. Deployment Rates:

- Brett: After discussion at the Monday pre-meeting, the group agreed to maintain last year's flat personnel

deployment rate of \$67.07/hour. Teams may propose rate changes (e.g., due to collective bargaining agreements) at the **May** meeting.

- **Vote:** John gives Motion, Colton seconds, to accept Deployment Rates. Motion carried — all in favor, none opposed.
- **Action Items:** Justin to send current personnel and equipment rate agreements as part of the meeting minutes.

iii. HazMat Team Deployment Flow Chart and Policy

- Brett: An incident highlighted gray areas in the deployment approval process. A draft deployment flow chart and policy have been developed to clarify approval processes and deployment packages.
- **Action Items:**
 - Justin to distribute the draft deployment flow chart and policy to all HazMat teams for review.
 - Finalized version to be brought to the **next** SERC meeting for approval.

iv. HazMat Team Reimbursement Waiver Letter

- Brett: Proposing a waiver letter process modeled after the National Guard, allowing local agencies to request forgiveness of reimbursement costs when unable to pay. Concept reviewed; draft templates to be circulated for member review.
- **Action Items:**
 - Brett to obtain National Guard waiver letter template, draft a HazMat version, and circulate to SERC members prior to the next meeting.

b. *** SERC Bylaws Adoption

- i. Brett: Montana's SERC by-laws were dissolved approximately 20 years ago. A new draft was developed based on best practices from other states. Members reviewed and found the bylaws straightforward and consistent with current statutes.

- **Vote:** Colin gives Motion, Doug seconds, to adopt SERC Bylaws as a living document. Motion carried — all in favor, none opposed.

c. Membership Appointments and Changes

- i. Brett: Several SERC membership updates are pending governor's office appointment confirmation:
 - Tribal Representative: Jeff Berger (Tribal Emergency Council Chair) nominated to replace Angel Lee, whose program was decommissioned.
 - DPHHS: Colin Tobin now serving as DPHHS representative.
 - Montana State Fire Chiefs Association: Chief Hoppel nominated to replace Chief Jones.
- ii. Brett: The governor's online appointment application process is not intuitive. Working to navigate it to finalize all nominations. Proxies are allowed per statute.

d. Duty Officer Annual Report

- i. Justin: Presented the annual Duty Officer report. Refer to the PPT prepared for SERC for data. Transition to CORE caused some data extraction difficulties; however, incident patterns remain consistent with prior years. Some ongoing gaps in local reporting/data entry continue.
- ii. Walter: HazMat Teams can begin providing activity reports to the Duty Officer even when not deployed, to help capture resource utilization data for SAC reporting.

e. LEPC Report

- i. Justin: Purpose of the LEPC report is to help SERC better support LEPCs — not oversight. Compiled from the updated fillable forms sent out this year (due November 1st). Tribes were included in the count this year to ensure inclusivity, bringing the total to approximately 56 counties plus 7 tribal jurisdictions.
- ii. Key findings from the 2025 LEPC Report:
 - 18 of 48 jurisdictions did not designate a Local Emergency Response Authority (LERA) — 30 have made at least some effort toward designation.

- 22 of 48 do not conduct an annual review of their HazMat plan as required by statute.
- 29 of 48 do not include all nine required planning elements.
- Media continues to be the least-engaged stakeholder in LEPC activities.

iii. Justin: Data extraction was more difficult this year due to the form changes; some data was manually compiled. Will continue to refine the process.

- Brett: Focus outreach on the most common deficiencies — LERA designation, annual plan reviews, and planning elements. Invite media to participate virtually to increase engagement, especially in geographically remote areas.
- Doug: Recommend sharing LEPC and DO reports directly with LEPCs.
- **Action Items:**
 - Justin to identify and focus outreach on common LEPC report weak areas (planning elements, annual reviews, LERA designation).
 - Justin to coordinate ways to share LEPC report with LEPCs — standalone or via newsletter.
 - District Field Officers to assist in outreach and training efforts on those particular items

f. **Emergency Management System (CORE/CIMS) Updates**

i. Brett: Updates on the rollout of the CORE Crisis Information Management System:

- The resource management module was successfully tested during a 21-day activation and allows efficient inventory and resource requests between jurisdictions. Plans to release this module to local partners ahead of other components.
- Custom-built duty officer reporting and situational awareness modules are still being refined. A cautious approach is being taken to ensure functionality before broader rollout.

g. Training and Exercise Updates

- i.** Betsy: If you're not receiving training updates, reach out. Also, Emergency Management Program Review input welcome.
- ii.** Justin: Did follow up by making sure CAMEO training opportunities were pushed out through Betsy's training updates. Provide suggestions and ideas or request assistance as needed.
- iii.** Colin Tobin (DPHHS): Upcoming exercises include avian influenza response, infectious disease, and medical surge. Training opportunities shared regularly via DES newsletters and coalition communications.
- iv.** Erin (EPA): Links to newly completed EPA contingency plans for regional watersheds have been shared. Ongoing discussions with CSKT tribe regarding training and exercise opportunities.

V. Partner and Member Updates

- a.** Susan (MDT): MDT preparing for winter operations — staffing and equipment readiness.
- b.** Jeff Berger (Tribal EM): Tribal Emergency Management Commission meeting is postponed pending funding; plan to reschedule in spring.
- c.** Peter (BNSF): Continues community training outreach; 400+ first responders trained in Montana this year.
- d.** Erin (EPA): EPA contingency plans completed for regional watersheds; links will be shared with CERT members.

VI. Q&A, Closing Comments, and Next Meeting

- a.** Brett: Next SERC meeting to be scheduled — tentatively spring 2025 (May timeframe). If you wish to participate in any workgroups, contact Brett directly.
- b.** Justin: Please provide feedback on meeting materials and SERC webpage. Follow-up items will be circulated with the meeting minutes.

Action Items:

#	Action Item	Responsible
1	Confirm Ash Grove incident details from spring 2025 records	Doug/John
2	Develop outreach ideas for Tier 2 filers on notification requirements; explore E-Plan collaboration with locals	Justin
3	HazMat Teams to get notification & info to DOs as appropriate	Colton
4	Distribute current personnel & equipment rate agreements with meeting minutes	Justin
5	Distribute draft HazMat Team deployment flow chart and policy to teams for review	Justin
6	Draft HazMat Team reimbursement waiver letter (based on NG model); circulate to CERT members	Justin
7	Coordinate LERA statutory language review with Patrick; bring update to next meeting	Brett / Patrick
8	Maintain LEPC speakers list and outreach scheduling calendar	Justin
9	Continue SERC membership appointment coordination with governor's office	Brett / Justin
10	Obtain National Guard waiver letter template, draft a HazMat version, and circulate to SERC members	Brett
11	Identify and focus outreach on common LEPC report weak areas (planning elements, annual reviews, LERA designation), share LEPC report with locals	Justin / DFOs