

Deputy Chief Joseph Aldsworth, City of Barre
Deputy EMD, President CFMAS, ~~Dist~~ ^{VT} Dist #6 Chair
EMS

S310 - Section 16

I would like to thank you for this opportunity to speak to the committee on behalf of the Capital Fire Mutual Aid system and the City's of Barre and Montpelier. It has been brought to my attention as the Capital Fire Mutual Aid Systems President, that funding for the State of Vermont's Urban Search and Rescue Team has come into question and potentially may be in jeopardy of not being funded. As the President of CFMAS this concerns me and I am representing 33 towns across Central Vermont. As a Chief Officer, I have personally worked with the State of Vermont USAR team since its inception. I have to say this is an essential service provided by the State of Vermont. Many of the communities including the cities of Barre and Montpelier are unable to provide and perform at or to the level of the Teams proficiency and provide the amount of resources they have available to communities large and small that become inundated during major catastrophes. This advanced level of training and the availability of qualified staffing it provides to departments throughout the State is essential to Fire Departments to be able to coordinate a safe, effective and efficient responses. In this day and age, the lack of volunteers and qualified staff have become an extreme issue for departments across the state.

The state has experienced a significant increase in the occurrences of devastating weather events in Central Vermont over the past 20 years. I have personally had to request the states USAR team to be deployed here in the City of Barre 4 times for extreme flooding. The states USAR team has provided countless hours in our City, and have affected numerous rescues and evacuations, to which the numbers are quite impressive and have played a significant role in the prevention of the loss of life for our citizens and Vermonters across the State. While this is just a sample of their capabilities, they are an invaluable asset for high and low angle rescue, structural collapse, confined space, trench rescue, recoveries, and incident planning.

I urge you, as our representatives to fight to fully fund this essential service for Central Vermont and for the entire State. Without the states USAR team being properly funded it puts our first responders at a severe disadvantage to respond and provide rescue and evacuations to our estimated 70,000 citizens here in Central Vermont. I also urge you to make this funding permanent and as part of the fiscal annual budget.

Again Thank you for allowing me to testify and available if there are any questions

Respectfully,

Joseph G. Aldsworth

Deputy Chief, Deputy Emergency Management Director for the City of Barre & President of the Capital Fire Mutual Aid system, ^{VT} EMS Dist #6 Chair