

**Governor's Office of Homeland Security And Emergency Preparedness
State of Louisiana**

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First Responder Subcommittee Meeting Minutes

Thursday, August 13th, 2026, at 10:00 AM

GOHSEP Overwatch

7667 Independence Blvd., Baton Rouge, LA

ATTENDEES

The following First Responder Subcommittee members or their designees and others were present: Chairman Steven McCain; Vice Chairman Bryan Adams; Department of Public Safety and Corrections-Frank Besson; Regional HSEP-Earl Eues; GOHSEP-Brent Lewis; State Fire Marshall-Chad Sonnier; Non-profit Vol. Group-Burk Hughes; additional LA-SAFE/LSP Staff including Jonathan Kemp, Justin Berry, Dave Hernandez, and Christie Varnado; and additional GOHSEP Staff including Mark Ward, Matt McKee, Stephen Durel, Denda Ball, Tiffany Brouillette, Jackie Manton, and Jacie Jeansonne.

WELCOME

Sheriff Steven McCain called the meeting to order. After a roll call it was determined a quorum of the statutory members of the subcommittee were present. McCain welcomed everyone.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

McCain asked for a motion to approve the minutes for November 13, 2025. There was no opposition. Earl Eues motioned, and Chad Sonnier seconded. The November 2025 meeting minutes were approved.

Current and Emerging Threats Briefing

LA-SAFE (Dave Hernandez and Christie Varnado):

- Dave Hernandez discusses targeted critical infrastructure sectors:
 - Commercial
 - Mall of LA shooting (April 16)
 - Thwarted NOLA festival attack (April 23)
 - Public Safety
 - Officer involved shootings
 - Damage to LPRs
 - Damage to emergency vehicles
 - Energy
 - Electrical control systems and threats against the grid
 - Government Facilities
 - Bomb threats and UAS incursions (Barksdale)
 - Water and Wastewater
 - Michigan, Minnesota, South Dakota
 - LA has 250 water treatment facilities-20 have reported no intrusions
- Hernandez discusses threat vectors:
 - UAV usage
 - Vehicle Ramming
 - On mass gathering events or on plant gates or substations
 - Unauthorized Excavations
 - Not calling before digging and fiber optic lines being damaged
 - Cyber
 - Threats to all critical infrastructure in the state.
 - Domestic Violent Extremist
 - Physical attacks on critical infrastructure or public events
 - Nihilistic Violent Extremist (NVE)
 - Varnado adds an explanation: NVE groups will target vulnerable populations (usually children) and then coerce the person to do terrible things to cause chaos. A concern is that it will bleed into the lone-wolf actor category
 - McCain adds to the difficulty of the situation with personal anecdote.
 - Foreign Threat Actors
 - Primarily responsible for cyber-attacks on critical infrastructure
 - Secure Communications Platforms
 - FTO, HVE, DVE, and NVE on apps such as WhatsApp, Telegram and Signal
 - Ex. Swatting attacks
- Hernandez discusses emerging threats:
 - Data Center Attacks
 - Colocation Data Centers—attacks on these affect all Critical Infrastructure sectors, because every facility needs data storage.
 - Hyperscale Data Center—processing side

- Defense Industrial Base
- Threat Picture
 - Calls for arson, physical violence such as hangings, protests/counter-protests
- LPR (Flock)
 - Cutting down or running them over with cars (has happened in several spots all of LA)
 - Next week there is a call to action
 - Hernandez assumes there will be an uptick in damage to these systems.
 - There is a major concern that there will be obstruction of LE operations such as AMBER alerts or criminal investigations and a compromise on officer safety
 - There are websites where people will post the location of the cameras.
 - There is a lot of negative sentiment online about this issue.

Intelligence Coordination Center (Mark Ward and Justin Berry):

- ICC has been started in coordination between GOHSEP and LA-SAFE
 - Mark Ward says the plan is to always have someone at the table to share information with emergency response and law enforcement partners
 - ICC Charter has been created.
 - Hopefully committee meetings will start in October
 - There will be subcommittees set up under the committee to help with policy changes/recommendations
 - Justin Berry says this collaboration has been in the developmental process for about a year
 - Fusion centers were created post 9/11 to share info; however, Louisiana still silos information. The ICC will help mitigate this issue.
 - The subcommittees made of SMEs in each field will help create policy to share information from the bottom up, and each working group will have federal partners present.
 - The point is to strengthen Louisiana's intelligence community by sharing information about vulnerabilities that could affect the state to law enforcement and private partners across the state.
 - This is an affective framework that will be a game changer for Louisiana even though it is still a work in progress.
 - Brent Lewis says one of the goals of the ICC is to predict and prevent events rather than respond to and report on what has already happened.
 - McCain asks how statewide partners will be informed of potential attacks
 - Ward says that the process of notification is still being developed, but a regular cadence will be determined to share information.

- Berry says the Fusion Liaison Officer (FLO) program is active, and LA-SAFE staff are trying to enhance the program. The plan is to create a process for delivering strategic briefings to leadership and then create analytical products to be shared.
- Lewis says if something is imminent, a phone call would be made to inform the necessary partners.
- Berry says professional development and training will also be involved with the creation of the ICC
- Ward says the ICC working groups and subcommittees will be fluid depending on the threats and vulnerabilities found in the future
- Ward says the ICC will be attempting to establish frequent regional meetings across the state, maybe once a quarter
 - McCain says it is worthy of everyone's time to meet and share information
 - Berry says constant engagement is necessary to accomplish the goal of strengthening Louisiana's intelligence community.

Unmanned Aerial Systems-LSP (Jonathan Kemp)

- Jonathan Kemp discusses federal and state laws that affect UAS usage in Louisiana
 - Safer Skies Act
 - Created to bypass six other laws regarding drones being considered a plane and/or computer
 - It authorizes SLTT law enforcement and correctional agencies to intercept and mitigate drone threats.
 - The American Security Drone Act
 - Supply and demand of UAS have been affected, because U.S. agencies are only allowed to buy U.S.-made drones
 - McCain asked if there is any effort to expand the backlog of people in the line for UAS mitigation schooling in Huntsville.
 - Kemp said that there are some classes scheduled for next year, but only 16 people per class are allowed. Train-the-trainer option was denied by federal partners.
 - Kemp understands why federal partners are worried about the wrong people being able to mitigate drones, because it would be very easy to mitigate a drone incorrectly and cause damage.
 - FAA Extension, Safety, and Security Act
 - FAA has formalized the process for facilities to request FTRs over critical infrastructure facilities.
 - Buy American Procurement Standards for UAS
 - LA Act 521
 - Pilot bill allowing public safety officials to deploy UAS for rapid emergency response and threat detection on public school campuses.

- 6 U.S.C. 124n(a)(1) is where we are now. The FBI is the only entity allowed to mitigate drones.
 - 6 U.S.C. 124n(a)(2) will give Louisiana the ability to mitigate, but requires the state to notify the federal government on what is occurring.
- The “We Will Act” Act (LA Act 170)
 - Gives the authority for LA to mitigate, even though you still must follow federal law.
 - Cannot fly over parade routes
 - Cannot fly over military installations
- Act 854
 - Unlawful drone use amendments
 - Hopefully will assist the state stage with appropriate equipment across the state to respond more quickly to UAS issues
- LA is creating drone threat assessment
 - Most threats called in are actually planes and not UAS
 - Anyone in the public will be able to have access to the assessment
 - It will give an assessment a rating and determine in a more streamlined way on how to respond
- LSU Football Season
 - Ground Intercept Teams are being provided this year
 - TFR in place for all LSU home games (3 miles around Tiger Stadium); in effect one hour before kickoff and one hour after the end of the game
 - All parties are very serious and will enact fines and strict arrests starting this year.
 - McCain asks if LSP would be interested in allowing statewide partners to join in.
 - Kemp says of course.
 - Frank Besson suggests a rotation schedule can be developed to allow personnel from different sheriff’s offices to gain experience on the counter-UAS team.
- Vice Chairman Bryan Adams asks if there are any issues with Amazon drone usage in Baton Rouge
 - Kemp says there have been some complaints from local law enforcement because there have been some issues during operations

Cybersecurity-Cyber Threats Analytics Center (Matt McKee and Stephen Durel)

- Matt McKee provides an update on the new GOHSEP structure
- Stephen Durel provides a threat intel briefing for first responders
 - Ultimately attacks are not letting up and in fact are ramping up across the state.
 - North Korea, Russia, and Iran are the three main actors
 - A printout was provided to personnel present listing the current threat landscape, key threats and operational priorities for the state.

- Louisiana Cyber Assurance Program is still letting entities across the state join
 - The intent is that if everyone went down in a parish, at least one site would still be operational
- McKee provides a couple of examples for potential threats across the state:
 - Volt Typhoon has infiltrated a lot of water systems in the country
 - Salt Typhoon has compromised a lot of telecommunications systems across the country. McKee warns that nothing sensitive should be communicated by texts because this group probably has access to it.
 - Hernandez says that LSP is in the process of acquiring Evertel that will provide encrypted communications
 - McKee says IMessage for Iphones is encrypted. Not SMS.
- Make sure you have a backup plan on how to operate before you get hit by a cyber-attack. If that attack happens, enact the plan, and then call CTAC.
- Ai-Enhancement Phishing & Social Engineering are tricking more people
- Intel Section has been stood up within CTAC
 - They are monitoring situations and potential cyber-attacks across the state.
- CTAC has a new enduring support model
 - Incident Response Section
 - Office of Cyber readiness for assessments
 - SOC
 - Modified 24/7 support across the state
 - Standard support Monday through Friday through ticket submission
 - After hours support through Signal chat/text app
 - Critical emergency support through calling the ESF2 Cyber after-hours line directly
- SLCGP
 - Applicants put in for a lot of different products and were submitted to FEMA. They are waiting for approval and then will disburse funds.

MSA Relative Risk Score 2026-GOHSEP (Jacie Jeansonne)

- Jacie Jeansonne provides Louisiana's 2026 Final Relative Risk Score to the committee members
 - Risk data for each category is sourced from several different entities.
 - Each category is assigned a risk score and then assigned a value after being compared to all other U.S. states and territories.
 - The final score is ultimately set by the federal government and your state's value in comparison to other states and territories.
 - GOHSEP can only affect two categories on the Relative Risk Score: national infrastructure and special events.

- National infrastructure is very difficult to affect due to the high thresholds needed to nominate infrastructure for consideration.
- With coordination from HSEPs across the state and other partners, GOHSEP has made significant progress on increasing the state's special event risk score.
- Ultimately GOHSEP staff do not feel that the Relative Risk Score is a good indicator of the state's risk, because the Relative Risk Score only utilizes counterterrorism data from a time frame before the January 1 attack in New Orleans.

Unfinished and New Business

Louisiana National Qualification System Implementation and Certification-GOHSEP (Denda Ball and Tiffany Brouillette)

- Denda Ball explains that the NQS subcommittee was created post-Covid to clear up process to meet requirement of grants for HHIMT teams and their training, etc.
- Tiffany Brouillette discusses the NQS Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) that have recently been created:
 - The working group has fulfilled the intent of creating an SOP
 - The SOP has two tracks:
 - Track 1: EMPG-Funded Personnel
 - This is a mandatory condition of grant funding for all parish OHSEP Directors, and local emergency management staff funded in part or in whole by EMPG
 - Track 2: EMAC Interstate Deployments
 - This is required for any emergency management professional or response asset seeking interstate mutual aid deployment
 - Once a person determines their preferred track, they will decide if they are going with one of two pathways that require their own checklist and portfolio
 - Historical Experience Pathway
 - This is for seasoned emergency managers
 - Standard PTB Pathway
 - This is the long-term qualification framework for new emergency management personnel, progressive upgrades, or any applications submitted post-SFY 2027.
- There will be several positions to choose from
- There will be a governance Board of GOHSEP Preparedness, Response and Recovery; 3 seats from ESF leads and one Parish OHSEP Director
- An implementation schedule is provided in which a cadre is seated by June 2027.

- Rusty Edwards (State Fire Marshall) adds that there have been several training courses across the state, and GOHSEP is trying to plan equivalent training classes.
- Ball says EMPG money was requested to pay for this training.
- Bryan Adams says the Fire and Emergency Training Academy is now providing free training.

2025 and 2026 SHSP Budget Review-GOHSEP (Jackie Manton)

- Jackie Manton discusses the 2025 and 2026 recommended allocations.
 - 4.3 million was allocated for both years
 - 2025 and 2026 are very similar except GOHSEP recommended moving cybersecurity money into soft target/crowded places category
 - There was no change between years for pass-through allocation
- McCain asks for motion to accept 2025 and 2026 SHSP Budget allocation
 - Earl Eues motions. Brent Lewis seconds.

Update on Subcommittee Charter and By-Laws

- McCain asks for a motion to accept new By-Laws.
 - There is no opposition to by-laws
 - Frank Besson motions. Bryan Adams seconds.
- McCain asks for motion to accept new Charter.
 - Bryan Adams motions. Chad Sonnier seconds.
- Bryan Adams motions for a new Vice Chairman to be Chad Sonnier.
 - Sonnier introduces himself.
 - There are no oppositions.
 - McCain asks for a second. Frank Besson seconds.

Public Comment

- McCain asks for comments from public or media.
- There are none.
- Ward asks if there is something from outside that the subcommittee wants to be discussed or investigated, please send it in beforehand.
- Lewis lets the group know that a long-time employee of GOHSEP, Steve Burr, passed away a week ago.

ADJOURNMENT

McCain asks for a motion to adjourn. Earl Eues motions. Frank Besson seconds
Meeting is adjourned at 11:30 A.M.