



# ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

**JB PRITZKER**  
GOVERNOR

**JANE R. FLANAGAN**  
DIRECTOR

## Warehouse Safety Standards Task Force

### MEETING MINUTES

**Date:** September 25, 2024  
**Time:** 11:30 a.m.  
**Location:** In-person: SIUE Edwardsville campus  
Virtual: By Webex webinar via video conference connection (video)

**Call to Order:** 11:34a.m - Jane Flanagan, Director of IDOL (Chair)

#### Roll Call of Task Force Members:

Members Present:

Jane Flanagan, IDOL, Director (Chair) (in-person)  
Representative Jeff Keicher (video)  
Representative Dan Ugaste (video)  
Senator Seth Lewis (video)  
Representative Katie Stuart (in-person)  
Senator Erica Harriss (in-person)  
Alec Laird representing retail merchants (video)  
Senator Belt (video)  
Anna Brown, AFL-CIO (in-person)  
Marcos Cenicearos (video)  
Rep Kevin Olickal (video)

**Quorum established 11 out of 16 present**

Others Present:

Clayton Cope family members: Alexandra Cope (in-person), Parents Lynn and Carla Cope (audio)

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Cathy Hensley, City of Edwardsville, Communications Director (video)  
Greg Bryant, Masonry Structural Coalition (in-person)  
Bruce Augustin – Masonry Institute of St. Louis (in-person)  
Kathryn Gruber – Illinois Counsel of Code Administrators (video)  
Lynn Vasquez – Masonry Institute of Southern Illinois (in-person)  
Press Member (in-person)  
Patty Williams and Jessica Wembley, Chief of Staff taking notes on behalf of Senator Ventura  
James Whiteford, City of Edwardsville Fire Chief

*IDOL Staff Present:* Jason Keller, Assistant Director; Elizabeth Guerrero, Director of External Affairs & Community Engagement; Anna Koeppel, Legislative and Policy Director; Erik Kambarian, IDOL OSHA Division Chief; Stephanie Barton, Deputy General Counsel.

### **Opening Remarks:**

Director Flanagan – Purpose is to get organized for final report purposes and will review testimony and information presented to date and establish a process and timeline for finalizing the task force report and recommendations.

Senator Stuart: Thank you to everyone for attending and the good work everyone is doing as we start to wrap up the work and make change and recommendations to the General Assembly.

### **Approval of 7//24 Minutes**

- Motion by Anna Brown
- Second by Rep. Keicher
- Motion passed

### **Approval of Quarterly Report**

- Motion by Rep. Keicher
- Second by Rep. Stuart
- Motion passed

### **New Business:**

Chair, Director Jane Flanagan - present PowerPoint –

#### **1. Slide 1 Agenda and Objectives:**

- Review summary of expert testimony
- Review summary of recommendations from experts
- Establish process and timeline for finalizing Task Force report and recommendations

No discussion of slide 1

#### **2. Slide 2: Draft Outline for Final Report:**

- Background on Taskforce and acknowledgments

- Exec summary and recommendations
- Summaries of Expert Testimony
- Task Force Recommendations – groupings taskforce discussed
  - Structural safety (building code standards and enforcement)
  - Warehouse disaster & emergency plans and procedures
  - Emergency response

No discussion of slide 2

3. **Slide 3 – Prior Meetings and Topics:**

- July 18, 2023 – December 2021 Tornado Response
- Nov. 2, 2023 – Warehouse Internal Operations and Procedures
- Jan. 30, 2024 – Warehouse Structural Safety
- April 8, 2024 – Occupational Safety and Emergency Response
- July 10, 2024 – Building Code Enforcement
- Sept.24, 2024 – Discussion of Final Report Process

No discussion of slide 3

4. **Slide 4 – Summary of Expert Testimony**

5. **Slide 5 - Background on Edwardsville Tornado**

- Structure of Edwardsville warehouse made walls fall over once roof blown off
- Challenges coordinating emergency response between different agencies in the area
- Large physical site and on-going (tornado, electrical) threats posed ongoing challenges for emergency responders
- Challenges accounting for people in multi-employer facility
- Source: Edwardsville Fire Chief James Whiteford; media reports and footage

Discussion:

- Director: This is a summary and does not include all the information at each meeting and need to know anything anyone wants to be include in the final report, so please review and be thinking of anything else. This is considered all as draft.
- City of Edwardsville, Fire Chief Whiteford – 6,000 sq. foot warehouse, so size was a challenge, but fact multi-employer facility and accounting of people makes it difficult. Appears to be a good overview of the situation at the site.

6. **Slide 6 – Background on Edwardsville Tornado**

- Investigation found that Amazon did have an Emergency Action Plan (EAP)
- OSHA report found no violations – no specific standard for warehouse
- OSHA Report identified “risk factors” to be addressed:
  - → Megaphones locked in a case and not accessible
  - → Some employees did not recall location of shelter-in-place facility and stated that

- they had never participated in a safety drill previously
  - EAP was not customized for the Edwardsville location, did not identify the shelter area.
- Where federal OSHA has not adopted a specific standard, states can enact regulations that impact
- Sources: Brian Bothast, United States Department of Labor Occupational Safety and Health Administration; public US DOL OSHA Fairview Heights Office Inspection Letter to Amazon

No discussion of slide 6.

#### 7. Slide 7 – **Background on Warehousing**

- Warehousing has soared in the past decade, from an industry with a little over 700,000 workers to just under 2 million. (80,000 workers working in the warehousing industry in Illinois alone).
- Warehousing has high labor demand as technology adoption has been uneven.
- Warehouse operators placed increased reliance on temporary staffing agencies, to cope with labor demand.
- Common to have a mix of employees of temporary staffing agencies, direct employees of Amazon, and driver delivery services in and out of warehouses.
- Warehouses have high occupational injury rates
- Sources: Dr. Beth Gutelius, UIC; Tommy Carden, Warehouse Workers for Justice

No discussion on Slide 7.

#### 8. **Slide 8 – Background Testimony on Building Codes**

- Building Code standards are largely decentralized in IL; local governments have authority to adopt codes and inspect buildings.
- In 2023, the General Assembly Enacted the State Building and Residential Codes Act. Now units of local government must choose between recently published versions of standard building codes.
- Building code enforcement is entirely local, standards are inconsistent, and municipalities with fewer resources have challenges with enforcement.
- Since 2015, the International Building Code (IBC) has required tornado shelters only in schools and emergency response facilities.
- States have the ability to establish requirements for tornado shelters above and beyond the IBC standard, or to specify the kind of construction to be used in new warehouse buildings.
- Sources: Tim Schmitz, International Code Council; Jeff Stehman, City of Collinsville; Dr. Marc Levitan, National Windstorm Impact Reduction Program

Discussion:

- Alexander Cope – Heard some testimony about no requirement of certification or license of code inspectors.
- Rep. Stuart: Recall local government can adopt codes but can be below standard is my understanding so want to make sure what the current standard for local governments.

- Director – Want to check if that is still true since State has adopted International Building Code, so let’s clarify that if that is still true.
- Anna Koeppel: Will check minutes and experts to verify.
- Rep. Ugaste: Referring to last minutes, but believe Tim Schmidt stated if existing codes in place, they do not have to change them, but anyone who did not have one, had to be up to standard.
- Anna Koeppel: Believe both can be true. However, Rep. Stuart was referring to the issue of an amendment to exempt – they can do so for non-structural. Law enacted earlier this year defines structural design as “the capacity of a [building] to withstand forces [such as] snow loads, wind loads, soil loads and hydrostatic pressure, rain loads, and earthquake loads, and to resist flood damage.” Counties and municipalities are not restricted in how their local codes address any other topic covered by a building code, such as soundproofing or residential fire sprinklers.
- Director: This is a summary, but minutes have more details for review.

9. **Slide 9 – Summary of Expert Recommendations**

10. **Slide 10 – Recommendations- Structural Safety**

- Ensure that building codes require appropriate shelters or that warehouses are built to withstand tornados.
- Encourage or require designated places for shelter or designated “storm shelters,” in large footprint structures. Note that to be a designated “storm shelter” an area must meet the ICC Building Code 500.
- Design some or all ICC Risk Category II buildings (such as warehouses) to be built to meet the higher standards applied to Risk Category III buildings (such as schools and group homes) or Risk Category IV buildings (such as emergency responder stations.) Alternatively, Risk Category II buildings, or warehouses in particular, which have tall heavy walls that rely on a roof for stability instead of a traditional steel frame, should be built to withstand a minimum tornado speed or intensity.
- Possible means of implementation could include voluntary compliance by builders/building owners; statewide or regionalized statutory requirement; local municipal ordinances...what else?

No Discussion on slide 10

11. **Slide 11 – Recommendations – Structural Safety**  
**Prioritize more regular building inspections by qualified inspectors.**

- Local governments should collaborate on regional pools of code inspectors that could serve multiple communities; or if a local government has an insufficient budget for code inspection, that government should require the builder to pay for the inspection.
- Alternatively, the state could fund a grant program to help smaller jurisdictions meet the need for code enforcement personnel or supplements inspection and enforcement of building code standards.
- Building owners should notify authorities if there is change in commodities or population inside the building, with a resulting re-inspection.

- The State could establish professional licensure for building code inspectors, as exists for other professions such as [architects](#), [professional engineers](#), [design firms](#), etc. Alternatively, local jurisdictions should require that code inspectors become certified by a professional body [such as the International Code Council](#).
- Possible means of implementation could include legislative changes, State budget priorities, municipal collaboration.... what else?

Discussion:

- Chair – Just clarifying these are the summary of recommendations we have heard only.

## 12. **Slide 12 – Recommendations – Disaster & Emergency Plans and Procedures**

- Develop clear protocols for emergency action planning and training in large, multi-employer warehouse settings and provide authority and hierarchy for employees in the event of an emergency.
- Ensure that warehouse employers have emergency action plans, as required by OSHA regulations. These should include designated areas of refuge/storm shelters/safe rooms, and a way to get the workers to those safe places in a timely fashion. This includes hazard communication capabilities (such as bullhorns or loudspeakers that are audible even in the presence of noisy machinery) in the event of severe weather.
- Conduct drills and training on emergency action plans regularly.
- Employers in warehouses should have regular safety talks with occupants and be required to discuss tornado response plans with occupants.
- Clarify where safety responsibilities lie in multi-employer workplaces to ensure that workers receive clear information about procedures in advance of any emergency, and consistent messages in an emergency.
- Possible means of implementation could include awareness and voluntary compliance, developing additional state standards.... what else?

Discussion:

- Marcos Cericerros – Spoke about facility and policies in Joliet area and have policy in place but do not practice the practice drills and where can we discuss accountability to train and talk to workers in appropriate language and part of recommendations.
- Chair – Tried to capture in 3<sup>rd</sup> bullet point of this slide as training and drills are critical and we heard testimony of when those drills have worked during tornados.
- Rep Stuart – On 3<sup>rd</sup> bullet point Emergency Action Training to be performed regularly and in the language the employees primarily speak.

## 13. **Slide 13 – Recommendations – Emergency Response**

- Help equip local fire departments and emergency response agencies to be more prepared to coordinate personnel and equipment necessary to respond to a disaster like a tornado throughout a geographic region by investing in the Illinois Mutual Aid Box Alarm System

(MABAS).

- Local emergency response agencies (such as police or fire departments) should review those emergency response plans in large facilities such as warehouses, be familiar with them and the physical layout of these large footprint areas so that they are able to target response and search and rescue efforts in the event of a natural disaster.
- Consider statewide support for local police and fire in this respect.
- Possible means of implementation could include legislation paired with budget allocation; future coordination with IEMA; statewide conference or planning among fire chiefs... what else?

Discussion:

- Erik Kambarian – MABAS established in 1968 in IL and designed to increase cooperation between fire departments with over 1100 state fire departments to work together as mutual or automatic aid. It is already pre-determined who comes to help for additional resources and dispatch already know who to call and what to bring statewide. It is model program expanded beyond Illinois for Fire Departments nationally to work together when another department needs assistance.
- Chair – Do we know cost?
- Erik K. MABAS has assets that are distributed to state for equipment funded through various sources, but there are initial costs and maintenance costs. MABAS has staff and chiefs work together in the certain counties/MABAS designate area, so there are variable costs. 911 funding surge are past us, but long-term outlook of maintenance and replacement of MABAS system is of concern, but the need is to coordinate large-scale event.

14. **Slide 14 – Draft Process and Timeline:**

- On or before Oct. 16, 2024 – Members provide feedback on draft recommendations or new recommendations and Members of the public submit any additional recommendations
- On or before October 30<sup>th</sup> – IDOL circulates the draft report and recommendations
- Week of Nov.12<sup>th</sup> – Task Force discusses and votes on final report
- Late November – IDOL circulates final version for minor edits
- Early December – IDOL Submits final report

Discussion:

- Rep. Ugaste – Please share prior documents and minutes. Good outline to get things rolling and may need to make changes to timeline if need more time and will depend on how many recommendations and agreement.
- Chair – Rep. Stuart clarified, it is due at the end of this calendar year an may want to put a hold on first of December as mid-November may be aggressive time line.
- Chair – Means of recommendations – how much does Taskforce want to hear at high-level or provide specific implementation details to vote on.
- Rep. Keicher – When get into details more to edit and leave to local jurisdiction in manner they choose
- Rep Stuart – Believe it’s important that if something is recommended for statutory change, that is communicated to General Assembly in report.

- Rep. Keicher – Agreed, but think it should be avoided a bull point recommendations, but yes statutory requirements should be proposed, if needed.
- Rep. Stuart – Such as MABAS that needs continued appropriation that needs to be included to General Assembly.
- Chair – Thank you that gives me parameters for the report structure.

**Public Comments:**

Alexander Cope – Presents two documents – A letter to taskforce from Cope family for recommendations of final report for TaskForce’s consideration. Primary recommendation is for the Taskforce to consider use of Tornado Preparation for Employer document from OSHA’s website of voluntary best practices for worker tornado guidelines to write this into law. Trainings conducted and completed documentation submission and pass into law and consider statewide certifications for building code inspectors, as well as state funds set aside for building and safety warehouse inspections. Thank you to Taskforce for the family to be heard and the dedicated work.

Chair – Documents from Ms. Cope and PowerPoint will go out to all members of Taskforce.

Chair – Anything else from members? None.

Motion to Adjourn: 12:33p.m.

Rep. Ugaste –Motion

Anna Brown – Second

Motion Passes

If you think you have constituents that want to weigh-in, please do so before next meeting.