



ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

JB PRITZKER
GOVERNOR

JANE R. FLANAGAN
DIRECTOR

November 15, 2023

To Governor Pritzker and members of the Illinois General Assembly:

Please see attached for the report of the July 18, 2023, meeting of the Warehouse Safety Standards Task Force, as required by 20 ILCS 4124/3-10 (below.) This report was approved by the Task Force on November 2, 2023.

Sec. 3-10. Reports. The Task Force must provide quarterly updates of its findings, discussions, and decisions to the Governor and the General Assembly. The Task Force shall submit a final report of its recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly no later than January 1, 2025.

Sincerely,

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Director

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Report to the Governor and General Assembly on the Warehouse Safety Standards Task Force.

Pursuant to Public Act 102-1115, the General Assembly established the Warehouse Safety Standards Task Force to study warehouse safety standards. The Task Force is charged with providing quarterly updates of its findings, discussions, and decisions to the Governor and General Assembly, leading to a final report of recommendations by January 1, 2025.

The Task Force held its inaugural meeting on July 18, 2023, in Edwardsville, Illinois. Illinois Department of Labor Director Jane Flanagan convened the meeting. In addition to regular meeting business such as introductions and adoption of bylaws, the members were welcomed by James T. Minor, Chancellor of Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville, which hosted the meeting; Edwardsville Mayor Art Risavy, also a member of the Task Force; and State Representative Katie Stuart, who represents the Edwardsville area in the Illinois General Assembly.

Also in attendance was the family of Clayton Cope, a worker at the Amazon warehouse facility in Edwardsville who was killed when a tornado destroyed the warehouse on December 10, 2021. Carla Cope, Clayton's mother, spoke to the Task Force about her family's advocacy in the wake of the loss of her son, and stated that she looks forward to seeing how the Task Force will be used to better protect workers.

Following Ms. Cope's remarks, Edwardsville Fire Chief James Whiteford made a presentation to the Task Force. On the day of the tornado, December 10, 2021, Chief Whiteford was charged with leading emergency response efforts and coordinating emergency response agencies. His presentation included audio and video of the storm, the damage to the warehouse, and audio of the emergency response radio communications. He emphasized the physical challenges the emergency responders faced, such as a second storm wave that passed through Edwardsville during the rescue efforts; and downed electrical wires that presented an electrocution hazard. He also emphasized the institutional challenges the emergency response agencies faced, such as the difficulties in coordinating personnel and equipment from a variety of agencies in the geographic region.

Chief Whiteford concluded his presentation by making three recommendations to the Task Force, as follows:

1. The Task Force should encourage more governmental financial support of the Illinois Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS), a statewide mutual aid response system for fire, EMS, and specialized incident operational teams. Through MABAS, communities agree to voluntarily send resources to other communities that experience crisis, and also can benefit from other communities' aid if they experience a crisis. The MABAS network was a critical resource for Edwardsville during the tornado response.
2. The Task Force should lobby the International Code Council, a private entity that publishes building codes which are adopted by jurisdictions throughout the world, to provide code guidance that could allow businesses to create additional shelter options for the public to improve safety at a minimal cost.

3. The Task Force should find ways to support small communities in the hiring and training of code enforcement officials. This could include a state-funded grant program to help smaller jurisdictions meet the need for qualified, trained code enforcement personnel.

After Chief Whiteford's presentation, Director Flanagan suggested that the Task Force focus on three areas:

1. Structural safety and building codes
2. Warehouses' internal policies, protocols for emergencies, and managing staff of multiple employers on-site
3. Challenges faced by local emergency response agencies, and best practices for emergency response

Task Force members discussed these potential areas of emphasis and ultimately voted to pursue all three in the course of the task force's duties.