

MINUTES March 11, 2026

New City Hall 3rd Floor County Commissioner's Board Room & Virtual 9:10 am – 10:01 am

APPROVAL OF MINUTES as distributed [1st: Bob Lough with YARES; 2nd: Bobby Westbrook with ParMontana Refinery]

AGENDA – DISCUSSION:

Quarterly Financial Report: NEXT REPORT IN MARCH

Ending Balance: \$30,574.18

- No revenues or expenses to report

Member Presentation(s):

No member presentation(s) this month. Contact Jen Staton to get on the schedule.

Subcommittee Schedule & Chair Contact:

- Right-to-Know (RTK)
 - VACANT
- Public Education & Information
 - CCC/CAER
 - Pam Sanderson
 - psanderson406@gmail.com
 - 4th Tuesday every month; 09:30-10:30 @ United Way or virtual
 - Crisis Communications
 - VACANT
- Hazardous Materials Facilities Liaison
 - VACANT
- Emergency Response and Resources
 - Exercise Design
 - Paul Totton (Email Chrissy Brese with questions)
 - volcoord@uwyellowstone.org
 - 4th Tuesday every month; 10:30-11:30 @ United Way or virtual
- Grants
 - Dianne Lehm
 - dianne@bigskyeda.org
 - Meets as needed. Contact Dianne for more details.

- Training
 - yclepc@gmail.com
 - Email all training opportunities to LEPC Gmail.

Subcommittee Reports:

- ***Right-to-Know (RTK) & Hazardous Materials Facilities Liaison***
 - Both committees still need a chair
- ***Public Education & Information***
 - Two members of the group have moved/left the area, as such the CCC is shifting their focus to include citizen preparedness in addition to responder preparedness.
 - Focus shift/group is on hold until they restart meetings – TBD.
- ***Emergency Response & Resources***
 - Exercise Design
 - May 2026 is the mandatory annual FAA exercise. 2026 is the full-scale exercise for the airport – Set for May 14, 2026.
 - More details to come at a later date.
- ***Grants***
 - Homeland Security Grant Awards Update
 - Funding is still on hold until Federal Government Shutdown/funding freeze on DHS is released/ends.
 - FY26/27 grant cycle applications have not opened, nor has any information regarding NOFO drop date been released.
 - FY25/26 Application Projects on hold/unable to move forward until funding is released.
- ***Training***
 - **Emergency Management Institute (EMI) in Maryland is currently paused/closed. Unknown if this is a temporary or permanent decision.**
 - As there is no chair, there are no meetings.
 - All training opportunities should be emailed to LEPC Leadership, so they can forward them to the rest of the LEPC members.
 - Training opportunities can be found at:
 - MTDES
 - DNRC/NWCG fire classes
 - Betsy Ross is the state training coordinator at MTDES (betsy.ross@mt.gov)
 - New training opportunities are **BOLDED**.
 - CISA does numerous FREE online trainings/webinars.
 - Continue pursuing NIMS/ICS training. ICS 100, 200, 700, and 800 are free and can be completed 100% online.
 - [ICS 700.B – An Introduction to the National Incident Management System](#)
 - [ICS 100.C – Introduction to Incident Command System, ICS 100](#)
 - [ICS 200.C – Basic Incident Command System for Initial Response, ICS-200](#)

- [ICS 800.D – National Response Framework, An Introduction](#)
- **IF DEPARTMENTS OR AGENCIES NEED ADDITIONAL CLASSES (higher level ICS) – CONTACT DES.**

End subcommittee reports

Continuing Discussion/Old Business:

- LEPC Direction Leadership Update:
 - A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Yellowstone County, the City of Billings, the City of Laurel, and the Town of Broadview was drafted by the DES department in October 2025 to clarify the roles and responsibilities of each aforementioned party, as well as the roles and responsibilities of the Yellowstone County DES Department to each of those entities (per Montana Code Annotated).
 - This MOU would formalize in writing (and eventually adopted in resolution) what has previously been poorly worded, vaguely understood, or strictly verbal/handshake agreements regarding the roles and responsibilities of the DES Department and the Principal Executive Officers of each political subdivision.
 - This MOU is “currently being vetted by the legal departments of the Cities of Billings and Laurel.”
 - Feedback towards the MOU has been fairly positive up to this point.
 - Uncertainty around meeting content/spotty meeting schedules have been due to conflicting updates/feedback from political subdivision leadership regarding the MOU.
 - LEPC Leadership did not want to invest a lot of time and work into updating plans only to have to scrap it and start over when the MOU comes back and changes the model/process.
- Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) and Hazardous Materials Plan (HAZMAT Plan) Updates:
 - Each jurisdiction (county/city/town) is required to have both of these plans.
 - Previous plans have been combined where the Cities of Billings and Laurel and the Town of Broadview adopted the same EOP and HAZMAT Plan as adopted by Yellowstone County.
 - Regardless of the future direction, both plans need to be heavily updated/edited, but are dependent upon the adoption and terms of the MOU.
 - We will move forward with starting to update the HAZMAT Plan on the assumption that the MOU is likely going to be adopted fairly close to the existing verbiage.

- We need to overhaul the written verbiage around operations, procedures, and policies so they are consistent and reflect reality so we aren't holding ourselves to an unrealistic standard.
 - We also need to pull the plan's focus back to more of a 10,000-foot view of the event as the current plan dabbles in tactics which makes this plan harder to implement consistently/well.
- DES to start working with refinery and railroad Emergency Response Teams (ERTs) and Billings Fire Department (BFD) HAZMAT Team (designated LERA), to coordinate realistic response protocols:
 - Who makes the call when the incident starts?
 - Where is the incident happening?
 - What happens if/when the incident falls outside the fence [of the refinery]?
 - **Note: Even when large events remain within the fence, refineries often work with BFD to act as a third-party source to confirm that the event truly stayed within the fence (through air quality monitoring).**
 - Is emergency messaging to the public needed?
 - How is messaging requested (process)?
 - Who sends the messaging?
 - What messaging needs to go out?
 - *DES will set up a date for 3 refinery ERTs and BFD (and possibly Peter Killman with BNSF) to discuss and review the HAZMAT Plan.*
 - *Goal is to structure the response in the HAZMAT Plan so it is predictable and consistent, regardless of where the event occurs, what is spilled, or who is leading the response.*
 - *Goal is to simplify the incident response (especially when it's 'within the fence').*
- Firming up protocols, policies, and agreements to better reflect reality.
 - To include: Evacuations, traffic control, public messaging, responder communications, roles and responsibilities, etc.
- The HAZMAT Plan is written for response to a large-scale event (not a small spill).
 - Update to better define and establish the threshold.
 - Just because a general caller calls in a possible event, does not mean it automatically qualifies as a HAZMAT event (not a trigger point).
- Currently dispatch sends out a one or two (non-hazmat) engine response to a possible HAZMAT event to further assess the validity and potential scope and escalate the response from there accordingly.
- The leveled response approach that is outlined in the current HAZMAT Plan does not reflect the current process.

- BFD voiced that they are not opposed to that approach as it may allow dispatch to optimize their callouts.
 - **QUESTION: Do we need to change the [HAZMAT] Plan or change the culture of response?**
 - Possibility to have response be similar to that of the 3-level alert approach currently in effect at the Billings Logan International Airport.
- Writing down a plan and adopting it, while at the same time committing to not following it or responding differently sets a bad legal precedent.
- **Hazardous Release Report**
 - Standard releases/flaring events and small spills.
 - No activations of the EOC or DES Personnel requested.

 - Tier 2 reports are coming in. So far there is a good transition from paper submissions to E-Plan (digital submission system).
 - Is there anyone not reporting that should be?
 - BFD does not conduct audits of who should report in order to ensure compliance.
 - Good function of the LEPC to tackle.
 - Still need some sort of public facing request and/or awareness platform for EPCRA.
 - Is having that hosted on the DES website the right place to house this system?

PUBLIC COMMENT: No public comments given during this time.

TOPICS OF NOTE/SITUATIONAL AWARENESS:

- ParMontana Refinery
 - Upcoming exercise: August 6, 2026 – HF Acid Training
 - Invite list looking to include: YC-DES, other refineries, BFD, area hospitals, ambulance companies, ER staff, and YCSO and MHP (for roadblocks and evacuations discussion), etc.
 - Role players will be present and decontamination setups on scene to show what that process looks like.
 - Day before (8/5) will have the Acid Trailer and chemist training and discussion briefing.

LOCAL EMERGENCY PLANNING COMMITTEE
JOHN V. OSTLUND BUILDING – BILLINGS, MT 59101
JEN STATON, CHAIR

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned @ 10:01 am. [1st: Bob Lough with YARES; 2nd: Bobby Westbrook with ParMontana Refinery]

Next Meeting:

- **APRIL 8, 2026 @ 09:00am**
 - **WE WILL BE IN THE 3RD FLOOR COUNTY COMMISSIONER'S BOARD ROOM AT THE JOHN V. OSTLUND BUILDING**

ATTENDANCE RECORD – MARCH 11, 2026

Agency (Federally Funded?), First & Last Name

1. **Alternatives, Inc.**
 - a. Rick Deady
2. **AMR**
 - a. Brady Drescher
3. **Big Sky EDA**
 - a. Dianne Lehm
4. **Billings Fire Department**
 - a. Cameron McCamely
 - b. Rick Schauer
5. **Billings School District 2**
 - a. Joe Halligan
6. **Laurel EMS**
 - a. Troy Charbonneau
7. **Laurel Police**
 - a. Jarred Anglin
8. **Lockwood Fire**
 - a. Ben Shipp
 - b. Lindsay Lambert
 - c. Ryan Staley
9. **Member(s) of the Public**
 - a. Pam Sanderson
10. **MSU-Billings Police**
 - a. Brandon Gatlin
11. **National Weather Service (yes)**
 - a. Nick Vertz
12. **Par Montana Refinery**
 - a. Bobby Westbrook
13. **Phillips 66 Refinery**
 - a. Steve Blood
14. **Redtail Communications**
 - a. Cody Mehus
15. **Rehabilitation Hospital of Montana**
 - a. David Ude
16. **RiverStone Health**
 - a. Ray Ezell
 - b. John Jones
17. **St. John's United**
 - a. Rob Wilkerson
18. **St. Vincent's Hospital**
 - a. Jennifer Staton
19. **Team Rubicon**
 - a. Rod Boettcher
20. **YARES**
 - a. Bob Lough
 - b. Paul Miller
21. **Yellowstone County GIS**
 - a. Mike Powell
 - b. Alyssa Quiroz
22. **Yellowstone County Sheriff's Office**
 - a. Shane Gibbs
23. **Yellowstone County DES (yes)**
 - a. Annemarie Fowler
 - b. Derek Yeager

TOTAL ATTENDANCE: 30