

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Chairman Banner
Vice Chairman Thompson
Mrs. Cafferata
Ms. Foley
Mr. Hichey
Mr. Bennett
Mr. Jeffrey
Mr. Rackley
Mr. Rhoads

MEMBERS ABSENT:

None

GUESTS PRESENT:

See guest list attached.

WITNESSES TESTIFYING:

Bill Bunker, Federated Firefighters
Michael Verrilli, Clark County Fire Department
Marston Perkins, Firefighters Local 1908
Steven Hanson, Vice President, Firefighters Local 1908
Bob Kerns, Reno Firefighters
Will Diess, Vice President, International Union of Police

Chairman Banner called the meeting to order at 5:05 P. M. and announced to the committee that the bill to be heard is AB-137.

AB-137: Makes various changes in Nevada Industrial Act and Nevada Occupational Diseases Act.

Mr. Bill Bunker, Federated Firefighters, explained to the committee that he would not testify on the bill itself but wanted to give background information. He brought several people with him that this bill affects directly and they will testify also.

Mr. Bunker said the MGM Grand and Hilton Hotel fires, although spectacular, are no more dangerous than the house and trailer fires that the firefighters respond to every day. Small fires are just as life threatening and hazardous, particularly in the area of plastics which emit toxic gasses. Some of the gasses are; carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, hydrogen sulfide, hydrogen cyanide, phosgene, and various aldehydes. Mr. Bunker told the committee that the firefighters do have self-contained breathing apparatus and they are able to put a mask on a fight a fire for 15 or 20 minutes before the air runs out. This is effective

protection in small fires but in large ones such as the high rise hotels it is impossible to reach the bottom for new air bottles at times. The result is usually that once the air runs out the firefighters continue to work and try to find fresh air as long as possible. Ultimately smoke and gasses are breathed into the lungs.

Mr. Bunker spoke about the stress as related to firefighting and paramedic work. In the course of attempting to save lives there is much emotional stress such as children drowning in swimming pools, being able to rescue only part of a family from a burning structure. There is much research now being done pertaining to stress "burnout" as related to life and death situations.

Emergency call statistics for three fire departments in Las Vegas was 37,787 emergency, red light, siren calls. These three departments compose about 660 men. He mentioned at one station there are as many as 32 calls in a 24 hour period for one rig. According to a national study this was the second busiest unit in the United States. Basically they are running on tourists who forget medication or have serious health problems. Firefighters are required to make life and death decisions every day on the job. Children dying in your arms on the way to the hospital is not an unusual situation. Mr. Bunker pointed out that in a firefighters 24 hours on duty they sleep virtually under the gun waiting for the alarm to sound. When the alarm does come, they have approximately one and one half minutes to get oriented to where the emergency is, dress, learn the type of emergency and be on the truck.

Mr. Rhoads wanted to know if the conditions area as bad as described by Mr. Bunker, why does anyone want to become a firefighter. He said in Elko people are waiting for years to be hired by the fire department.

Mr. Bunker answered that the conditions are quite bad. People have come to regard the firefighting profession as glamorous and do not understand the dangers to health or the emotional strain involved. Also, some fire departments are not as busy as the ones in Las Vegas.

Michael Verrilli, Captain, Clark County Fire Department, announced he would speak on the occupational hazards involved in firefighting and mentioned some material he wanted the committee to have.

The first is a report from the University of Oklahoma, it is a dissertation on "Occupational Mortality among Professional Firefighters" and other materials related to his testimony and the testimony of others. All of this material is on file in the secretary's office.

Mr. Verrilli explained to the committee that in March, 1979 he was given the responsibility to set up and run the annual physical examinations for his department, approximately 350 personnel. Examinations are mandated by law because of heart and lung law. They consist of heart examinations, chest x-rays and blood work. The complete report of what was done in this area at the request of the oversight committee will be given to Mr. Banner.

Mr. Verrilli mentioned that claims submitted by firefighters for lung or heart problems to the NIC appeared to be routinely denied, and that is the reason for the changes in the law as set forth in AB-137.

He said that currently on duty today there are 8 to 10 firefighters that are afflicted with some type of disability as a result of their job, ranging from lung injury, heart attacks, fractured discs, knee and elbow repairs, etc. There is no disability rating within the law which would give them compensation.

Mr. Verrilli gave these statistics of injuries and deaths in the two big hotel fires in recent months:

MGM Grand	700 civilian casualties
	85 dead
	150 firefighters injured
	40 hospitalized

Hilton	300 civilian casualties
	8 dead
	100 firefighters injured
	30 hospitalized

Mr. Verrilli told the committee that psychological problems with the firefighters went up dramatically as a result of the two big hotel fires.

Chairman Banner explained the changes in the law as spelled out in AB-137 and went through the bill page by page with Mr. Verrilli and the committee.

Mr. Verrilli then made a slide presentation showing the results of the MGM Grand fire. Following the presentation the committee recessed for a five minute break.

The meeting continued at 6:20 P. M.

Mr. Marston Perkins, Engineer with Firefighters Local 1908, testified that a microscopic spore entered in his lung resulted in the removal of one lung. The NIC had no rating system for this problem. His claim was at first denied then he went through the appeal process. He researched the "San Joaquin Spore"; a spore contained in a manure fire at a nursery where Mr. Perkins had helped fight a fire. NIC eventually approved his claim and

paid medical bills but he has to date not been compensated for all of his time off while ill and recuperating. This bill would help this kind of problem; permanent partial disability. Mr. Perkins thanked Chairman Banner for his help and support during his ordeal.

Mr. Steve Hanson, Vice President Clark County Firefighters 1908, told the committee that he participated in the MGM Grand fire and three days later was in the intensive care unit in the hospital with diagnosed myocarditis, a heart disease.

A causal factor of myocarditis is carbon monoxide poisoning. He was in intensive care one week, one week in medical intensive care, 8 weeks as an out patient in cardiac rehabilitation. The prognosis is unsure as additional damage to the heart or heart muscle might not manifest itself for some time. As the bill stands, if he later has a loss in heart function he cannot be rated because it is considered a disease.

Mr. Hanson invited the members of the committee to come to Las Vegas and ride for 24 hours on a truck for their own experience.

Mr. Bob Kerns, Reno Firefighters, told the committee that Reno faces the same problems as pertains to the Las Vegas firefighters, tenfold. If a similar fire occurred in Reno as happened at the MGM Grand, the maximum number of firefighters would be 250 as compared to 650 in Clark County. The dangers involved to each person would increase tremendously. The Truckee Meadows has no portable air system and a major fire would force firefighters to rescue people without spare bottles.

A point Mr. Kerns wanted to make to the committee was that many people died in the rooms at the MGM with no sign of smoke but from carbon monoxide poisoning. He stressed that you can see smoke but you are not safe under that smoke because you breath carbon monoxide with no discomfort or awareness.

Mr. Thompson brought up the point that lung capacity testing should be required and Mr. Kerns agreed and added that the proposed change in the bill would cover the firefighter and police officer when they are no longer able to do their job because of service related disabilities and occupational diseases. They are trying to get rated at a certain percent of disability and get paid for it.

Will Diess, Vice President, International Union of Police, thought that Mr. Thompson brought up an important point about the lung capacity test. He said many entities in public safety do not require even yearly physicals and the committee might want to address itself to this aspect of the problem. Perhaps the entities should render physical examinations not only at entrance levels but after a catastrophe such as the MGM fire.

Mr. Diess mentioned that the police answer the same calls that the firefighters respond to and protect the scene so the fire can be fought. Therefore, they are exposed to smoke and toxic gases without any life support equipment. Police support people such as in helicopter and search rescue, and homicide men were at that frie also and exposed to the same dangers and should be considered as a part of AB-137.

Chairman Banner presented two bills for committee introduction; AB-206 and AB-209.

Chairman Banner continued this hearing on AB-137 for Monday, March 2, at 5:00 P. M.

Mr. Thompson moved the meeting adjourn; Mr. Bennett seconded the motion and the meeting adjourned at 6:50 P. M.

Respectfully submitted,



Janice Fondi
Committee Secretary

GUEST LIST

AB 137

ate: 2-23-81

PLEASE PRINT YOUR NAME	PLEASE PRINT WHO YOU REPRESENT	I WISH TO SPEAK		
		FOR	AGAINST	BILL NO
CHUCK KING	SELF INSURER ASSOC			137
Will Dress	ALIBON ^{vice president} UNION of ...			
Bill Bunker	Red Fire Fighters	✓		
Mike Verrill	County Fire Dept	✓		
CHUCK LAKING	REPAIRMEN LCC 131			
Wido W. Gerhard	Fire Fighters Local 731			
JON L. JOHNSON	FIRE FIGHTERS LOCAL 731			
Will Keating	employees of ...			11132
CLAUDE FURUS	...	X		131
Don Buehler	...			
Charles Bilardo	SO			
DANNY MANHA	FIRE FIGHTERS LOCAL 731			
Carlos Archuleta	fire fighter LOCAL 731			
Ken Krenth	of Reno		✓	37
Coran Krenth	Las County		✓	137
Bob S. ...	FIRE FIGHTERS	✓		137
Joe			137

ASSEMBLY

AGENDA FOR COMMITTEE ON.....LABOR.....

MONDAY

Date.....FEBRUARY 23.....Time 5:00 P. M. Room.....316.....

Bills or Resolutions
to be considered

Subject

Counsel
requested*

AB-137

Makes various changes in Nevada Industrial
Act and Nevada Occupational Diseases Act.

*Please do not ask for counsel unless necessary.