

LOCAL EMERGENCY PLANNING COMMITTEE

Wednesday, October 15, 2025, 2:30 PM

Meeting Location: Room 255/257/260 Government Services Center
801 N. Sales St., Merrill, WI 54452

MEMBERS PRESENT: Elizabeth McCrank, Tyler Verhasselt, Chris Marlowe, Michael Caylor,
Jennifer Gartmann, and James Kelly

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Rick Burns

MEMBERS ABSENT: Sarah Brooks

VISITORS: Renee Krueger, Shelley Cohrs, Mike Huth, Dana Miller, Arthur Ryzak, Steve Taskay,
Will Garske, and Rich Thiemer

MINUTES

1. Call Meeting to Order by McCrank at 2:32 pm.
2. Meeting minutes from September 17, 2024 were reviewed and approved; Gartmann/Kelly—carried.
3. Meeting minutes from May 7, 2024 were reviewed and approved; Caylor/Verhasselt—carried.
4. Review Correspondence:
 - a. Letter of resignation of Rick Burns as the Chair of the Local Emergency Planning Committee.
5. Public Comment: None
6. Spill Reports:
 - a. WI SPILL #22545/#22556
 - i. Discussion commenced regarding the Tomahawk wastewater sludge spill. Verhasselt clarified the discrepancy in spill volume, with Ryzak (DNR) and Thiemer confirming the corrected volume was 6.5 million gallons. Thiemer detailed the spill detection and response timeline, including the quick repair and public notification via targeted letters and a city Facebook banner. Caylor raised concerns regarding the delay in public notification to property owners and recreation users. Cohrs advised that her office sent targeted letters to 18 addresses. Verhasselt highlighted the need for the City of Tomahawk to designate an emergency management person, which the Taskay acknowledged, stating the incident would prompt formal discussions on the position. Taskay also discussed aging infrastructure and budgetary constraints for major repairs. Thiemer reported post-incident improvements, including hiring a second operator and plans to hire an engineering firm. Arthur Ryzak confirmed the spill entered a wetland complex and that the investigation, including potential sediment testing for heavy metals and future clean-up/monitoring, is ongoing.
7. Public Comment:
 - a. Jim Bayer expressed continued concern over the spill's impact of wetlands and Wisconsin River.
 - b. Mallory Gilbertson expressed concern over the lack of public notification.
8. 2025 Off-Site Response Plan Approval; Verhasselt/Kelly—carried.
 - a. Interflex Group
 - b. Northern Wire, LLC.
 - c. PCA
 - d. Samuel, Son, & Company (USA) Inc.
 - e. Walmart #1366
 - f. Harley Davidson—Kaphaem
9. Next Meeting set for December 17, 2025 at 2:30 pm.
10. Meeting adjourned at 3:48 pm.

Minutes prepared by: Tyler Verhasselt