



STATE FIRE MARSHAL

Automatic Extinguishing Systems Advisory Committee

July 27, 2022, Meeting Minutes, 9:30 A.M. to 1:30 P.M. Pacific Daylight Time (PDT)

Office of the State Fire Marshal

Zoom Meeting Conference Call

Meeting ID: 210 520 3211

MEMBERS PRESENT

Peter Hulin, National Fire Sprinkler Association (NFSA)

Wayne Weisz, American Fire Sprinkler Association (AFSA)

Randy Roxson, Sprinkler Fitters Association of California

Randy Dysart, National Association of Fire Equipment Distributers (NAFED)

Darrell Hefley, Jorgenson Company

Shelley Merrell, Integrated Fire & Safety

Jason McBroom, Alpine Fire Protection District

Bryan Jonson, West Sacramento Fire Department

Todd Golden, Sprinkler Fitter Local 709

Jeff Awtrey, California American Fire Sprinkler Association (CAFSA)

Eddie Wade, Brooks Equipment Company

James Feld, University of California, Berkeley (retired)

Jeff Dixon, Sprinkler Fitters and Apprentices, Local 483

Steven Fox, Sprinkler Fitters and Apprentices, Local 483 (Alternate)

Bruce Lecair, American Fire Sprinkler Association (AFSA) (Alternate)

MEMBERS ABSENT

Allen Quirk, California Association of Life Safety and Fire Equipment (CALSAFE)

Chip Lindley, Lindley Fire Protection

Jason Hudgins, Walschon Fire Protection, Inc.

OSFM STAFF

Al Adams, Committee Chairperson, OSFM

Brice Bennett, Co-Chairperson, OSFM

Greg Andersen, OSFM

Elena Rich, OSFM

Megan Lopes, OSFM
Cortney Walker, OSFM
Jose Sanabria, OSFM
Ernie Paez, OSFM

PUBLIC GUESTS

Wendy Day, Sprinkler Fitters, Local 709
Jeff Bridges, JB Fire Protection
Ted Hakimi, California Fire Protection Coalition
Gary Arakelian, Project/Construction Manager
James Carver, So CAL FPO Equipment and Devices
Rigoberto Vazquez, Advanco Fire Protection
Vahe Zohrabian, California Fire Protection Coalition
John Holmes, Sprinkler Fitters, Local 709
Jon Saia, Fire Safety First
Pamela Schaal, CAFSA
Todd Barry, Sprinkler Fitters UA Local 669
Drew Slocum, Inspect Point
David Karrick, Aegis Fire Systems
James Knowles, Amerex
Amber Barrios, Associated Compliance & Training
Michelle Perez, CAFSA
Terry Householder, General Underground Fire Protection
Kim Stocking, Advanco Fire Protection

I. Call to Order

A. Welcome

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Al Adams, at 9:36 A.M. PDT on July 27, 2022.

B. Roll Call/Determine Quorum

Roll call was conducted by Elena Rich and it was determined that a quorum (12 of 16) of members was present.

C. Introductions

All attendees introduced themselves.

D. Approval of Minutes

Chairperson Al Adams asked for approval of the minutes for the April 27, 2022 meeting. Member Randy Dysart asked for an amendment to the minutes with a change to the company he is representing to NAFED.

It was moved by Member Jason McBroom to approve the minutes as amended; motion seconded by Member Randy Dysart. Motion was unanimously approved at 9:50 A.M. PDT.

E. Announcements

Chairperson Al Adams welcomed everyone to the meeting. He asked Co-Chairperson Brice Bennett to please inform the group of the instructions for today's meeting. Co-Chairperson Bennett further explained the features of the virtual meeting and the meeting agenda. Chairperson Adams added that members of the public are welcome to speak once the agenda has reached public comment period. Chief Greg Andersen introduced himself as the new FEI division chief including his background and experience within the state and the OSFM. He thanked everyone for their participation as the advisory committee meetings are very valuable. Chairperson Adams stated he plans to retire at the end of the month, therefore Chief Andersen will assume the role of chairperson of the committee. He also announced Cortney Walker is the new SSM I for the FEI division, replacing Vikkie Franklin who has promoted out of the division. Chief Steve Hawks has been announced as the new Assistant Deputy Director and Chief Daniel Berlant has been appointed to Deputy Director of Community Wildfire Preparedness and Mitigation. He informed the committee that Chief Hawks may attend future meetings to be informed of the difficulties and challenges in the division and the industry.

Chairperson Adams also announced that there has been a drop in licensees in the sprinkler fitter program. He further stated this drop in licensees is not unique to this program and has been seen throughout all programs. The state contractors board dispersed letter confirmations notifying companies that they need to work with the OSFM to obtain licenses. This led to a lot of inquiries to the OSFM about how to get licensed. He also stated that this is the first year that CEUs have been required and many people have not yet renewed due to not completing the CEU requirement. Chairperson Adams stated he has provided Chief Andersen with as much historical information on the program he could gather to ensure he is aware of what has transpired to get the program where it is today.

Chairperson Adams stated that he knows this is the first year dealing with GOVMotus for renewals and CEUs and he is aware there have been some issues. The OSFM has been working through these issues and documenting them to discuss with the vendor to correct. The issues with GOVMotus have occurred throughout all programs and will continue to improve. Chief Andersen contributed that it has been a huge step for the office to establish a digital platform for renewals and the OSFM will continue to improve the process and investigate issues. Chairperson Adams allowed Chief Andersen to resume the remainder of the meeting as Chair.

- II. OLD BUSINESS
 - A. Partial Sprinklers

Chairperson Andersen presented this topic to the group as it was discussed and voted upon in the last meeting. Chief Adams opened the floor to Guest James Carver who originally presented this topic to the committee. Guest James Carver stated he appreciates the committee's support on this and once the NFPA 25 updates get published and pass through OAL they will pass it on to their membership. Chairperson Andersen stated he would like the update to have the newest editions of NFPA 25, and work will be done to make it ADA compliant. Member James Feld stated that he would like to incorporate partial sprinklers into Chapter 5 amendments to correlate with the forms.

Member Darrell Hefley moved to accept partial sprinklers into Chapter 5 regulation changes; Member Jason McBroom seconded the motion. A roundtable vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously in favor of approval at 10:05 A.M. PDT.

B. Regulations Development

i. Chapter 5.5 Language

Co-Chairperson Bennett thanked everyone for their participation. He informed the group that the language changes are currently being reviewed amongst staff.

ii. Chapter 5 Language

Co-Chairperson Bennett announced the workgroup is meeting the second week of August to resume discussion on Chapter 5 regulations language changes.

Chairperson Andersen opened the floor for any questions from the committee on regulations development; no further comment was made.

C. Forms

Co-Chairperson Bennett thank everyone who participated in developing the forms and stated forms are back with staff. Member Shelley Merrell stated that Member Feld presented a question as to having the subcommittees double check the code references listed on the forms. She stated this is a task that still needs to be accomplished.

Guest Drew Slocum posed a question regarding the forms from a tech perspective. He stated they are a software platform that has imbedded a workflow according to the current Title 19 regulations to better flow the inspection process amongst contractors, AHJ, and the building owner. His question regarding the new form development was, can the data within the form be gathered in a different format or does it need to be in the same format as the form? Chairperson Andersen reminded guests that public comment was reserved for later in the agenda. He answered by stating that most of the time in the regulations they are looking at what specifically is required in the form, and if provided a written document. There is also

the option to provide an internet form and spell out exactly what is asked. In this case it could be in different formats, however, further explained the information must be in the regulations. Member Feld stated in the past there have been issues across the state with the utilization of various forms and gathering information. He stated that is why they came up with one form to be utilized throughout the entire state for standardization and ease of contactors, building owners, and AHJ use. Chairperson Andersen appreciated Member Feld for the input and agreed there are several ways to go about this when submitting information to the state and having internet options. If the form is inputted into regulation, then it will create a standardization for the form to be utilized. Chief Adams stated the Member Feld is correct, and when this topic of standardization was originally presented there were no electronic versions. Now there are more departments transitioning to an electronic format which is causing some reinterpretation of the forms. Dependent upon who the vendor is, depends how the form is being put together. He stated that this may be something the office will look at later or stick with the original understanding that every form must be the same. Chairperson Andersen thanked Chief Adams for his input as this is a very valid point and is something the OSFM is dealing with for a lot with state forms. Either they need to be standardized or if being made to address the digital option it could be that there is a tech program that collects the information and populates the data into the approved form. This may create more work for the industry and should be considered before moving forward. It may be an issue that needs to be addressed once a form is standardized. Knowing that the regulations package is moving forward it can also address the current issues. Alternate Steve Fox stated that he agreed with Member Feld, when the paper forms were created there was confusion on who was doing what and where they are going. However, in the electronic age if they are being submitted electronically the information contained is more important than the format of the form because the technology can sort out the information.

III. NEW BUSINESS

A. Non-Compliance Red Tag

Chairperson Andersen introduced this topic submitted for discussion by Member Randy Dysart. Member Dysart submitted a sample and cover letter to be shared with the group. He stated that there has been a lot of discussion about having a "Non-Compliance" or "Impairment" tag rather than a "Red" tag. The purpose of the tag is to notify any interested individual that something is wrong with the system, not to list deficiencies or impairments, but to direct individual to report and act accordingly. He stated there are some companies who have utilized non-compliance tags and there have been a couple of cases of fire loss where the individual stated they did not know they had a problem. An example that was provided was a situation of fire loss where it was caught on footage that a

red tag was on the system. Member Dysart believes this would be beneficial for the industry. Member Dysart provided a second example of a tag that is white with red lettering as to not be confused with a "Red" tag.

Member Peter Hulin asked if this would need to be in regulation. Member Dysart stated if the OSFM decided to go this route it would be, however, any company could start using their own, as long as the OSFM seal and do not remove by the order of the State Fire Marshal are not on the tag. Chairperson Andersen stated that the OSFM seal and removal warning would need to be codified, this would require criteria on when a system would be tagged, who could tag a system, when it could be removed and by who. Member Dysart agreed and stated this is why it was presented to the committee, to see if it could be a benefit and what the criteria would be requiring a workgroup if it is to move forward.

Member Hulin asked as a contractor if a tag was placed, what authority over the building owner does he have to not have them remove it. Member Edie Wade stated usually this deficiency would also be noted on the invoice. Member Feld stated there needs to be a line drawn that constitutes the criteria for a non-compliance tag, including variations in accordance with the terminology in NFPA 25. He also stated there should be separation between a tag and a label dependent upon the type of system according to how it is defined in regulation. Member Wade stated that is where documentation comes in and there should be record on the invoice as to why a tag was hung. This would remove the need for multiple types of tags.

Member McBroom liked the idea of identifying deficiencies clearly for AHJ inspections and stated there needs to be further discussion on this topic and how it is documented. Member Feld stated he agrees that engine company inspections would benefit the most from having a tag or label.

Member Hulin stated to keep in mind there is no legal requirement that someone must keep the tag in place. Member Dysart stated that as a service company, photo documentation would be reported and submitted as evidence. He also stated that amongst the state the system either passes or fails rather than having various levels of tags as NFPA states.

Chief Andersen stated this is going to need some work to have this completed and posed the question to the committee if this topic is important enough to be included in the current package, a subsequent package, or not at all. Guest James Knowles stated that a lot of cross referencing and defining would need to occur to accomplish this task and should not be rushed. There are a lot of nuances within various systems that need to be considered. Also, with a tag that has the OSFM seal, who has the authority to place a tag and remove the tag? He suggested a

workgroup be formed first, then decide if this is something that would be viable for this package to not hold the package back. Member Feld stated he does not think it will hold up the package because there are other regulations development that are still in progress. He agreed and would like to see this done now. Chairperson Andersen asked Co-chairperson Bennett if a work group is already in place working on regulations or if a new work group would need to be formed. Co-chairperson Bennett stated this topic justifies a new workgroup.

Member James Feld moved to proceed with establishing a workgroup to address a non-compliance label; Member Edie Wade seconded the motion. A roundtable vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously in favor of approval at 10:39 A.M. PDT.

Chairperson Andersen asked Chief Adams if members of the public could participate in the workgroup. Chief Adams stated yes, if there were members of the public who would like to contribute to this topic they may be included. Chairperson Andersen stated an invite will be sent to committee members and anyone who would like to participate in this work group.

B. Employment Verification Letter Certifying

Chairperson Andersen introduced this topic presented to the committee by Member Peter Hulin. Member Hulin stated he can sign the employment verification letter but does not understand why he is required to sign the letter stating they have their apprenticeship training. He stated he has had multiple letters rejected stating that it needs to cover both the employment and training. He asked if there is some way the people responsible for training submit the letter and that the employer is responsible only for employment verification. Chief Adams stated that there is a regulatory conflict with this issue and compliance with current regulation. He asked Co-chairperson Bennett if this section of regulation was under review. Co-chairperson Bennett stated they have not addressed this section yet. Chief Adams stated this could be something that is addressed in the current regulatory package.

Member Hulin asked in the interim if he needs to continue to sign the letters? Alternate Fox stated from a training perspective they compose a letter of all training completed and there is a section of the letter that the employer signs under penalty of perjury that they have received training and employment when transitioning from apprenticeship to journeyman.

Member Feld stated there was also a section of regulation stating the employer is responsible for making sure all employees are registered or certified. Member Hulin stated he can verify they are registered but to verify their experience and what they were taught is something completely

different. Member Todd Golden agreed that the employer doesn't know the history or the transition of what is going on and why the employer is responsible when the apprenticeship program also sends completion information in to the state. Guest Kim Stocking stated the issue is the penalty of perjury, and there should be two letters not solely the employer's responsibility.

Member Randy Roxon asked for the regulations section that is being referenced. Member Darrell Hefley referenced Section 945 that stated verification of experience by the employer.

Member Dysart stated verification of employment is understandable but verifying that the individual has the number of hours or requirements goes away from the intent of the program which is to get the fitter certified. This has required the employer to do things they should not be required to do, when it is the fitter's card not the employers. Guest David Karrick stated that now that we have moved past grandfathering in fitters, the employer verifying experience is no longer applicable and the employer should be absolved of that responsibility. The completion certificate of the program itself should be enough. Chairperson Andersen agreed with what has been said and stated this should be addressed in the regulation.

IV. OPEN FORUM

Member Feld presented the topic of CEU classes that did not have an examination at the end of the course and if the OSFM is monitoring this. Co-chairperson Bennett stated the OSFM is in the beginning stages of this enforcement.

Member Wade stated the term of service and reappointment letters need to be addressed due to a discrepancy in the dates and the next committee meeting. Chief Andersen apologized and stated the OSFM will be extending the date of service until the next reappointment of committee members. Member Hefley confirmed that all appointment letters need to be submitted to the office by September 1st if they would like to be in the committee next year. Member Jeff Awtrey asked to whom the attention goes to for reappointment letters. Chief Adams stated they should be addressed to the State Fire Marshal and submitted to the program coordinator via a mailed letter. Member Feld asked if the address could be provided. Chairperson Andersen stated he would provide the address to the group. Member Hulin asked if a notification was sent regarding this and if it would be possible to send an email to the committee members with more information.

Alternate Fox asked if members have not completed the previous round of CEUs and take a class now, if today's classes count toward the previous cycle. Co-chairperson Bennett stated yes, they will apply.

Alternate Fox also asked that alternates be included in email correspondence as well. Member Jeff Dixon also asked that he be added to the email list for correspondence.

Chief Andersen added that the subcommittee assigned to regulations development address the situation of a leave of absence of a licensee and that they either need to catch up their certification or reapply as a fitter with their experience. Chief Adams stated that the proposed language has already been submitted for review on this issue and they are fairly confident that this will be addressed in the upcoming package.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT

Guest Vahe Zohrabian extended congratulations to Chairperson Andersen and expressed concern regarding Chapter 5.5 regulations specifically on who is permitted to open and test fire pump panels. He also expressed concern about follow up enforcement of systems requiring repair and establishing the infrastructure for enforcement.

Guest Ted Hakimi extended congratulations to Chairperson Andersen and his thanks to Chief Adams. He wanted to refer back to the reduction of the number of pipe fitter certifications this year. He suggested the rejuvenation of the grandfather law to increase fitters, then start enforcing after the infrastructure is in place.

Guest David Karrick asked if the committee member listed on the website could be updated in comparison to the roster and committee meeting minutes posted. Chairperson Andersen stated this will be addressed.

Alternate Steve Fox stated he had a follow up on the journeyman sprinkler fitter exam and whether the questions will be updated, or if a subcommittee will be formed on this subject. Chief Adams stated there could be other things done first prior to updating the questions. For example, ceasing the open book requirement. He also stated the other reason there is a high pass ratio is due to three attempts being allowed before failure. If this was also restricted there may be a better idea of where the exam is at prior to reconfiguring the exam completely. Alternate Fox agreed with reducing the number of attempts; however, he believed an open book exam is designed to be harder because one is required to look something up, whereas a closed book exam is written under the assumption that it is something the test taker should know from memorization. Chief Adams explained how this was vetted through the exam

experts who insisted an open book exam would give a better pass rate. Member Feld stated when the open vs. closed book discussion occurred several years ago it was discussed to be closed book but contain diagrams similar to what is in NFPA. He also discussed the option of having both open and closed book exams. Closed being for items that should be known off the top of your head and open for something more challenging that must be looked up. He believed the compromise lies with having both and limiting the time permitted to taking the open book test. Chief Adams agreed with Member Feld and stated with the closed book exam the pass rate was so low and that is why it was changed to an open book. Member Hulin stated specifically at the time the exam was composed it was designed for the exam to be open book. Somewhere it was changed to a closed book exam, but it was not originally written in that way. Members Wayne Weisz, Steve Fox and Jeff Awtrey concurred. Chief Adams stated that after having a low pass rate the number of questions were reduced and the test was changed to open book. He would like for a new format to be discussed moving forward. Member Feld stated that from an educational standpoint having only three answer options to the questions is not a valid testing strategy for a test taker needing to have a deep understanding of the material they are testing on. He supported redoing the test questions and adding four or five answer options. Alternate Fox agreed with increasing the number of distracters in the questions. He asked Chief Adams to elaborate on if there is a new option to the current format. Chief Adams elaborated by stating the options could be a reduction in current attempts, reevaluating the open book format with the current exams, or new avenues for testing and formats could be explored. Guest Vahe Zohrabian stated that they are already facing examination within their licensing or apprenticeship program, so having another exam is an added burden on someone who is a recent graduate. Chairperson Andersen stated that he agreed the test should be to enforce that the information presented was learned. Guest John Holmes asked if the OSFM has investigated how many attempts the average person is taking. Chief Adams stated yes, they are looking into this information. Member Hulin stated that a lot of the apprenticeship is spent on mechanical aspects, but the test is structured to be a working knowledge of fire protection systems. He believes that 90% of the working knowledge can be tested on a closed book exam, however there are occurrences that are out of the ordinary on the job and it is important that if you don't know something you know where to look it up. This is something that an open book exam reinforces. Guest David Karrick stated that some people are excellent sprinkler fitters but terrible test takers so a first-time pass rate is not an accurate look at the knowledge base and should be considered prior to taking multiple test attempts away.

Guest Vahe Zohrabian thanked Chief Adams for all his service and wished him the best of luck in his future. Chief Adams stated this committee has been presented with a lot of challenges and believes in the concept of this program and leaves the committee knowing there is still work to do but it is positively moving forward. He thanked the committee for their involvement in the process and he wished the committee the best.

Guest Jon Saia wanted to second the comments and congratulation to Chief Adams. He also thanked everyone for speaking up with their comments regarding sprinkler fitters. He understands there is a difference between book knowledge and field knowledge. He posed the question regarding forms and if there will be an opportunity to preview the forms or comment on them. Chairperson Andersen stated this topic will be brought back to the committee and there is opportunity for public comment within the regulatory process.

VI. SCHEDULE FOR FUTURE MEETING

The next Committee Meeting is scheduled for October 26, 2022.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Chairperson Andersen thanked everyone for their participation and stated he looked forward to working with everyone and asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

It was moved by Member Shelley Merrell to adjourn the meeting, motion seconded by Member Randy Dysart; all in favor of adjournment. Chairperson Andersen adjourned the meeting at 11:44 A.M. PDT.