



## STATE FIRE MARSHAL

Automatic Extinguishing Systems Advisory Committee

July 17th, 2024, Meeting Minutes, 9:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.M. Pacific Daylight Time (PDT)

Office of the State Fire Marshal

Hybrid Zoom Meeting Conference Call

715 P St., Sacramento, CA 95814

Meeting ID: 821 3947 8105

### MEMBERS PRESENT

Allen Quirk, National Association of Fire Equipment Distributers (NAFED)

Peter Hulin, National Fire Sprinkler Association (NFSA)

Randy Roxson, Sprinkler Fitters of Association of California (SFAC)

David Karrick, California American Fire Sprinkler Association (CAFSA)

Vahe Zohrabian, California Fire Protection Coalition

Edie Wade, Brooks Equipment Company

James Knowles, Amerex

James Feld, University of California, Berkeley (retired)

Randy Dysart, Retired

Jason McBroom, Alpine Fire Protection District

Darrell Hefley, Jorgenson Company

Chip Lindley, Lindley Fire Protection

Shelley Merrell, Integrated Fire & Safety

Todd Golden, Sprinkler Fitters and Apprentices Local 709

Amber Barrios, Associated Compliance & Training

### MEMBERS ABSENT

Matthew McCarrick, California Association of Life Safety & Fire Equipment (CALSAFE)

Bryan Jonson, West Sacramento Fire Department

Wayne Weisz, American Fire Sprinkler Association (AFSA)

Jason Hudgins, Walschon Fire Protection, Inc.

## OSFM STAFF

Greg Andersen, Committee Chairperson, OSFM  
Brice Bennett, Acting AES Program Coordinator, OSFM  
Michael Hill, OSFM  
Megan Lopes, OSFM  
Adam Stewart, OSFM  
Taylor Machado, OSFM  
Chris Dale, OSFM  
Alexander Rapphahn, OSFM

## PUBLIC GUESTS

Mickey Owens, Local 669  
Steven Miles, Local 483 (Alternate)  
David Lewandowski, Jorgensen Company (Alternate)  
John Holmes, Local 709  
Todd Golde, Local 709  
Brian Hutto, Local 669  
Rick Vasquez, Local 709  
Shawn Arballo, Local 709  
Wendy Day, Local 709  
Kim Stocking, Advanco Fire Protection  
Shawn Gray, Lund Pearson Mclaughlin Fire Protection  
Jon Saia, Fire Safety First  
Alicia Karrick, Greater Bay Area Chapter AFSA

## **1. CALL TO ORDER**

### **A. Welcome and Logistics Briefing**

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Greg Andersen, at 9:01 A.M. PDT on July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

#### **1. Meeting Ground Rules for the Public**

Chairperson Greg Andersen announced an update on Bagley-Keene. There are two level of Bagley-Keene to comply with. The higher level, which is for appointed position that make policy, the quorum must be in person. If the member is online, they must disclose their location and have it open to the public. The AES advisory committee does not meet this standard. The committee will still be following Bagley-Keene rules because it may need to meet the lower level. Online committee members should have their cameras on, with a few exceptions such as the camera slowing down the members internets interrupting their ability to participate. Please announce if you're having issues. OSFM

legal staff will come to the next meeting to give a presentation on this topic

2. Comments on agenda items from the public should be held until the Public Comments portion of the meeting. Public members may speak outside of that if they are first recognized by the committee chairperson. Members of the public may have a time limit on what they can say if they are bringing up an item not listed on the agenda.
3. In person attendees were informed of fire evacuation routes, the regroup point, and bathrooms.
4. Chairperson Greg Andersen reminded in-person members to say their name before or after they speak to assist in the meeting minutes.

#### **B. Roll Call/Determine Quorum**

Roll call was conducted by Alexander Rapphahn, and it was determined that a quorum (13 of 20) of members was present.

#### **C. Introductions / Announcements**

All attendees introduced themselves.

#### **D. Approval of Minutes for April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024.**

Chairperson Greg Andersen asked for approval for the April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024, meeting.

**It was moved by Member Todd Golden to approve the minutes as presented; motion seconded by Member Allen Quirk.**

Member Vahe Zohrabian requested to change “a boon” on page 11 of the meeting minutes to the word “better”.

Chairperson Greg Andersen requested that page numbers be added to the meeting minutes.

**It was moved by Member Todd Golden to approve the minutes as amended; motion seconded by Member Allen Quirk. Motion was approved unanimously.**

## **2. OLD BUSINESS**

### **A. Division Report**

Brice Bennett stated that the AES program is near the end of renewals. This last month 100 fitters, 33 apprentices, and 2 trainees renewed. Roughly 500 fitters renewed after May 1<sup>st</sup>, which is when late fees being.

The program wants to do its best to ensure that people renew on time. We are coming up with new ways and are open to hearing from the committee on why 1000 people renewed late. Member Amber Barrios responded that there is still a lot of confusion, and many people still think they have until June 30<sup>th</sup> to renew. Brice Bennett added that any other recommendations on how to address this issue are welcome. The new AES program coordinator, Patricia Rock, will be starting August 31<sup>st</sup> and a new Fire Extinguisher program coordinator, Terence Liszewski, will also start then as well. Patricia rock will be based out of south California and Terence Liszewski be based out or Northern California. Both will be cross trained to perform AES and Fire Extinguisher inspections.

Alternative Steve Miles stated that the email he received say the license expires June 30<sup>th</sup> but does not say that a late fee is added after May 1<sup>st</sup>. Could something be added to state that. Brice Bennett agreed that would be a good addition. Chairperson Greg Andersen added that having two people on the AES team has great reduced the application turnaround time and is allowing the program time to focus on other areas, such as regulations.

Member Amber Barrios asked the status on the updated provider list. Brice Bennett responded that it was posted last week.

Member Chip Lindly stated that enforcement could be a reason that people are not renewing on time. If people were worried about being kicked off a job, they would be motivated to renew. People in the industry need to feel like compliance is mandatory and there will be consequences if not followed. Chairperson Greg Andersen agreed that getting the enforcement out to the jobsites is important. Some people have been removed from job sites, but they must continue to work with local and state partners. There has also been an increase in complaints to the CSLB. They are continuing to move forward with ways to increase enforcement.

Member Randy Dysart asked if there was a way to have a mailing and physical address and have notice sent to both. Brice Bennett responded that there is a check box that allows applications on GovMotus to have a physical and mailing address, but things mailed out will only go to the mailing address. Additionally, notification of renewals and license expiration are only sent out through email and SMS messages from GovMotus, they are not sent through the postal service.

Member David Karrick asked if a redacted summary of enforcement actions could be sent out to some of the associations working with the OSFM so they can push it to their members and put the word out that enforcement is happening. Chairperson Greg Andersen responded that

they are implementing an E-newsletter to be sent out after the committee meetings that summarized the key points discussed in the meeting and has other information, in email blog format. They are looking at adding something like was being asked for with combined complaints against C-16 licensed companies and actions taken.

Public Guest Kim Stocking asked if two emails could be attached to licenses to allow for multiple people to manage that license. Chairperson Grag Andersen replied that having two emails is something they are looking at and they are also looking at having a sign up on the AES page to allow of other emails to get important AES updates.

**B. ITM Licensing Taskforce Update**

Chairperson Greg Andersen stated that the recommendations are currently with OSFM, and he is working with executive staff on a proposal. One of the things they are looking at is a 5-year certification and what skills are needed for that certification. He has run into some difficulties scheduling time with Chief Berlant due to his very busy schedule, so while the proposal is still moving forward, nothing has been decided yet. More to come, this will remain on the agenda for future updates.

**C. Sprinkler Fitter Programs Numbers**

This information was covered in the Division Report section.

**D. Committee Chartered Update**

Chairperson Greg Andersen Stated by updating the committee on the Charter, they are reviewing and updating all the advisory committee charters. Draft reports have been created and they may change some of the committee membership makeup. They will be reviewing committee membership, renewing appointments or appointing new members. This process had to go through legal review, and they received that review back about a month ago and they are in the process of updating the charters. This is an advisory committee, but they want to make sure there is balanced representation for all the committees.

**E. Sprinkler Fitter and Multi-Family Residential Sprinkler Fitter Cognitive Exam Update**

Chairperson Greg Andersen stated that they are currently working on updating all the FEI exams, starting with the AES exams. Subject matter experts are assisting in identifying the Knowledge, skills, and abilities that are needed. They are looking at making their exams compliant with international standards. More questions will be added and more than one exam. Each exam will be evaluated to have the same level of difficulty and categories as the other exams. If someone fails, the exam they will be

notified of the areas that they need to study more on. This is being done by test making professionals with the help of subject matter experts. When this is done a survey will be sent out to all the sprinkler fitters to get feedback from the industry.

Brice Bennette added that 4 subject matter experts from different parts of the committee have been brought in to validate the knowledge skills and abilities on the new tests. The next step is ensuring that the questions on the test are appropriate to the subject matter and at the appropriate level of difficulty. The goal of this process is to not make a harder exam but to make a fair exam. The exam will have more metrics to show the teste areas they were not successful in.

Member Amber Barrios asked if a link to the survey sent out to all the fitters would be available for managers that run multiple fitters through one account. Chairperson Greg Andersen confirmed that there will be a link sent out for the survey.

#### **F. Notary Public Signature Removal from The Fire Sprinkler Application Form Information Bulletin 24-006**

Brice Bennett stated that going forward the committee would be receiving staff reports on topics. The first staff report on the topic will be information only. Should that topic require a vote, the next staff report on the topic would ask for the committee to vote on it. This information bulletin is information only, showing that the notary public signature is no longer requires for sprinkler fitter applications. No new information had been added. They cannot make changes to paper applications yet because they are incorporated into regulation, but it will not be required moving forward on GovMotus applications.

Chairperson Greg Andersen added that all this information can also be found on the committee meeting webpage, in the same place the meeting minutes are located. All the staff reports, information bulletins, and agendas are located there.

#### **G. NFPA 25 Adoption Options**

Chairperson Grag Andersen opened stated that this topic was discussed at the last meeting, the 3 different options to moving forward with NFPA 25. Option 1 is to adopt the 2023 NFPA edition with limited amendments into title 19. Option 2 is creating a new California edition of NFPA 25 based off the 2020 edition of NFPA 25. Option 3 is to adopt the 2026 version of NFPA 25 with limited amendments, but it would not be implemented until after the NFPA 2026 version is published. Going forward with any of the options will require a work group to be made.

Chairperson Greg Andersen opened the floor for discussion.

Member Vahe Zohrabian stated that in the last meeting the national standard has already passed all the hurdles of economic legality and does not have the same licensing and publication issues as the California edition. The industry moves forward at a rapid pace and adopting previous versions just keeps them behind the latest industry standards. Using a national standard makes it easier for cities to comply with it. The industry cannot wait 13 or 14 years between standards updates. Choosing option 1 or 3 will shrink title 19 accordingly. It will remove the repeated requirements in title 19s current 110 pages.

Member Jim Feld stated that the history of why California made their own version of NFPA 25, some things that were inserted into NFPA 25 were already in title 19 for inspection testing and maintenance. One thing that he considered important was the testing of standpipe systems. NFPA 2011 required that all standpipe systems be tested but then it was changed to only automatic standpipe systems had to be tested every 5 years. Automatic standpipe systems are primarily for high rise buildings, so this leaves smaller buildings without automatic standpipe systems not being tested. He referenced two incidents, the One Meridian Plaza fire in 1991 where 3 fire fighters lost their lives because the standpipe system had bad pressure reducing valves that were never tested. A 2011 fire in Asheville, North Carolina, where a fire captain lost his life because the buildings standpipe system was not working. The crew at the standpipe was asking for water and the pump operator said they were pumping, yet not water was moving through the standpipe. He believes in testing all standpipes because it is for firefighter safety, standpipes are firefighters last ditch effort to extinguish a fire. There must be certain amendments in NFPA 25. In the early 2000s, he believes that John Guhl with OSFM, prepared a document listing all the code tradeoffs being allow for the presence of a fire sprinkler system. This puts a lot of confidence in the sprinkler systems and that system must function properly because backup fire protection systems are not there. We rely on sprinkler systems more and more every day and if other states cannot recognize that, it is their problem.

Chairperson Greg Andersen replied that if they do adopt the national standard, they will have amendments to it, but the process would but different as they will be in chapter 80. Currently they adopt 134 NFPA national standards and they keep them on time with every triangle section, something during an intervening code cycle, occasionally because of extra work they are one cycle behind. There is one exception to this, but it is for very different reasons, and it has problems with standards.

Member Randy Roxson asked if option 1 or 3 were chosen would the

amendments go right into chapter 80 instead of into title 19. Chairperson Greg Andersen confirmed that was correct.

Member David Karrick agreed with Jim Feld in principle, there are some things that really need additional eyes on them from the committee's perspective, so there should be some additional amendments. He doesn't know that a whole book is required, he likes the concept of adopting the national standard with amendments. Most of the amendments wouldn't change edition to edition and the minimal additions of amendments would allow help to adopt the new ways the industry is evolving and progressing. This would allow them to keep pace with the industry.

Chairperson Greg Andersen commented if the committee chooses to go forward with options 1 or 3, that there would be a PDF document of amendments on the AES website that could be printed off and inserted into the NFPA 25 book or saved on a computer.

Member Jason McBroom stated that in the current document they have in California, there is 551 highlighted sections that are in the standard. 286 of those highlighted sections occur from page 1 to 102. He has created a side-by-side of the 2013, 2023, and the 2026 NFPA 25 editions. Moving forward, everything that in the 2023 that California did not already amend will be amended in the 2026 edition. The national standard is looking at all of amendments in the 2013 California edition and they will become part of the NFPA 2026 edition. Moving forward they should need very little amendments. He is in favor option 3.

### **Member Jason McBroom Motions to adopt Option 3**

Chairperson Greg Andersen asked if Member Jason McBroom to form a work group to which Member Jason McBroom agreed and asked the committee for a second on the motion.

### **Member Edie Wade Seconded the motion.**

Chairperson Greg Andersen announced that they now have a motion and a second for option 3. This motion is now open for discussion.

Member Randy Roxson asked for more information about both options 1 and 3 in the discussion period. How would option one be affected as far as the adoption? Chairperson Greg Andersen replied that in the current code cycle they have a code package that has already been submitted to the Building Standards Commission and heard by the CAC. Nothing can be added to this cycle, 2025 is done. They could add it to the next cycle which gives them about 8 months to get the amendments ready with the 2025 intervening code cycle. If they try for biannual, that would be in 2028,



giving them 18 months. Member Randy Roxson asked if he was talking about option 2? Chairperson Greg Andersen responded options 1 or 3, to do it at a national level it has to go into ICC code, through the Building Standards Commission to get it into chapter 80. The timeframes are 8 months or into the next cycle in 18 months. Option 2 would be different because it is adopted through title 19 but it has a lot more hurdles to go through. It must go through the Office of Administrative Law (OAL); contract negotiations must be set up with NFPA and whoever is going to publish the book. Member Randy Roxson replied that going with options 1 or 3 would require adopting new standards in the building code so this would require going before the State Building Standards Commission (BSC). Unlike before where they would just make changes to title 19 because it is a non-building regulation. Chairperson Greg Andersen replied that he would do it both ways, put it into title 19, adopt the national record, then send it to title 24. Member Randy Roxson asked which process would they have to go through BSC or OAL? Chairperson Greg Andersen replied both. It is different title 19 because it can be submitted any time, but it must also be submitted to title 24 during its cycle, otherwise the submission to title 19 would point at something that doesn't exist.

Member Jason McBroom added that a significant amount of the amendments from the 2013 California edition of NFPA 25 are in the 2026 NFPA 25 edition. So, it is going to behoove them to adopt to the national standard, add the amendments to chapter 80 in title 24 and have the information be in title 19. Having the amendments online would make it readily available to the contractors in the field. Chairperson Greg Andersen asked if the NFPA 2026 edition was out yet? Member Jason McBroom replied that it is in 1<sup>st</sup> draft format available online and viewable, so they could start working on amendments.

Member Peter Hulin asked what is the quantity of minimum state amendments and what does that mean? Chairperson Greg Andersen replied that when the state passes a regulation, California is what is called a minimum state. So, when the BSC or the OSFM adopts the minimum state code the local authorities have the ability to pass more restrictive code but not less restrictive. Member Peter Hulin asked if they could have national standard of NFPA 25 that every jurisdiction in the state could say that it is the minimum standard and could then require more. So, inspections in one city could be different than others. Chairperson Greg Andersen confirmed that could happen and is already allowed under California Law, but it does not happen very often. Member Peter Hulin stated that in his experience with the 2013 California edition of NFPA 25, most cities follow it because they believe it is to a higher standard already. Chairperson Greg Andersen replied that few have made amendments, but they don't change the edition. They are things like fire department access

or sprinklers, these amendments are for things very specific for their communities.

Public Guest Shawn Arballo stated that some of the amendments that they have in the California edition are because of historical issues that the state has encountered, and they tried to address. Some of the big changes that they have made in the 2025 California edition was that the national standard does not recognize back flushing of the FDC. Additionally, in the current national standard, inspections for fire sprinklers are one done from the floor level. You're not required to get into any of the concealed accessible locations to look at those sprinklers. This is a historic issue because they have found areas where sprinkler heads are glued to ceiling or walls. These are some of the big issues and why they need amendments in an edition. Now that they have identified and addressed those issues in California and if they change how they go about things then this will create a lot of inconsistencies is what is happening in the field. One of the things they are constantly trying to combat is inconsistencies. That is his big concern with having those amendments. From his understanding, if they adopt the national standard, there will be a supplemental document of California amendments not in the national standard. So, they are still going to have a California edition but is going to be a pamphlet in addition to the national standard. Chairperson Greg Andersen replied that they are open to additional ways to get that information out there. In regulations, the amendments would be in title 24 chapter 80. But they are also planning to have a PDF document of the changes available online so they can be printed out or saved on a computer. Their goal is to make the model of the amendments to a minimum. The added amendments are important and straight to the point in their wording, to keep the number of pages low and allow for them to get through the legal process. Public Guest Shawn Arballo replied that adding more variables can lead to confusion. Having one document can eliminate some of that confusion versus having two documents that need to be brought together or referenced. They already have trouble getting people in the industry to get their licenses and asking them to seek out an additional document may present new issues. He sees that as being very problematic to what they are trying to accomplish.

Member Randy Dysart stated that the limiting of amendments kind of sounds like all the work the committee did on the 2025 California edition to make amendments was just to have amendments and if that is what is being said it is not fair nor correct. The reason the California edition was published in the beginning was so that there would only be one document. Once you create a second document, someone must go through NFPA 25 and then through the amendments document and tie them together, it creates a challenge, and many people won't do that. He doesn't understand what timesaving is being done by adopting the national

standard because essentially, they are already doing that. The challenge has not been the process, the amendments, and the review. The challenge has been on the part of the OFSM to expedite these changes and expedite this process. He is concerned about what they are trying to accomplish by adopting this and he is very concerned about limiting the number of amendments that can be made to the document. Chairperson Greg Andersen replied he was given the role to keep the amendments to a minimum and to ensure the ones added are important ones that they need. From what he has heard, many of the amendments from the California edition are already in the 2026 edition, which will greatly reduce the work that needs to be done. The problem with having multiple pages of amendments is that it can cause confusion. So, if the amendments can be kept to the important things, this will help eliminate confusion. In statute, they are directed, as part of the 9-point criteria for adopting regulations is based on national code. He agreed that the OSFM has had issues trying to set up through the state process to publish codes and do anything close to a timely manner. They are well over 10 years behind the last edition of NFPA 25, and this is a problem. Their goal is to create something based off newer editions so they can become current without having to go through the same process of having to go through OAL for the whole book. It is a significant process for a national code. The downside is yes, it would have to be two documents that would have to come together. They are having this discussion to look for recommendations moving forward.

Member Allen Quirk asked for clarification on how the word “minimum” was being used. Was it regarding the minimum standard set by the OSFM that local JHAs could ask for more strict standards or about having a minimum number of amendments based on what is needed to be put in place for California? Chairperson Greg Andersen replied that those are two different things. He answered a question about minimum code, which is state law and having a minimum number of amendments if they adopt NFPA but concise might be a better word for what their goal is for the amendments. They don't want to cause confusion with too many pages of amendments and focus on the important changes that are needed in California.

Public Guest John Holmes asked if another work group would be created for this process and if the amendments would go through that group. Chairperson Greg Andersen confirmed that it would, and he believes it would be a much shorter process. They would take the model code and look what needs to be changed on the addition, it could be one word, deleting an entire section, or adding a new section to make the model code say what they want. He reminded the committee that the motion on the floor was to adopt option 3 with a workgroup, and it was seconded. Public Guest John Holmes added that when they did the work from 2013 up to 2020, it moved a lot more in alignment with the national standard at

that point. Chairperson Greg Andersen replied that is one of the reasons they are looking at it, because the national codes are getting closer to the California ones, do they need to do all the work or is it possible just to amend the national ones.

**Chairperson Greg Andersen hearing no other discussion on the topic called for a role call for the motion on the floor: adopt option 3 and create a workgroup for it.**

**The motion passed with 9 yes, 4 nay, and one abstain.**

**Break was called at 10:15 A.M. until 10:25 A.M.**

Chairperson Greg Andersen called the meeting back to order and informed them that they will be forming a workgroup to work on the 2026 edition of NFPA 25 and they will be assigning a chair to the group. This will go through Brice Bennett, those interested in participating should contact Brice via email. An email about this will be sent out to the membership.

Member James Feld asked if going with the 2026 edition of NFPA 25 means that they would not be able to adopt it until 2028, if this is true then they will go 15 years between updates. Chairperson Greg Andersen replied that there is a possibility they could bring it in during an intervening code cycle but yes. He asked Member Jason McBroom if the 2026 edition of NFPA 25 will be adopted nationally in the next 8 months. Member Jason McBroom replied that it would not, based on the 2<sup>nd</sup> hearings. Member James Feld asked if they had a 2026 edition to start working with or if they were still using the 2024 edition. Chairperson Greg Andersen said they did not and that he was correct. Member James Feld stated that they would still have to wait a couple of years for an edition to amend and did that make sense. Chairperson Greg Andersen replied that Member Jason McBroom was looking up the date when the 2026 edition will be finalized.

Member Randy Dysart stated that they have a 13-year gap between editions, and they have people in the field doing ITM inspections. What document legally are they supposed to use for those inspections? How is that going to affect their liability? If they do something in line with the 2013 California edition and there have been changes made to the NFPA standards and they don't follow those standards, where does the liability stand. He believes that it stands with the company, and they will be sued. He provided an example of how a person working in the industry could be confused by the California edition and the national standards and choose to use the California edition because they are working in California. Chairperson Greg Andersen replied that the 2013 edition of NFPA 25 is the legally adopted standard in California and it is enforceable. There are

many annotations they do not adopt. It is the legally adopted standard.

Public Guest Shawn Arballo stated that one of the big amendments in the edition they were working on was the AES inspection forms. To his understanding they are currently in revision and should be done soon. Is there a deadline for publishing those documents? Because that is what everyone is going to be using and if they don't have current documents to go along with the current standard, there is no kind of standing. He recommends that some kind of deadline be put into this to keep current. Because if they adopt the 2026 edition but there is nothing moving forward, they need to have some kind of regulation saying that they will be on the most current standard of NFPA or adopt it within 2 years. They need to stay in step and not kick the can down the road. This goes for the standards and the amendments. Right now, there is nothing saying they need to have current adopted forms. His recommendation is to have some type of date in place to have the regulations adopted and what is the state of the current revised inspection forms. Chairperson Greg Andersen replied there are two dates that will be coming up. The first will be in 8 months and he will work the Building Standards Commission (BSC) to get a date for when they would need the proposed regulations to make the intervening code cycle. The next date would be the next tri-annual, that would be in about 20 months. He would prefer the intervening code cycles, but it depends on 2 things. How far along they are in the draft because by the regulations when it is heard by the BSC, the national edition must be published. They can have a draft before that and if they need to make modifications they can. But when it is submitted to the BSC, it needs to be completed. They need to confirm if they 2026 edition will be done before June of next year, maybe a little sooner. He will work with the commission to find out what that date is. They have a path forward to consider and if the workgroup identifies issues, it can be brought back to the committee.

### **3. NEW BUSINESS**

#### **A. Pearson Vue Exam Authorization**

Chairperson Greg Andersen stated that they are making big changes to all the FEI programs. They are changing the whole business process of their exams, and this will be implemented starting October 1<sup>st</sup>. Currently, an application would be submitted, it gets reviewed and accepted, then it is paid for, then it would be sent to Pearson Vue for testing approval. That process is going to end, they will be switching to self-certification meaning that person certifies that they meet the requirements of the license before taking the test on their own. There will still be deadlines in that if they fail

the exam, they cannot retake it within 30 days because that is in regulations. ID will be required to take the exam. The person will go and take the sprinkler fitter exam, if they pass, then submit an application. Member Amber Barrios asked if they don't have to submit an application until after they pass the sprinkler fitter exam. Chairperson Greg Andersen confirmed that was correct and added that this will reduce the programs workload tremendously. They will still be confirming with Pearson Vue that the applicant has passed the exam. After the application is reviewed it will be accepted and the applicant will be notified that they can pay, after payment the license will be issued. Phase 2 of this plan will have payment be submitted with the original application, but they are not there yet. There will be blackout period of September 27<sup>th</sup> to the 30<sup>th</sup> 2024, where we will not accept applications as they are in the process of swapping to the new systems. This will hopefully smooth out the application process for everyone.

Member Vahe Zohrabian asked if the Pearson Vue exam fee was going up? Chairperson Greg Andersen replied that no change in cost was identified. It is going to be less work for Pearson Vue. Anyone can set up their own testing date online, they will be asked during the registration process if they meet all the requirements for the license and the test is not the only requirement. They will have to acknowledge that and check a box to register to take the exam. The applicant will go to Pearson Vue first, take the exam, then submit their application on GovMotus. They will be updating their exam information on the website and Pearson Vue will update theirs. They will still be getting all the data from everyone taking the exams, who passes who fails, and monitor the exams for exam development going forward.

Member Todd Golden asked how the teste's identification is verified at Pearson Vue? Do they have to show a photo ID? Chairperson Greg Andersen replied that yes, they must show an ID, Pearson Vue has a list of acceptable forms of identification such as Driver's Licenses.

Member Vahe Zohrabian asked if the exam would still be open book. Chairperson Greg Andersen replied that it would still be open book. Member Vahe Zohrabian asked what the status of translators was. He understands that the test cannot be translated into every language but having translators would open the industry to more people. Member Amber Barrios agreed things need to be translated but there must also be a need for that translation. They need the Spanish translation, but do they need a translation for a language that only a few people speak and there is no apprenticeship program in that language. Chairperson Greg Andersen replied that these are items they have been discussing and they are looking at other state agencies to see what appropriate standard to follow. There are a couple different options but one of those may be

limited by Pearson Vue, they are discussing other options at the time. They have identified this issue and are trying to make this accessible as possible but have run into a couple hurdles and are exploring their options. Member Vahe Zohrabian said that there are people who have passed the apprenticeship programs and met all the requirements of title 19 but they cannot take the fitter exam because it is not in a language they speak/read. Chairperson Greg Andersen replied that there is option available right now, but he does not like it. If the applicant goes to Pearson Vue, they can request a translator but there is a cost that the individual must pay, and it varies on whatever the business rate. OSFM does not control the cost and it can be expensive, but it is an option. Member Vahe Zohrabian replied that for someone's career they will pay anything. Chairperson Greg Andersen replied that it is an option, but they are exploring other options at this time.

Public Guest Wendy Day asked if the locations available for testing was something being looked at because some of the locations available in southern California are not near to them or not available for months. Brice Bennett replied that previously there was only two place to take the exams that were run by staff from this office and the dates were selected by them as well. When Pearson Vue became an option to create a more accessible testing experience under the candidate's timelines, they saw that as the best current options. Chairperson Greg Andersen added that his is an issue they have mention to Pearson Vue, so they are aware of it.

Member Todd Golden stated that they have multiple different language speakers in their program, and they get assistance in the program but when they go to take the test they are on their own. The translator that can be hired from Pearson Vue, how much does it cost? Chairperson Greg Andersen replied that is varies on the language and translation service, and it was more than a few hundred dollars. Member Todd Golden added that it would help the apprenticeship programs, the fitters, and the industry to get a translator in to assist people regardless of the cost and eliminate people failing the exam due to language difficulties. Chairperson Greg Andersen replied that they see this as an issue and they are exploring different options, looking at other state agencies with high-risk exams to see what processes they use and working with the contractors for the exams to see what they allow. More to come. Brice Bennett add that Pearson Vue does not allow an outside translator to come into the testing center. You must use their person who is certified through their program to come translate for your candidate. Member Vahe Zohrabian said that they had previously talked to Pearson Vue and was told they could bring their own translators. Brice Bennett asked to talk to Member Vahe Zohrabian after the meeting about this.

Public Guest Kim Stocking stated that she had enquired about translation

services for a fitter and was quoted a price of \$250 to \$300 per hour and they can only test for so long. The issue that she sees with their translating services is that the Pearson Vue translator does not understand industry terminology or how to translate it. The price of the translator could be up to \$1000 while not correctly translating the exam. This also extends the time needed to take the test. It is also very difficult to schedule a translator through Pearson Vue that is not Spanish speaking. Pearson Vue's lack of ability to schedule translators is an issue for the fitters and the industry. Getting a test with a translator could cost as much as \$1200 and if they fail that test, they must pay that again to get the translator. Chairperson Greg Andersen agree that it is an issue and one of the things they looked is if they allow outside translators in, they might not understand the industry terminology or how to translate it. But this topic is about changing the testing authorization process.

Member Chip Lindley stated as a hypothetical question if there was an illiterate fitter, does Pearson Vue have something to assist a person like that? Chairperson Greg Andersen replied that Pearson Vue does have a whole program for reasonable accommodations, he assumes that would be a common one, but he has not asked specifically about that. They met with Pearson Vue reasonable accommodation program, and they met with the legal reasonable accommodation teams for CALFIRE, and they had 4 meeting together. Member Amber Barrios stated that they looked on Pearson Vue's webpage and they require certification of a learning disability to request reasonable accommodation, it is not clear if illiteracy is one of those, but they will call Pearson Vue to find out. Chairperson Greg Andersen replied that discussions with Pearson Vue about this topic seemed more open to different issues that what is posted on the website. He would like to know what their response to Member Amber Barrios' question is because if they are not doing reasonable accommodation then there, they may face some legal issues on that.

#### **B. Proposed Regulations for Fee Increases**

Chairperson Greg Andersen stated that they had a fee package that was previously submitted to the Office of Administrative Law (OAL), which had no fee increase for the fitters. This package was rejected by OAL citing that they must balance their budget and some other issues. They have a new proposal, it is broken into 2 categories, things that have not been updated since 2008 which received a 25% to 27% increase based off rounding to whole numbers. The other category was the fee increase to the pipe fitters, what they did is maintain their current positions and leave the other positions vacant to keep the increase to the pipe fitters to a minimum. There is a \$20 increase to the pipe fitters, that is the smallest round number they could get to ensure the budget was in the black. He is not sure OAL will accept this, but this is what they are going for as the fitter numbers are increasing, they are providing better customer service,



they are following up on complaints with C-16s. When they see those increases, they cannot fill the open positions in the field. A 13% increase across the board for sprinkler fitters and the other licenses were rounded to a more consistent increase across the board. The fee package is basically complete at this time, and they want to get it to OAL. It will go through the legal process and go out for public comment. They have been working diligently to make the numbers work and working with budgets. Fee increases are never popular, but he has been charged with balancing the budget and they are increasing their efficiencies by filling staff positions.

Member Amber Barrios thanked Chairperson Greg Andersen for listening to the previous comments on proposed fee increases. Stating that \$20 is a much more reasonable amount for fitters to pay than what was talked about before.

Member Vahe Zohrabian asked if they were still looking at a 3-year renewal. Chairperson Greg Andersen replied that is still being discussed but that is nothing something that will be part of this package. It will be coming back for discussion at a later date. They are looking at a few different ways of doing it, but they are trying to find the best path forward. The highest priority right now was to balance the budget. Member Vahe Zohrabian replied that a \$20 increase is fair and justified for the pipe fitters. But the companies that are CEU providers only got a \$20 increase as well. These companies are billion-dollar companies that are paying a small amount to teach these CEU classes, the same increase that a single pipe fitter must pay, that doesn't seem fair. Chairperson Greg Andersen responded that OAL required a consistent increase in the fees, but they are in the process of doing a workload analysis. They are going to break down all the licenses and certifications to see how much time is spent on them. They will use this information to assess if another fee adjustment is required. When they do this, other issues like the one member Vahe Zohrabian brought up, will be looked at. But right now, based on addressing the comments from OAL, the path forward was to keep the increases consistent. Member Vahe Zohrabian that it didn't seem fair that apprentices and trainees to pay the same amount as large corporations, but he understands the requirements for the fee package. Chairperson Greg Andersen replied that the current goal was to get the fee package passed and when they start the next process, this issue will be part of what is looked at. He is not making any promises that something will change, they need to do the work to see where their time is spent and what is taking up the majority of the work in the program.

Alternate Steven Miles asked about the trainee renewal on the fee increases. Brice Bennett replied that trainees can renew because they are allowed 365 days of being a trainee and depending on when their license

was issued, they may have to renew to ensure they get the minimum opportunity to reach 365. This does lead to some trainees inadvertently getting a more than 365 days.

#### **4. OPEN FORUM**

Chairperson Greg Andersen opened the floor for open forum.

Member Randy Roxson asked if a committee was being formed to work on option 3 that was selected from the NFPA 25 Options and if people could join it. Chairperson Greg Andersen replied that an email will be sent out to everyone that is interested in joining the committee that will be working on option 3. Brice Bennett will set that up and they will appoint a chair of that committee. Members can email Brice directly right now or wait for the general invitation email, and Brice's email has been put in the zoom chat.

Chairperson Greg Andersen stated that new format for the meetings with the staff reports and the meeting timeframes will require agenda items to be submitted much earlier to meet these new timeframes. They will need to be submitted well in advance of the meeting so that staff reports can be created, and agendas can be updated and posted. There is a whole review process that goes with formalizing this process. Please be thinking of new items that committee members may want to add to the agenda, they can be sent to Brice Bennett or the new coordinator when they start. A week before they start to finalize the meeting, an email will be sent to the members alerting them that any new items must be submitted before the finalization.

#### **5. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Public Guest Kim Stocking asked what happens to a fitter who cannot get a translator to take the exam, but they have passed the apprenticeship program. What happens to these fitters who have done everything required of them, but they cannot get tested. Chairperson Greg Andersen replied when there is an issue beyond control of the applicant, contact the AES program. There are things that they can do to assist. But if the issue is the fault of the applicant or company managing their license then the responsibility is on them. The translator issues have been an ongoing issue that they are trying to resolve, they want to make an accessible process that works for the fitters. They are working with Pearson Vue and looking at other outside options to address this. If someone is having these issues then they should reach out to the program, Cortney Walker is a good contact. They can work to find a way to accommodate fitters in need of assistance while they are looking for a better system. Member Amber Barrios asked if the new authorization process will help resolve some of these issues. Chairperson Greg Andersen replied that it would because applications will only be submitted

after the exam has been passed. Public Guest Kim Stocking asked what could be done for the fitters that are waiting to take the test but have passed their apprenticeship program. Chairperson Greg Andersen replied that there will not be any sort of waver, they can still work at the apprenticeship level under supervision until they pass the exam. Public Guest Kim Stocking stated that if the fitter stays as an apprentice until they can get the assistance they need to take and pass the exam, that fitter's paycheck will remain as an apprentice as well. Chairperson Greg Andersen replied unfortunately yes because they do not need the requirements to be a Journeyman sprinkler fitter. They are trying to make this a less painful process to get through.

Public Guest Jon Saia stated that the largest line items on the fee increase are Type L renewals and new applications, certified sprinkler fitters and apprentices. His concern is that the industry is losing fitters faster than new ones are joining the industry. Fitters who let their license lapse have to retest to enter the program, he thinks there are a lot of headwinds preventing people with a certified fitters licenses from re-entering the workforce and reenrolling in the license fees for the health of the program. Is there any possibility of looking at some other options to allow fitters to come back into the program other than accelerated apprenticeship program to make it easier to get skilled fitters back into the workforce. Brice Bennett asked if Public Guest Jon Saia was inquiring about a fitter that leaves the workforces and comes back to not have to take the fitter exam. Public Guest Jon Saia replied that if that is the bar and they want to hold the quality standard of the test. He believes that apprentices are not backfilling fitters over the same 5-year period and that the attrition rate if fitters are higher is than accretion rate of onboarding apprentices. Brice Bennet responded that there is another avenue for previously licensed fitters to get their license current. They can pay the fees and late fees for all the time their license has been expired and submit 3 continuing education units. The reason why continuing education units were implemented is because a large contingent of fitters who were not good test takers. These continuing education units are another option instead of retaking the exam. The original licensure was built with letters of recommendation, but it was advised by this committee and members of the industry to move forward in the manner they are using now. Was Public Guest Jon Saia looking for a simpler way or does he have a recommendation for a skills or knowledge challenge to get a fitter back in the industry. Chairperson Greg Andersen added that if someone was already licensed there are paths for them to reenter the industry, they can contact the program for more information on those options.

Public Guest Jon Saia stated that they have a lot of out of state applicants that require them to enter apprenticeship programs and there are some programs that have assessments to test what level the fitter is at instead of starting them as a level 1 apprentice. But those assessments are not widely known and could be of assistance to apprentices in the field. Chairperson Greg Andersen acknowledged that Member Amber Barrios had an answer for this question. Member Amber Barrios replied that fitters from out of state for her program are given a placement

test. The test determines where they will be placed in the program. Chairperson Greg Andersen added that is important to work with the different apprenticeship programs and find out what options they have for accelerated placement they have available. Member Randy Roxson stated that when the program was developed, the idea for out of state fitters to be evaluated by the apprenticeship programs and bring them into the program at that point. Chairperson Greg Andersen added that the OSFM was against the office doing that, but it is up to the apprenticeship programs. Member Vahe Zohrabian the out of state fitters are beholden to the apprenticeship program that they choose to enter and test in. It doesn't do any justification when 669 can work anywhere but an experienced out of state fitter will at least have a shortened time in the apprenticeship program.

Alternate David Lewandowski asked if there was going to be any changes to the ITM licensing program now that they have changed the direction, they are going with NFPA 25. Chairperson Greg Andersen replied that it would not, and they are still moving forward with their process on that.

Chairperson Greg Andersen stated that the next committee meeting would be on October 16<sup>th</sup>. in Long Beach at the Pipeline Safety Office. He asked if the meetings were set up for 2025. Brice Bennet replied that they had not been set up yet. But he would like to bring up how they have scheduled the AES committee meetings with the Fire Extinguishers committee being the day before. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each quarterly month has worked well over the past year and they would like to continue that. The quarterly months are January, April, July, and October, and this allows for additional meetings to be scheduled if needed. They would like to continue this unless there is an objection to it. Chairperson Greg Andersen added that they will send out a calendar invite to confirm those dates and move them if there is a conflicting association meeting, or they will not have the attendance for a quorum. Please let them know as soon as the members find out so they can look at moving the meeting. Member Vahe Zohrabian asked if the meetings would be in the morning or afternoon. Brice Bennett replied that the meetings would be in the mornings.

## 6. ADJOURNMENT

Next meeting is October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

Chairperson Greg Andersen thanked everyone for their participation and asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

**It was moved by Member Amber Barrios to adjourn the meeting, motion seconded by Member Edie Wade; all in favor of adjournment. Chairperson Greg Andersen adjourned the meeting at 11:22 A.M. PDT.**