

AUTOMATIC EXTINGUISHER SYSTEMS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MEETING MINUTES – WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16, 2025, 9AM – 12PM

Hybrid Committee Meeting



Meeting Location:

California Natural Resources Building

Office of the State Fire Marshal

715 P St, Sacramento, CA 95814

2nd Floor, Room 2-201

Zoom Meeting ID: 878 9009 7820

MEMBERS PRESENT

Peter Hulin, National Fire Sprinkler Association (NFSA)

Vahe Zohrabian, California Fire Protection Coalition

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

Edie Wade, Brooks Equipment Company

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

James Feld, University of California, Berkeley (retired)

Travis Tyler, California State University

Jason McBroom, Alpine Fire Protection District

Jose Colin, Suisun City Fire Department

Chad Richardson, Los Angeles Fire Department

Ken Kwong, Sacramento City Fire Department

Shelley Merrell, Integrated Fire & Safety

Richard Eyssallenne, Black Bird Fire Protection

Randy Roxson, Sprinkler Fitters and Apprentices Local 709

David Karrick, California American Fire Sprinkler Association (CAFSA)

Jeff Dixon, Sprinkler Fitters Local 483

Amber Barrios, Associated Compliance & Training

MEMBERS ABSENT

Wayne Weisz, American Fire Sprinkler Association (AFSA)

James Knowles, Amerex

OSFM STAFF

Brice Bennett, Committee Chairperson and Acting Divisions Chief for Engineering and Investigations, OSFM

Jeffery Schwartz, Deputy State Fire Marshal III Supervisor, OSFM

Patrica Rock, Committee Co-Chairperson and AES Program Coordinator, OSFM

Terence Liszewski, FE Program Coordinator, OSFM

Cortney Walker, OSFM

Michael Hill, OSFM

Taylor Machado, OSFM

Chris Dale, OSFM

Alexander Rapphahn, OSFM

PUBLIC GUESTS

Robert Vasquez, Code Red Fire and CalSafe
John Holmes, Local 709
Mike Zeif, Next Level Fire and CalSafe
Chip Lindley, Lindley Fire
Brian Hutto, Local 669 JATC
Jon Joseph, Simon's Fire Protection and AFSA San Diego
Harl Buckridge, 3A Quality Services
Robbie Munjar, CAFSA
Roy Afusia, Local 709
Shawn Arballo, Local 709
Kim Stocking, Andservice101
Jason Hudgins, Walschon Fire Protection, Inc.
Todd Barry, Local 669
Shawn Gray, Lund Pearson McLaughlin Fire Protection Systems
David Lewandowski, Jorgensen Company and CalSafe
Steven Miles, Local 483
Alicia Karrick, Greater Bay Area Chapter AFSA

1. CALL TO ORDER

A. Welcome and Logistics Briefing

The meeting was called to order by Chief Brice Bennett at 9:05 AM. Chairperson Bennett reviewed Bagley-Keene requirements for committee members, meeting etiquette, and when the public attendees could make comments.

B. Committee Members Introduction and Roll Call

Roll call was conducted by Alexander Rapphahn, and it was determined that a quorum (17 of 19) of members was present.

C. Introduction of Non-Committee Members.

All non-committee members introduced themselves.

D. Approval of Minutes for October 16th, 2024.

Chairperson Bennett asked for approval for the October 16th, 2024, meeting.

It was moved by Chad Richardson to approve the minutes; motion seconded by Member Edie Wade. Motion was approved unanimously.

E. Announcements and Division Updates

Patricia Rock Asked the committee members to email her their selections for alternates. These selections may be emailed directly to her or to the AES inbox (aes@fire.ca.gov).

Chairperson Bennett informed the committee of the retirement of Chief Greg Andersen and his appointment as the Acting Divisions Chief for Engineering and Investigations. The selection process for the new Division Chief will be commencing

shortly. Chairperson Bennett instructed the committee members and public guests to send any questions they had to the AES inbox.

Cortney Walker reviewed the February 26, 2025, Information Bulletin 25-003 regarding the Translators for Pearson Vue exams. Cortney Walker reiterated that there is a cost associated with the translators. This cost is based on the language, location of the exam, the exam time, and the translators travel time. The process for obtaining a translator would start with the applicant scheduling an exam at a minimum of 30 days out. They will then email the program with to let them know that a translator is required, this email should include the candidate's full name, the exam they are taking, the exam time, date, and location, and the language they require a translator for. This information will be passed on to Cortney Walker so she can work with Pearson to locate a translator, get a quote, and then provide that information back to the candidate so they can confirm that they want to move forward with hiring a translator. This is the optimal route for hiring a translator from Pearson Vue that is currently available

Member Vahe Zohrabian asked what the associated cost is for hiring a translator. Cortney Walker replied that it depends on the testing center location, the language needed, the exam time, and the travel time of the translator. Member Vahe Zohrabian stated that it makes it very hard for the workers to hire a translator not knowing the price. Cortney Walker replied that the OSFM could build translator costs into the license, but that would drive the license and certification cost up. The division is not able to provide translator or exam in every language available so the Pearson Vue translator option can be utilized until other options become available in the future. Currently Pearson Vue does not allow anyone besides the one 3rd party translators into their exam rooms.

Member David Karrick asked what the expected turnaround time is for hiring a translator. Cortney Walker replied that at a minimum of 30 days' notice would allow for adequate time for hiring a translator. The process of hiring a translator has only been utilized once so far and in the end the translator was not used, so they do not have

Public Guest Kim Stocking stated that they had talked directly to Pearson Vue before February 2025 and was told they did not have a translator for Armenian. Cortney Walker asked that the committee and guests not contact Pearson Vue directly to schedule a translator. Scheduling a translator is something that needs to go through herself and the account manager at Pearson Vue. The Pearson Vue call center will not be able to provide information on hiring a translator. The one time the translator process was started, it was for an Armenian translator, and one was located but the candidate did not complete the process. Public Guest Kim Stocking asked if the division was looking at other translator options. Chairperson Bennett replied that they

are exploring different testing agencies and opportunities. It is part of the exam development process that they are working on with Cal State Sacramento and IO Predict

Member Peter Hulin stated that they thought any 3rd party translator could be submitted to Pearson Vue and that Pearson Vue was not the one hiring the translator. Cortney Walker replied that there is only one 3rd party translator company that Pearson Vue allows in their exams. Member Peter Hulin asked if Pearson Vue had an exclusive contract with that 3rd party translator company that they are forcing candidates to use. Cortney Walker replied that she did not know if Pearson Vue used more than one company for translators, only that they had to go through Pearson Vue to option a translator.

F. Charter Updates

Chairperson Bennett stated that they are working to adhere to the charter that was created and approved by the State Fire Marshal. That is how they have built the framework for the committee membership. Any questions about this can be emailed directly to Chairperson Bennett.

2. OLD BUSINESS

A. Proposed Regulations Update

There were multiple regulation updates moving forward at the same time, with the transition of division leadership, they are going to pair that back to completing individual regulation updates instead of trying to do everything all at once. The proposed fee increase is moving the Office of Administrative Law (OAL). If it passes through OAL and is submitted, it will not affect sprinkler fitter renewals for this year. It will affect the fall renewals of fire pump certifications, Tye L licenses, Type A1 and 2, as well as the sprinkler fitter renewals for next year. The next item they will work on is the proposed changes to the text of Chapter 5.5, it is currently with staff, and they will be working to get those proposed changes moving through the queue and to OAL quickly.

B. NFPA 25 Work Group Update

Chairperson Bennett stated that a large amount of time was spent by members of the committee updating Chapter 5, which is NFPA 25, 2013 edition, California edition and the everyone values the work they put into doing that. The prior advisory committee considered all the time, effort, and work completed that was put into updating Chapter 5 and voted to explore going to the national adoption of NFPA 25 with one to two pages of amendments. That group will convene as soon as they finish harnessing the group power for the IO predict exam update group. That group of people has changed multiple times, and they have balanced group working to identify the knowledge,

skills, and abilities (KSA) for different exam questions and for the trade. The group is currently tasked with linking the identified KSA of the trade to the existing exam questions. They will complete that task in the upcoming weeks. They will meet with the doctorate from CSU and identify how many new questions will need to be made and then a new group will be convened to create those new questions. Once they have stopped tasking members of the committee and trade with assisting in creating the new exam, they will reallocate them to the review of NFPA 25 2026 editions identify what gaps are in the 2013 edition. This will also be a balanced group, Member Jason McBroom originally volunteered to be the chair of that group but has had to step down due to work responsibilities. He has already participated and will continue to participate with a very good framework to identify the gaps between the two editions. The group will build recommendations for a two page plus forms amendments. They are not trying to make another California edition; it is the belief of the majority of the group that the Nations standard has caught up with the California examples, but they want to identify any holes that might exist between the two.

C. Self-Authorization Exams through Pearson Vue

Cortney Walker stated that the FEI Division has now gone to a self-authorization for all exams through Pearson Vue. This eliminates the need for a candidate to submit and pay for an application to get authorized to take the exam in a 90-day test window. Candidates now go directly to Pearson Vue and schedule their exam. Before taking the exam, they answer some self-attestation to confirm they are eligible for that exam and take the exam. Upon successful completion of the exam, the candidate submits their new application with the pass-fail report that they received from Pearson Vue. The pass-fail report is verified through Pearson Vue as part of the acceptance process. Candidates are no longer held to a 90-day testing window and limited attempts per application, but they will have a cooldown period between failed attempts as outlined in the regulations of each program as a waiting period between failed attempts.

Guest Kim Stocking stated that people have come to them that have taken the sprinkler fitter exam but have not completed an apprenticeship program, trying to use the passing of the exam as a back door to getting a sprinkler fitter license. The rumor about taking the exam as a backdoor is spreading in the apprenticeship world and they wanted to bring it to the attention of the committee. Chairperson Bennett thanked Kim Stocking for assisting in squashing rumors and keeping the trade secure.

3. NEW BUSINESS

A. 2025 Renewal Update

Patrica Rock informed the committee that they are nearing the end of the sprinkler fitter renewal period and encouraged everyone to get their renewal application in before May 1st to avoid late fees. The AES team is available to assist with any issues

or questions about renewing. Chairperson Bennett reminded the committee that the AES inbox (aes@fire.ca.gov) is an excellent tool for communication with and assistance from the program and it is monitored by multiple people. Patrica Rock added that CEUs must be uploaded to renewal applications when they are submitted. Applicants cannot submit their renewal applications and turn in their CEUs at a late date. They are due at time of application submission, or the application will be rejected.

Guest Steven Miles asked if a fitter could pay for the renewal application before submitting CEUs. Chairperson Bennett replied that they could not, CEUs are due at time renewal application submission.

B. Updated Certifications and Registration Identification Cards

Cortney Walker stated that the renewal sticker process has been eliminated and every program that used them will now send out new ID card every year. The ID card will have the licensee's name, license type, license number, expiration date, and a photo. There are two types of sprinkler fitter ID cards, horizontal and vertical. The horizontal is for journeyman sprinkler fitters and the vertical is for apprentices and trainees. They are no longer sending out stickers. This requires that a current ID badge photograph is uploaded every year with renewal applications. They are working on much clearer photograph requirement instructions because there are some file types and photos that will not be accepted. The default Apple phone photo file type (HEIC) cannot be opened by the program and will not be accepted. Photos in that file type will need to be converted to JPG or PNG format. The applicant's face needs to be 75% of the photo. Previous rules still apply, no hats, no sunglasses, must be wearing a shirt, and photo cannot have other people in it. The photo should be on a light background and be a clear headshot of the applicant. Not accepted are pictures of picture, pictures of driver's licenses, pictures, or pictures of the previous year's sprinkler fitter card. These pictures should be updated every year, and they will go on the new card that is sent out every year. Chairperson Bennett asked the committee members to share this information with their employees and members as it saves a lot of time for the staff during the application process. Cortney Walker added that the program has not done a lot of rejection due to photos unless the photo was blatantly unacceptable. The analysts are having to crop many photos to make them acceptable and it is taking up a large portion of their time. In the near future, after clear instructions are put out for the photo requirement, the industry will start to see more rejected applications due to unacceptable photos. They have not been doing this, but the goal is to put the onus of submitting an acceptable photo on the applicant and not on the program to fix the pictures.

C. CEU due dates for applicants.

Cortney Walker informed the committee that the AES program now has the ability to change CEU due dates in GovMotus. Previously, due to how the system was set up and the Covid CEU extension, work arounds were required for adjusting CEU due dates. They can now be changed internally. This tool will only be utilized if it can be proven if fitter's existing CEU due date in GovMotus is incorrect. That does not mean that if an applicant submits CEUs early on an application where they were not requested that the program will change the CEU due date. CEU due dates are still every 3 years, every 3rd renewal at time of submission. The tool will not be used if a fitter wants to push the CEU due date to next year because they forgot to do their CEUs. Over the last year the analysts have been maintaining a list of licenses with incorrect CEU due dates. When the tool became active in the system, they went back through and adjusted all the CEU due dates on those licenses. With the way the system is now, multi-year renewals mess with the systems logic and when a multi-year renewal is processed, the CEU due date is not updated. Cortney Walker is working with IBTS/GovMotus to get the logic updated. This caused licenses that did a multi-year renewal to have a CEU due date of 2022. The program is using the tool to update licenses that have had a multi-year renewal. It is going to be a bit of a process to get all the licenses correct but they are working on it.

Member Chad Richardson asked what the expiration date of the cards is. Is it year-round or tied to a specific date. Chairperson Bennett replied that the sprinkler fitter licensure runs from July 1st to June 30th of each year. The year that the card is active for is printed on the front of the card. Previously they used colored stickers with a date and coding to identify what year the card was valid for. Every current sprinkler fitter license is on the same cycle. The example license shown to the committee has an incorrect expiration date. There have been proposals previously discussed and that may be discussed in the future about shifting to a what could be considered 365 licensure. It would require a regulation adjustment and is something that can be discussed by the committee in July to hear recommendation from the committee members. Member Chad Richardson replied that having a large amount of licenses renewing at the same time puts a huge demand on the admin side of the license. Being able to renew throughout the year can be less impactful on the staff. Michael Hill added that any license renewed after May 2nd is assessed a late fee even though that license does not expire until June 30th.

4. OPEN FORUM

Chairperson Bennet encouraged that if any committee members had an idea for a topic that they email the AES inbox to get the topic on the agenda for the next meeting. They will keep track of the topics so they can be added to the agenda for the next meeting. Members of the public can contact committee members to get their concerns itemized on the agenda.

Member Peter Hulin expressed concern that year-round licensing may be easier on the AES admin staff but would make things much more difficult for contractors to keep track of because they hire people throughout the year and need to ensure that they are hiring licensed sprinkler fitters. Chairperson Bennett asked Member Peter Hulin to bring their concerns up again when the year-round licensing topic is on the agenda.

Member Vahe Zohrabian stated that the 3-year cycle for CEUs makes it confusing for the sprinkler fitters and contractors to keep track of. A 10-hour yearly requirement would meet the intent and purpose of continuing education, but this idea was rejected in the past due to staffing issues. The system is much smarter now and the CEUs just need to be uploaded, annual CEU requirement would remove the chaos every 3 years with figuring out who's CEU are due.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

Guest Kim Stocking asked if it possible in the future for sprinkler fitters to pay for their renewal before they turn in CEUs to avoid paying late fees. Chairperson Brice Bennet replied that it was reviewed as a loop that was exploited by the licensees in the regulations. It has been the interpretation of the program that in regulations CEUs are due at time of renewal for a complete application. If the application is incomplete, a late fee will be assessed.

Guest Chip Lindley stated that they met a contractor who had no idea about the sprinkler fitter certification process. Would it be possible to start a policy or program where contractors become listed with the OSFM as well as the sprinkler fitters for a nominal fee. This would allow the contractors to receive all the same information that is send to the sprinkler fitters. This is the way that Nevada does it and it allows the contractors to be aware of any changes or updates to the certification and prevents the contractor from using the excuse that they didn't know. Chairperson Brice Bennett responded that himself and Chief Henning having an upcoming meeting with the CSLB to explore options similar to that. Depending on how the meeting does they may share more information in the July meeting. Member Amber Barrios added that they get weekly phone class from contactors who know nothing about the sprinkler fitter licenses. Having the contractors register could also come with a requirement of having them submit verification of all the sprinkler fitters they employ to ensure that the correct employer is listed on the sprinkler fitter licenses.

Member Vahe Zohrabian stated that C-16 licensed contractors should know the regulations, they were emailed in the past with notifications about the regulations and dos and don'ts regarding the regulation. The CSLB has all the information for the C-16 license holders and can sent out a mass email to them much easier than the OSFM. Chairperson Bennet responded that they intend to work the CSLB on this topic. There are two types of lists they use for mass emailing of information. The entire licensee database

and a constant contact list which requires the person to subscribe. Being a government agency there are rules as to what they can and cannot do regarding spamming licensees with information. For this reason, they created the constant contact update option within the OSFM website. They are working with IT to make the subscribe button easier to find. That is their main tool for disseminating information. They cannot tell the CSLB what to do but are going to work as best as they can to encourage them to assist in enforcement and education of this licensure. Member Vahe Zohrabian replied that information of that nature is not spam and the process has already been used to successfully send out information when the regulation was being proposed. The sending information to C-16 contractors through the CSLB is a great tool to be utilized by the OSFM in cooperation with the CSLB. Member Peter Hulin stated that using the C-16 mailing list would get more people involved in the program and assist in enforcement making the program better overall.

Guest Shawn Arballo asked if the 10-hour CEU safety requirement was still going into effect and when would it be in place. Chairperson Bennet replied that that requirement is in proposed regulation as recommended by the prior advisory committee. Discussions at the advisory committee do not change law, they make recommendations to the OSFM for how the programs should move forward. California is a regulatory heavy state and adjusting regulations, creating new regulations, or deleting regulations takes a substantial amount of time. The only way that regulations can be changes legally, such is the safety requirement for CEUs, is to go through the regulatory process. The chapter 5.5 update is where that change will happen and will not go into effect until it is chaptered into law. They are already working on this process by identifying problems in the regulation. This is done with members of the public, work groups, and this committee and then they identify the purpose, problem, and rational for each proposed change in the regulation that then must be proposed to the OAL. After that the proposed regulation change goes through a 45-day comment period to the entire licensure and any comments received must be responded to. There can be a public hearing if required. After that the OAL reviews the regulations package to ensure it was completed appropriately and have identified the concerns in acceptable fashion. The regulation would then be chaptered at the next quarter. They are working on one thing at a time, finishing the exams is first, then the NFPA 25 work group, and then the chapter 5.5 update. So, an exact date of the implementation of the regulation cannot be given at this time. Chief Jeffery Schwartz added that they are one division of 7 with 10 programs, the other 6 divisions also have programs with regulations packages that need to be completed with the assistance of Code Development which is comprised of 3 individuals. What regulations packages get moved forward is decided by executive staff. The process takes time. Chairperson Bennet added that while the process does take time, they are using assistance from the OAL to ensure that the process is done correctly the first time, and they are nearly complete with the 5.5 package.

Member Vahe Zohrabian stated that because these changes are taking so long to complete, they are going to be out of date by time they are completed. They are not even following how title 19 was written because many of the accepted CEU providers would not meet the standards set in title 19. There are also bulletins posted by the OSFM that are not being respected. Most of title 19 is based off NFPA 25 which is from 2013, and the industry has moved far past that. If the industry follows the rules in title 19, they are still breaking the law on the safety side.

Chairperson Bennett stated that the best way to get discussion items on the agenda for the next meeting is for committee members to send an email to the AES inbox.

6. UPCOMING MEETING DATES FOR 2024

- A.** July 16th, 2025, 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM Pacific Daylight Time (PDT)
Pipeline Safety (Long Beach Office) 3780 Kilroy Airport Way, Suite 500. Long Beach, CA 90806

7. MEETING ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Member Edie Wade to adjourn the meeting, motion seconded by Member Vahe Zohrabian; all in favor of adjournment. Chairperson Greg Andersen adjourned the meeting at 10:17 A.M. PDT.