
AUTOMATIC EXTINGUISHER SYSTEMS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MEETING MINUTES – MONDAY, JANUARY 5TH, 2026, 3PM-4:30PM

Hybrid Committee Meeting



Meeting Location:

California Natural Resources Building

Office of the State Fire Marshal

715 P St, Sacramento, CA 95814

2nd Floor, Room 02-221 A

Zoom Meeting ID: 878 9009 7820

MEMBERS PRESENT

Jose Colin, Suisun City Fire Department

Randy Roxson, Sprinkler Fitters Association of California

David Karrick, California American Fire Sprinkler Association (CAFSA)

James Feld, University of California, Berkeley (retired)

Travis Tyler, California State University

Peter Hulin, National Fire Sprinkler Association (NFSA)

Wayne Weisz, American Fire Sprinkler Association (AFSA)

Vahe Zohrabian, California Fire Protection Coalition

Matthew McCarrick, California Association of Life Safety & Fire Equipment

(CALSAFE)

Shelley Merrell, Integrated Fire & Safety (Arrived Late)

Richard Eyssallenne, Black Bird Fire Protection

Brian Hutto, Schmidt Fire Protection

Todd Barry, Sprinkler fitters Local 669 (Alternate for Jeff Dixon)

Amber Barrios, Associated Compliance & Training

MEMBERS ABSENT

Ken Kwong, Sacramento City Fire Department

Travis Tyler, California State University

Chad Richardson, Los Angeles Fire Department

Edie Wade, Brooks Equipment Company

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

Kyle Howeel, Kimble & Co.

Jeff Dixon, Sprinkler Fitters Local 483

Jason McBroom, Alpine Fire Protection District

James Knowles, Amerex

OSFM STAFF

Chief Frank Bigelow, Deputy Director

Andrew Henning, Assistant Deputy Director

Brice Bennett, Committee Chairperson and Division Chief for Engineering and Investigations

Jeffery Schwartz, Deputy State Fire Marshal III Supervisor

Patricia Rock, Committee Co-Chairperson and AES Program Coordinator
Terence Liszewski, FE Program Coordinator
Jamie Sammut, CALFIRE Attorney
Cortney Walker, Supervisor I
Larry Godbout, Supervisor I
Taylor Machado, Analyst I
Chris Dale, Analyst II
Alexander Rapphahn, Analyst I
Thoms Setnan, Analyst II

PUBLIC GUESTS

David Lewandowski, Jorgensen
Company/CalSafe
Alicia Karrick, Pye-Barker Fire &
Safety
Steven Miles, Local 483
Richard Marks, Pacific Advocacy
Group
Corey Gray, Thorpe Design
Chip Lindley, Lindley Fire
Protection
Jeff Bridges, JB Fire Protection
Henry Fontana, FSV Fire Security
Bob Caputo, AFSA
Robert Vasquez, CalSafe
Dana Wardstrom
Harl Buckridge, AAA Quality
Services, Inc.
Lannie Marceau
Morgan Barlow
Jorge Tejeda
John Fletcher
Todd Barry
Todd Stephens
Michelle Starkey
James Moyer
Will Fassler
Shawn Gray
Hal Burton

Paulene Norwood
Melissa Norwood, Alwest
Michelle Perez, CAFSA
Leann Langford
Mike Zeif
Billy Walker
Traci Williams, Lake Elsinore
OFM
Dillon Gray
Jon Joseph
Jon Saia
Darlene Moyer
Randy Dysart
Lisa Bissett
David Young
Mike Martin
Raul Herrera
Bill Norwood
Kevin Becker
Billy Walker
Kevin Reinertson
Robert Hammond
Mathew Walla
Roy Afusia, Local 709
Matt Frediani
Angelica Ramirez
Paul Tran
Jonathan Ward

1. CALL TO ORDER

A. Welcome and Logistics Briefing

The meeting was called to order by Chief Brice Bennett at 3:35 PM. 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 (13 of 21) of members was present, with 1 arriving late.

2. NEW BUSINESS

A. Fire Guard Judgement & Injunction Regarding Sprinkler Fitter Licensure

Chairperson Bennett stated that this was an informational meeting to let the committee know about the Fire Guard judgment and the informational bulletin regarding the judgment. The committee was shown how to locate informational bulletins on the OSFM website. Information Bulletin 26-001 was shown to the committee members, and Chairperson Bennett stated that the purpose of this Information Bulletin is to provide notice of a recent judgment and injunction by the Sacramento Superior Court in a case relating to the regulations for the Automatic Fire Extinguishing Systems Certification for Sprinkler Fitters. Effective Wednesday, January 7th, 2026, the following stricken sections of the regulations of the Office of the State Fire Marshal were invalidated and cannot be enforced. All other regulations in the California Code of Regulations, Title 19, Division 1, Chapter 5.5, remain in full force and effect. A fire sprinkler fitter trainee registration, a fire sprinkler fitter apprentice registration, or a fire sprinkler fitter certification is still required for persons working as sprinkler fitters in California.

The judge modified 3 sections. Section 924.11, T Definitions, the judge removed “at an entry level position”. The rest of the trainee definition remains. Section 926 was removed in its entirety; it stated that one sprinkler fitter could supervise up to two trainees. Section 937, part A, was removed in its entirety. Parts B, C, and D remain unchanged. Part E was modified to remove “work under the direct supervision of a Certified Fire Sprinkler Fitter at all times” and Part E line 2 was removed in its entirety. Part E line 2 stated that a trainee must be registered with a California state or federally approved fire sprinkler fitter apprenticeship program within one year of their date of hire. Part F was removed in its entirety. It stated that if the trainee is not accepted into a California state or federally approved fire sprinkler apprenticeship program within one year of their data hire, the individual shall no longer be restricted or registered to work within the scope of these regulations. This effectively removed the requirement that a trainee must move into an apprenticeship program. The Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) is actively working on a rulemaking package to resubmit the stricken sections to the Office of Administrative Law. The sections listed on Informational Bulletin 26-001 were the only parts of the regulation removed by the judge. The rest of the regulations all remain in place. The rules and regulations on the OSFM website will be updated with the stricken sections before Wednesday, January 7th. The rest of the regulations that are still in place will be there as well.

Chairperson Bennett opened the meeting for questions from the committee members. Member Amber Barrios asked if this topic would be discussed further in the January

28th meeting. Chairperson Bennett replied that it would be discussed further if it needed to be. Member Jim Feld stated that it was unfair that the committee members did not receive advanced notice of the information bulletin, as it would have allowed them to review it before the meeting. Chairperson Bennett replied that this ruling came from a judge, and the OSFM is working as quickly as possible. There is no discussion about what has occurred; this is now the law. Member Peter Hulin asked if they could now have unlimited trainees on a job site. They also asked if there were no criteria for being a trainee and if a trainee was no longer considered an entry-level position. Chairperson Bennett confirmed that is what the law states, beginning January 7th. Member Peter Hulin stated that the very nature of calling someone a trainee implies an entry-level position. Chief Andrew Henning replied that the judge elected to, using the judge's own words, take a scalpel to specific portions of the regulations rather than invalidate them entirely. Everything struck through on information bulletin 26-001 is what the judge specifically, in his rulemaking, removed from the regulations. The sections removed were what the judge identified as issues or found problematic based on the OSFM rulemaking activities.

Member Peter Hulin asked if a person could remain a trainee for 30 years. Chief Henning replied that under the current regulations, that is an accurate statement. But as Chief Bennett brought up before, the OSFM is actively pursuing resubmission of a new rulemaking package to the Office of Administrative Law (OAL) to recodify the sections that were removed by the court order. Member Randy Roxson asked if removing section 2026 removed the ratios for apprentices and trainees. Chairperson Bennett confirmed that was correct. Member David Karrick asked if there was a timeline for the regulation rewrite. Chairperson Bennett replied that they would like to get the new regulation package, which includes recommendations from the advisory committee on Chapter 5.5, to OAL by mid-2026. Member Amber Barrios asked if completing an apprenticeship program or holding a C-16 license was still a requirement to become a sprinkler fitter. Chairperson Bennett replied that those were the two ways to become a certified sprinkler fitter.

Member Richard Eyssallenne asked if apprentices still needed to submit classes and applications to become a certified sprinkler fitter. Chairperson Bennett replied that the path to becoming a sprinkler fitter, the two options still exist. The requirement does not. Member Richard Eyssallenne asked if that meant that apprentices were in limbo until the new regulations were completed. Chairperson Bennett replied that a person may still be promoted to be a sprinkler fitter by attending an apprenticeship program or holding a C-16 license and then taking the sprinkler fitter exam. Chief Henning added that for apprentices, the apprenticeship programs remain unchanged. For the most part, the Superior Court's findings did not impact that. A person who is midway through their apprenticeship, if they elect to stay on that path, should stay in the apprenticeship program. Once they complete their apprenticeship, meet the other

requirements for a sprinkler fitter, and pass the exam, they highly recommend becoming a certified fitter. The two biggest things that the changes impact are supervision on the jobsite and the amount of time a person is allowed to be a trainee. Member Richard Eyssallenne, if there would be any impact on the ITM certification process. Chairperson Bennett replied that they did not foresee any impact.

Public Guest Steven Miles asked about the multiple sent from CALFIRE today and wanted to confirm that there were no changes from the bulletin shown at the meeting. Chairperson Bennett replied that there were no changes. Chief Henning added that the reason they may have received multiple emails if they are signed up for multiple email lists and information is sent out to both lists, they will receive multiple emails. Member Amber Barrios asked for on the record clarification that the ruling does not affect the requirement for CEUs for those that currently hold a certified fitter card. Chairperson Bennett replied that that was correct. Member Wayne Weisz asked if the only requirement was to register with the state as a helper (trainee), or apprentice. Chairperson Bennett replied that that was correct and added that the term “helper” is not recognized by the OSFM. Member Peter Hulin asked if a certified sprinkler fitter wanted to be recertified as a trainee, could they. Additionally, if a fitter is recertified as a trainee, then would they no longer have to take CEU classes or renew. Chairperson Bennett replied that if a fitter wished to become a trainee they could, they would still have to renew, but CEU classes would not be required of trainees.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairperson Bennett opened the meeting to public comments and asked that they be kept to 3 minutes or less. Public Guest Richard Marks asked if the changes to supervision only applied to private construction work. Public works subject to the prevailing wage law, the supervision ratios would still be pursuant to whatever the standard is for that apprenticeship program. Chairperson Bennett replied that the OSFM would not be allowed to enforce supervision ratios. Public Guest Richard Marks asked the BLSE or an LLC could file a complaint if there was a public work project that was not appropriate within the scope of the agreement and contract. Chief Henning replied that this issue would go back to the apprenticeship program and the Department of Industrial Relations for Apprenticeship Standards. The OSFM supervision requirements were the ones that were struck.

Public Guest Jeff Bridges asked if the regulation revisions are submitted, will they be available for public comment. Chairperson Bennett replied that as part of the OAL rulemaking process, any rulemaking process is announced and goes through a 45-day public comment period. After which, anything identified as a substantive change in the proposed rulemaking can be made, and then the document will go out for an additional 45-day comment period. Public Guest Henry Fontana asked if federal contract requirements for apprentices would still be in effect for a federal project. Chairperson

Bennett replied that the OSFM does not have the authority to restrict that. Public Guest Bob Caputo asked if the OAL regulation resubmittal process has the same result as taking the court case to the Supreme Court in terms of the legal ramifications, or does the Superior Court still have authority over the process. OSFM attorney Jamie Sammut replied that it would be the same. The Superior Court judge said that OSFM violated the Administrative Procedure Act with certain provisions that were in the regulations, so if OSFM proposed new regulations and ran them through the regulatory process, it would have the same effect as these regulations would have. It would be the same if we appealed the case and the appellate court found that the Superior Court was wrong in its findings, and they reinstated these regulations. Public Guest Bob Caputo asked if the plaintiffs could go through the same process. OSFM attorney Jamie Sammut replied that anyone can bring a claim that the OSFM violated the APA. Public Guest Bob Caputo asked if it was better to go to the California Supreme Court or if there was a better process. OSFM attorney Jamie Sammut replied that they cannot discuss ongoing legal strategies for any of this.

Public Guest Chip Lindley asked if completing an apprenticeship was still a prerequisite for obtaining a sprinkler fitter certification. Chairperson Bennett replied that there are two options for obtaining a sprinkler fitter certification: complete an apprenticeship program or hold a C-16 and then pass the sprinkler fitter exam. Chief Henning added that the judge removed very specific portions of 5.5. For the most part, the program is unchanged. The two biggest impacts on the program are that a person can now be a trainee indefinitely, and the removal of the supervisor requirement. There are multiple levels of state regulations on supervision; only the OSFM's supervision requirements in Title 19 have been removed. All other supervision requirements through other regulations, apprenticeship agreements, and contracts remain. There is no new historical recognition period; the same paths remain to become a certified sprinkler fitter. There is no bypass to the apprenticeship programs other than a C-16 license. The OSFM plans to rapidly get a regulations package submitted to recodify the removed regulations with OAL and to start the 45-day comment period. Once the process is started, OSFM cannot exceed one year on the rulemaking activities. The goal is to recodify the removed sections and add the committee-proposed updates to 5.5 as quickly as possible.

Member Richard Eyssallenne asked if an AHJ could still enforce the pipe fitter program. Chief Henning replied that the Superior Court ruling, the regulations that were struck out in 924.11, in partial 926 in its entirety, and the modifications to 937 are the as it is shown, is what can be enforced in the state. The informational bulletin regarding this was sent out to the informational bulletin list, the AES list, and will be forwarded to the California Fire Prevention Officers, as well as the California Fire Chiefs Association, for distribution to their members. Member Randy Roxson asked how the OSFM interprets the second paragraph on page four of the judgment that says to establish apprenticeship and or other experience-related requirements for individuals, and so on. OSFM attorney Jamie

Sammut replied that OSFM is interpreting that as the ability to bring a regulatory package back to OAL and run it through APA, and it can include any of those items. OSFM does not want to tie their hands going forward for how they want to handle trainees, apprentices, or any experience-based level they want to create as part of the regulatory package. Member Randy Roxson asked if experience-based requirements are going to be instead of apprenticeships. OSFM attorney Jamie Sammut replied that the judge's ruling leaves it open with the "and or". Member Randy Roxson stated that they believe the 'and or' to be significant.

Member Peter Hulin asked if Member Randy Roxson's interpretation of the paragraph of the judgment he brought up meant that it was now like the grandfathering clause still existed. Chairperson Bennett stated that the grandfather clause does not currently exist. Member Randy Roxson replied that the paragraph they were talking about has 'a and or' which they interpreted to mean this or that. They have reviewed the paragraph multiple times and agree with the OSFM attorney. There is an option to add an experience-based alternative, but it is not required because of the "and or". It leaves the option open to come back to future regulations and add an experience-based program. Chairperson Bennet stated that once OSFM promulgates the regulation package, there will be a 45-day comment period for the public to share their thoughts on the proposed regulations through APA rulings. Member Randy Roxson asked if the committee would be involved in the proposed changes. Chairperson Bennett replied that the proposed changes for 5.5 were already recommended by the Advisory Committee back to the OSFM, and outside of that, the sections that were stricken will be recodified. Member Randy Roxson stated that they were asking about the paragraph that talks about apprenticeship programs and or other experience-based programs. Chairperson Bennett replied that they believed the judge was giving the OSFM the opportunity. OSFM will promulgate regulations through the OAL process, and then members of the committee, as well as the public, will have their opportunity to comment on those proposed changes.

Member Vahe Zohrabian stated that the Superior Court has issued a final judgment and permanent injunction regarding the fire sprinkler fitter regulations. The decision is the law and governs enforcement statewide. The court was clear that certain regulatory provisions were adopted in violation of the Administrative Procedure Act and are invalid and unenforceable. The court also delayed the effective date to law notice to affected persons. Notice has now been issued through Information Bulletin 26-001. However, clarity in enforcement is still lacking, and that creates real risk in a field. The bulletin states that specific regulatory sections are invalidated and cannot be enforced, yet it also states that trainee, apprentice, or certified registration is still required. Those statements read together create confusion for contractors, workers, inspectors, and local authorities trying to comply with the law. That confusion matters. Inspectors and authority-having jurisdictions need to know exactly what they may and may not require after January 7th. Contractors need to know what pathways are lawful for workers. Workers need to know

whether they can legally perform work without being enrolled in an apprenticeship program, which the court has ruled cannot be mandatory. Right now, the bulletin does not answer those questions. I'm not here to revisit past disagreements. The court has resolved the legal issues. My purpose today is to ensure that the implementation aligns with the judgment and injunction. And that the enforcement in a field is clear, consistent, and lawful. I will close with this. The rule of law is not the obstacle to public safety; it is the foundation of it.

Public Guest Corey Gray asked does a trainee need to have a fitter card to install commercial sprinkler systems. Chairperson Bennett replied that anyone installing commercial systems in California must have a card; there are no uncertified, unlicensed helpers. That has not changed. Member Vahe Zohrabian asked how the OSFM was planning to complete the APA-required economic study in less than a year. They also asked about the statement in the ruling that gave the choice to be registered as a trainee, apprentice, or certified fitter. It asked for registration only; a trainee does not have a CEU requirement, an apprenticeship requirement, to be supervised, or a jobsite ratio. The apprentice and certified pipe fitters are the same. Chief Henning mentioned that certain apprenticeship programs may enforce this. It is not on the apprenticeship programs when the order of law is there. The only distinction between a program and DOL/DIR jobsite is that they are governmental jobs with their own set of rules. No apprenticeship program can enforce these laws as they see it. It is the program and the funding of it that, if they get involved contractually, they need to follow those rules. Member Amber Barrios replied that as an apprenticeship program, there is a ratio written into their approval with DOL; it is the same with any DIR-approved program. They have specific ratios that are already written in their approvals that are aside from any requirements from the state. Chairperson Bennet asked Member Amber Barrios who enforces those ratios. Member Amber Barrios replied that the DOL and DIR do.

Public Guest Robert Vasquez asked if a person working as a trainee still had to be registered with the OSFM because regulations section 937A, which required them to be, was stricken. Chairperson Bennett encouraged everyone to read the regulations with the removed sections, not just the bulletin. There is a substantial amount of duplicate text in the regulation that explains many different cases. The updated laws and regulations will be updated on the OSFM website, if not today, then tomorrow. It will say 2026 edition; it will have the rest of the regulations, which do not include the struck sections. They will be crossed out as a strikethrough. Chairperson Bennett reminded the committee and public of the upcoming AES committee meeting. The agenda for the meeting can be found on the committee's webpage, and the Zoom link is on the agenda for those who want to attend virtually.

4. UPCOMING MEETING DATES FOR 2026

- A. January 28th, 2025, 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM Pacific Daylight Time (PDT)
Pipeline Safety (Long Beach Office) 3780 Kilroy Airport Way, 5th Floor, McKittrick
Conference Room (Room 512) Long Beach, CA 90806

5. MEETING ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Member Wayne Weisz to adjourn the meeting, motion seconded by Member David Karrick; all in favor of adjournment. Chairperson Brice Bennett adjourned the meeting at 3:50 P.M. PDT.