



**DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION
OFFICE OF THE STATE FIRE MARSHAL
FIRE ENGINEERING AND INVESTIGATIONS**

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Date: April 17, 2024

To: Automatic Extinguishing Systems Committee

From: Greg Andersen, Chief of Fire Engineering and Investigation

SUBJECT/AGENDA ACTION ITEM:

Sprinkler Fitter and Multifamily Residential Sprinkler Fitter Certification Renewal Period

Recommended Actions:

Information Only

Background Information:

Following the passage of Assembly Bill 433 (Gordon) in 2013, regulations went into effect on July 1, 2017, requiring Automatic Fire Extinguishing Systems (AES) sprinkler fitters to be certified by the Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM).

Per regulations, certified Sprinkler Fitters and Multifamily Residential Sprinkler Fitters must renew their certification annually. The certifications are valid from July 1 through June 30 (Title 19, California Code of Regulations, section 939(d)). Additionally, certified Sprinkler Fitters and Multifamily Residential Sprinkler Fitters must submit three accredited continuing education units every three years. The continuing education is only submitted every three years at renewal (Title 19, California Code of Regulations, section 946). OSFM staff process approximately 4,500 Sprinkler Fitters and Multifamily Residential Sprinkler Fitters certifications annually.

Analysis/Summary of Issue:

To streamline the renewal process for the efficiency of constituents and OSFM staff, the OSFM proposes transitioning to a three-year renewal period.

Certification Fees

The fee for the annual renewal is \$150 for both the Sprinkler Fitters Certification and Multifamily Residential Sprinkler Fitters Certification (Title 19, California Code of Regulations, section 925.1). The OSFM proposes moving to a 3-year renewal, which means the renewal cost will be \$450 (\$150 x 3 years). There is no change to the fee amount; applicants will pay for three years at the time of applicaiton.

Card Issuance

Once implemented, the Sprinkler Fitters Certification Card and Multifamily Residential Sprinkler Fitters Certification Card will have an expiration date listed on the card. The OSFM will no longer mail out annual renewal stickers that must be affixed to the card. When the applicant goes through the renewal process, they will submit a current photo, which the OSFM will use when issuing a new card.

Phase-In of Three-Year Renewal

The OSFM is evaluating how to implement the three-year renewal. The goal is to have a similar number of renewals each year. One method being assessed is to issue the three-year card when the applicant submits their continuing education. However, the OSFM is also considering implementing the three-year renewal simultaneously for all applicants.

Validity Period

For new Sprinkler Fitters Certification and Multifamily Residential Sprinkler Fitters Certification applicants, the OSFM is evaluating moving away from the July 1 through June 30th validity period. The proposed concept is to move to a certification that is valid for 36 months from the month of initial certification issuance. The 36 months would begin on the last day of the month from when the certification is issued (i.e., if the certification is issued on April 10, the expiration date would be April 30). Each renewal after the initial certification will be 36 months from expiration. The change in the validity period will not impact persons currently certified (persons who expire on June 30 will remain at a June 30 expiration for future renewals).

The renewal due date would be based on the expiration date. Renewal applications are accepted up to five months before the expiration of the current certification. The application must be submitted 60 days before expiration to avoid the late fee.

Continuing Education

This proposal removes the confusion with the continuing education due date (currently three years). Continuing education will be required to be resubmitted at the time of renewal.

Apprentice Registration / Trainee Registration

The OSFM is also evaluating moving the Apprentice Registration to a validity period as outlined above.

Proposed Regulations

The OSFM is drafting proposed regulations for codification based on these recommendations. The AES committee recommendations and guidance will be considered in the proposed regulations. The regulations must go through the Office of Administrative Law rulemaking process before implementation. Our goal is to implement the new process in 2026.

Analysis/Summary of Issue:

The proposed process would move to a three-year renewal for the Sprinkler Fitters Certification and Multifamily Residential Sprinkler Fitters Certification. This change would

reduce the SFT staff time devoted to renewals and bring SFT procedures more in line with other state licenses/certifications and other states with sprinkler fitter certifications.

This process will also reduce the amount of time the applicant has to spend renewing their certification by going from an annual renewal to a triannual renewal period. Additionally, it will make it more straightforward when continuing education needs to be submitted.

Streamlining this process will increase the efficiency of limited OSFM staff and align the AES certification renewal period with industry practices. Additionally, this will increase the quality of service and responsiveness without increasing fees.

Potential Industry Impacts:

The most significant impact on the industry is that three years of the annual fee will be required at the time of application for the three-year card (currently \$450). However, the applicant will only have to apply for renewal once every three years, reducing the time they spend applying for renewals.