

AUTOMATIC EXTINGUISHING SYSTEMS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES – OCTOBER 16, 2024, 9:00AM – 12:00 PM

Hybrid Committee Meeting



Meeting Location:
3780 Kilroy Airport Way, Long Beach, CA 90806

Zoom Meeting Option
Meeting ID: 835 5897 8626

1. CALL TO ORDER

A. Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Greg Andersen, at 9:00 A.M. PDT on October 16th, 2024.

Chairperson Greg Andersen stated that the AES committee meeting is open to the public and they are working to meet the requirements of Bagley-Keene. At the next meeting there will be a presentation from the legal staff on Bagley-Keene. He noted that they are following all the requirements for Bagley-Keene that they can, including members having their camera on when attending virtually, having a physical location available to attend, getting out notes in a timely fashion at least 10 days before the meeting, and sending out upcoming staff reports.

Chairperson Greg Andersen asked if any members had changes for the agenda. No members requested any changes.

B. Roll Call/Determine Quorum

Roll call was conducted by Alexander Rapphahn, and it was determined that a quorum (15 of 20) of members was present. 1 Member arrived late.

Members Present:

Allen Quirk, National Association of Fire Equipment Distributers (NAFED)
Wayne Weisz, American Fire Sprinkler Association (AFSA)
Randy Roxson, Sprinkler Fitters of Association of California (SFAC)
David Karrick, California American Fire Sprinkler Association (CAFSA)
Vahe Zohrabian, California Fire Protection Coalition
Matthew McCarrick, California Association of Life Safety & Fire Equipment (CALSAFE)
Edie Wade, Brooks Equipment Company (Arrived Late)
James Feld, University of California, Berkeley (retired)
Randy Dysart, Retired
Jason McBroom, Alpine Fire Protection District
Bryan Jonson, West Sacramento Fire Department
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:

Peter Hulin, National Fire Sprinkler Association (NFSA)
James Knowles, Amerex
Jason Hudgins, Walschon Fire Protection, Inc.

Office of State Fire Marshal Staff:

Greg Andersen, Committee Chairperson, OSFM
Andrew Henning, Assistant Deputy Director of Fire Engineering, OSFM
Brice Bennett, AES Program Supervisor, OSFM
Patrica Rock, AES Program Coordinator, OSFM
Terence Liszewski, FE Program Coordinator, OSFM
Cortney Walker, OSFM
Michael Hill, OSFM
Megan Lopes, OSFM
Thomas Setnan, OSFM
Taylor Machado, OSFM
Chris Dale, OSFM
Alexander Rapphahn, OSFM

Public Guests:

Mickey Owens, Local 669
Captain Chad Richardson, LA City Fire
Shawn Arballo, Local 709
John Holmes, Local 709
Rick Vasquez, Local 709
Steven Miles, Local 483 (Alternate)
David Lewandowski, Jorgensen Company (Alternate)
Alicia Karrick, Greater Bay Area Chapter AFSA
Janet Little, Ansel
Ted Hakimi, California Fire Protection Coalition
Drew Slocum, Inspect Point Software

C. Introductions

All non-committee members introduced themselves.

D. Approval of Past Meeting Minutes – (July 17, 2024)

Chairperson Greg Andersen asked for approval for the July 17th, 2024, meeting.

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

E. Announcements

Chairperson Greg Andersen announced that due to budgetary restrictions, all the committee meetings will be held in Sacramento for the upcoming year. Online attendance options will still be available. He added that Patrica Rock and Terence Liszewski will be cross trained to work in each other's programs and that the work with the Contractors State Licensing Board continues.

F. Division Updates

Brice Bennett updated the committee on the progress of the Cognitive Exam update. The outside SMEs have validated knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) given by members of the committee and outside sources. A survey was sent out to the industry and committee that received a large amount of feedback. This data will be used to double validate the KSAs. The next step will be to another group together to validate questions and create new ones.

Member Vahe Zohrabian asked if the questions would have three or four answers and how many questions will the new test have. Chief Andrew Henning answered that questions will have four possible answers, with one correct answer and three distractor answers. The number of questions will not drastically increase, it will most likely stay around 100 questions, but they will be doing a site consultation with IO Predict on this topic. This is to ensure that there are enough questions on the test to validate the KSAs of the applicant in each section. As well as giving the applicant enough questions to prove their knowledge, skills, and abilities on each topic section of the exam.

Member Vahe Zohrabian asked if the exam was being designed for sprinkler fitters who have graduated from the apprenticeship programs, not for test takers. Chief Andrew Henning responded that this new test is focused on the sprinkler fitters and not on ITM because they are still working on the ITM certification and exam. For this new exam they are focusing on the KSAs required for a certified sprinkler fitter.

Member David Karrick asked if the 3rd party, IO Predict, recommendations would be brought back to the committee. Chief Andrew Henning replied that those recommendations are normally about how to administer the test. Any substantial overhauls to the exam were recommended, for example increasing the questions to 300, doing something that would increase the costs to the industry to take the exam, or anything very different from the normal exam processes. Then they would bring that back to the committee, recommendations for industry standards or OSFM business practices will be handled by the internal administration. Chairperson Greg Andersen added that they are working with subject matter experts on the exam and administering it to them to ensure the validity of the exam for people who are in the field.

Chief Andrew Henning stated that subject matter experts from the committee and the industry validate the KSAs on the exam then the survey was sent out to the industry to verify how the different KSAs people are using in the field. This survey will help to identify which KSAs are used the most and which are used the least by sprinkler fitters and then the exam can be tailored to reflect how often the KSAs are used. Then the subject matter experts will assist in making test questions based on the survey. Then the difficulty of the questions and test will be evaluated with consideration taken to make sure that both versions of the exam are equal levels of difficulty. The outside consultant, IO Predict, assists with test balancing and using the best practices and industry standards on maintaining test banks.

Member Vahe Zohrabian expressed concern that the new exam would be more difficult and that the apprenticeship programs would not be prepared for a new exam, causing the exam pass rate to fail. Chief Andrew Henning replied that they do not see

that happening, they have very good statistics and data on the existing test banks and questions. They are keeping some of the current test questions and adding new ones to create two exams and meet industry standards. Chairperson Greg Andersen added that if the pass rate dropped to 25% that would not meet industry standards, and they would move to correct that exam. Chief Andrew Henning stated that OI Predict will help them assess not only the overall difficulty of the exam but for each question as well. If questions are found to be not reliable then they will be changed or removed from the exam.

Brice Bennett stated that information regarding the reinforcement of Prohibition on AFFF use at Part 139 Airports could be found on Information Bulletin 24-008 at OSFM's Information Bulletin page. The Information Bulletin was posted September 3rd, 2024, and has new contact email and phone number at the bottom. Any questions regarding this topic can be sent there. Member David Karrick asked if they could that contact could tell them where to take their discarded product. Bruce Bennet replied that currently they are only allowed to answer some questions and the subject matter experts that could are not currently attending this committee. Assistant Deputy Director Jim Hosler oversees this topic.

Brice Bennett stated that the new exam self-authorization with Pearson Vue began October 1st. Information bulletin 24-009 regarding this was posted September 16th, 2024, and can be found at OSFM's Information Bulletin page. This new exam process includes all FEI exams. The applicant will schedule an exam, self-validate that they meet the standards to take the exam, and when they pass then submit their application. This removes much of the back and forth between the analysts and applicants, additionally it removes the 90-day testing window.

Member Todd Golden asked how long an applicant would have to wait after they failed an exam to retake it. Chairperson Greg Andersen replied that for the sprinkler fitter exam there is a 30 day wait period between exams. Member Todd Golden if that time could be shortened. Chairperson Greg Andersen replied that the 30-day wait period was in regulations and would require a regulatory change to shorten the wait period. Member Todd Golden asked if they were looking into changing it so as not to possibly cost a potential fitter 30 days of employment for failing an exam. Chief Andrew Henning replied that they are willing to look at that but would use the examples from other industries. They use a cool down period that allows the applicant to study to ensure they have the additional knowledge to pass the exam. They are working on a student feedback report to give applicants after they take the exam to show what areas they did not do well in and allow them study and retrain. They also want to protect the security of the test, someone who could take the exam multiple times in a row could extract the test bank. It is something that they are willing to look into, but it will require seeing what other states and agencies do as well as consulting with OI Predict.

Member Amber Barrios stated that if a person taking the sprinkler fitter exam still held their apprentice license, then they could still work. Member Todd Golden replied that they had a few people with lapsed apprentice cards that were affected by this issue.

Member David Karrick asked if an apprentice could take the exam in their last 30 days off the apprenticeship, then submit their application after they complete the program. Chairperson Greg Andersen replied that before an applicant takes the exam, they must attest that they meet the requirements and that there is currently not a time limit for how long exam pass report is good for. They are looking at putting a time limit on it but that will have to be adjusted in regulations. An apprentice nearing the end of their program could schedule their exam before the program is completed, they just don't want someone who took the exam years ago to try to use that exam report to become a sprinkler fitter. Chief Andrew Henning stated that he agreed with both sides of this and that if the exam results were good for 90 days, then it would allow an apprentice to take the exam 90 days out and have time to study and retrain if necessary. Member David Karrick stated that in the last 90 days of an apprenticeship program, the apprentice is doing on the job training, not classroom testing. This change will streamline the process.

Member David Karrick asked if the self-authorization process had been tested already. Chairperson Greg Andersen replied that it had, and they were working to address any issues with the new process. People who were already in the Pearson Vue system but not active or never set up an account may have to set up a new account.

Member Amber Barrios stated that their self-authorization applicants had been getting double charged by Pearson Vue, while not booking their appointment. Cortney Walker asked Member Amber Barrios to send her an email with information on this topic so it could be addressed with Pearson Vue. Chief Andrew Henning added that Cortney Walker works regularly with Pearson Vue contract executives and other staff to address issues like this.

Member Vahe Zohrabian asked if Pearson Vue charged the OSFM for the exam like they charge the exam fee to the applicants. Chief Andrew Henning replied that they do not, but the exam fee is based on the time it takes to complete the exam. The longer it takes to complete the exam, the more they will charge for the exam fee.

2. OLD BUSINESS

A. Proposed Regulations for Fee Increases

Chairperson Greg Andersen stated that the proposed regulations have been completed and are under review by OFSM legal, budgets and then up to agency. They will send out the 45-day public comment when the review process is completed. More information and current updates can be obtained by going to the OSFM webpage and selecting the Subscribe button at the bottom of the page under the Quick Links section. This will sign you up for the Constant Contact program and you can tailor what information you would like to receive.

Member Todd Golden asked if information about enforcement would be included in the AES Constant Contact information. Chief Andrew Henning replied that E-News is new to this program, and they are looking at expanding the sections to cover more topics. They would like to get this topic on upcoming E-News reports, but it will not be on the next one to come out. They will look at how other agencies report similar topics and use that to create their enforcement information.

B. ITM Licensing Taskforce Update

Chairperson Greg Andersen stated they have the recommendations from the work group and are now working with different national level programs. They are asking about their processes, tests, and CEU requirements. Based on this information, a proposal will be drafted and brought back to the committee.

C. NFPA 25 Work Group Update

Brice Bennett stated that the members selected to work on the NFPA 25 workgroup will be contacted soon, it will be a smaller workgroup. The purpose of this workgroup will be to evaluate the differences between the NFPA 25 currently in regulation and the NFPA 25 2026 National.

3. NEW BUSINESS

A. Renewal Process Update

Patrica Rock stated that renewals for Fire Pumps, L licenses, and Type 1 and 2s are at 1030, last year's numbers were around 1,900, but there is still time in the renewal period. Sprinkler fitter renewal numbers are at 3,245, last year's renewal numbers were 3,870. For 2024, there is 983 apprentices and 19 trainees. Brice Bennett added that there is no expedited process for getting or renewing a sprinkler fitter's license.

B. New Renewal Cards

Chairperson Greg Andersen stated after a cost analysis on the renewal stickers, it was found that the stickers cost more than printing a new card. They are redoing the whole process and fitters, apprentices, and trainees will receive a new card every time they renew. Member Amber Barrios asked about making the license digital. Chairperson Greg Andersen replied that they have discussed doing that but will move forward with the card for now. The cards will have a QR code on them which links to the search engine, but they do not have a specific search engine platform at this time. The staff report on this topic cites it as a financial issue, each year they have leftover stickers, but blank cards can be used for the next year. There will be a phase in period and an information bulletin will be coming out. This process will also affect the Fire Extinguisher program. The AES cards for sprinkler fitters will be horizontal and the apprentice/trainee cards will be vertical to distinguish the different types of licenses. Chief Andrew Henning added that they understand the difficulty of creating a digital signature while using GovMotus on a computer. They are looking at removing the signature requirement but are verifying with local fire marshals and fire prevention officers if they use the signature for any purpose before they remove it. They have also received complaints that after a few years the photo and the card information will begin to rub off. The new card every year and updated photos will be an enforcement tool, fire prevention officers will not have to try to match old photos and worn-out cards to the fitters on the jobsite. The expiration date will be clearly marked on the front of the card as well. This will also eliminate the need to replace worn-out cards, and the fees associated with that.

Member Amber Barrios asked if the font on the cards would be bigger. Cortney Walker replied that the font would be bigger and unnecessary information was removed from the card.

Member Jason McBroom asked if there was a way to make the QR code on the back of the cards search for that specific license Chairperson Greg Andersen replied that at this time the QR code will only link to the search engine to see if the license is valid. Chief Andrew Henning added that they are working with records management vendors to see if they could have that capability, but they must evaluate if moving to a new vendor worth it versus staying with GovMotus. Member Jason McBroom stated that it would be helpful if the ITM license receives a card because of the multiple tiers and the need to identify the technicians and their certifications.

Member Randy Dysart asked if the search engine from the QR code would allow the inspector to identify the cardholders signature. Brice Bennett demonstrated the Verify License Status search engine located on the GovMotus homepage. No GovMotus account is required to use this search engine and the QR code will link directly to the search engine. Chairperson Greg Andersen recommended only using the license number in the search engine. Member David Karrick asked if nothing shows up when searching with a license number, that means there is no license. Chairperson Greg Andersen replied that if nothing shows up, check with the company but that is a red flag. Guest John Holmes stated if a name does not show up in search, then they might be expired or not have a license. Chairperson Greg Andersen replied that expired licenses should still show in the search engine (This is not correct, the search engine will only show currently issued licenses. If the license is expired, it will not show up in the search engine.)

Member David Karrick asked if proof of current enrollment in an apprenticeship program would also be required for renewal of an apprentice license. Brice Bennett replied that the committee proposed it as part of new regulations. Member Amber Barrios added that this is an issue they deal with regularly and to combat this they notify the AES program when an apprentice drops. Chief Andrew Henning state that this issue has been brought to their attention and they will try to add it into the proposed regulations. The regulations are clear that current enrollment in an apprenticeship program is a required part of hold an apprentice license. They will need to work with the OFSM legal team to see if they could make this change or if it would have to be part of a regulations package.

4. OPEN FORUM

Chairperson Greg Andersen opened the floor for discussion topics from the committee members.

Member Todd Golden asked for an update on the translators for the sprinkler fitter exam versus using the Pearson Vue Translators. Chief Andrew Henning replied that State Contractors Licensing Board only offers their exams in English and Spanish. There would be a high cost for the OFSM to have their exams in multiple languages and the cost would be passed on to the industry. They would also have to establish what other languages would they offer. The only way to utilize a translator for a Pearson Vue exam is to hire a Pearson Vue approved translator. The leadership team has spoken with Pearson Vue about this but can speak with them again. The Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) uses a different testing platform like Pearson Vue, with a similar amount of testing locations. The DCA has an agreement with their testing platform that a translator can be used as long as they are over the age of 16

and not currently working in the industry. After translating for an exam, they are banned from taking that exam for 2 years. They can evaluate the switching testing providers or offering two providers. If two providers were offered, then the cost of testing could go up with the less people taking the exam at each provider. They do see the benefit of being people to bring in a translator at no cost to the test taker. The committee expressed interest in this new test provider and Chief Andrew Henning responded that they would add it to their list of things to look at in 2025. The contract process for this would be a six-to-twelve-month process.

Member David Karrick asked if there was an approved apprenticeship program register to teach in a language other than English or Spanish and was turning out sprinkler fitters who learned the trade in that language, would that be enough to get the sprinkler fitter exam translated into that language. Chairperson Greg Andersen replied that they are looking at different options, there would be a cost involved in translating an exam, and the cost could vary depending on how many languages the exam needed to be translated into. If this were to become an issue, then it would be addressed.

Member Vahe Zohrabian stated over the past 5 years the number of sprinkler fitters has dropped, now it is 3,245. Other government agencies, such as the DMV offer their exams in multiple different languages. Have the exam in different languages or allowing translators to assist the exam takers would benefit the workers, the industry, and the AES program. This also has the benefit of allowing more people to enter the industry. Someone who has spent the last 5 years going through an apprenticeship program will pay the Pearson Vue translator fees if it means getting their journeyman sprinkler fitter license. Chief Andrew Henning confirmed that applicants may request translator services through Pearson Vue. The applicant can contact Pearson Vue, let them know that a translator is required, and a Pearson Vue approved translator will be assigned to assist in the exam at a cost to the applicant. The cost varies depending on the travel and testing time.

Member David Karrick asked if they could contact Pearson Vue and find where the nearest translator for a specific language was and then schedule an exam near them. Chief Andrew Henning replied that would be a question for Pearson Vue.

Member Vahe Zohrabian asked if the OSFM objected to an applicant bringing their own translator and that Pearson Vue told him that the OSFM set the rules for translators. Brice Bennett asked for more information. Member Vahe Zohrabian was given. Member Vahe Zohrabian replied that he was told that the government agency in charge of the tests sets the rules. Cortney Walker stated that for a translator to be scheduled for a Pearson Vue exam, the person taking the exam must schedule the translator before they show up to take the exam. They cannot show up the day of the exam and request a translator. When they request one before their exam date, Pearson Vue contacts their 3rd party translating services and schedules the translator to be at a specific testing location. That location is then notified that the translator will be attending an exam. Chief Andrew Henning stated that they will work on an informational bulletin to better inform the industry on the procedure of getting a translator through Pearson Vue.

Member Amber Barrios asked if there was any process for canceling licenses that have been expired for a long time. They have sprinkler fitters that refuse to do CEUs and have been expired for nearly 6 years. They have not been able to find anything in the regulations regarding this topic. Chairperson Greg Andersen replied that this is something that is being looked at for the new regulations. Cortney Walker added that they are looking at limiting the number of years that a multi-year renewal can go back. If a sprinkler fitter was expired for more than a predetermined number of years, they would have to submit a new application and start the process over.

Member David Karrick asked the status of committee appointments. Chairperson Greg Andersen replied that they are in the process of updating all the committee charters, several have made it through legal review already. The legal review is to clean up the language in the charters. They are also reevaluating the memberships, to ensure that the committee has the correct group makeup for the committee to operate effectively. The finalized committee charter will be brought back to the committee. Appointment letters can be sent in now, they would like to have all of them by November, but they will still look at them if they are a little late. Brice Bennett added that new letters of interest will be required, and they can be directed to the OSFM but sent to aes@fire.ca.gov. They would like all the letters to be submitted by November 1st.

Member David Karrick asked what the official process on alternates and having them appointed. Chairperson Greg Andersen replied that the process is currently being updated in the charter.

Member Chip Lindley stated that a task group that met a year or two ago and they agreed that if a person was expired for three years, then they would have to start over again. Brice Bennett replied that a task group makes recommendations to the committee and this issue is being addressed in the new regulations.

Member Amber Barrios asked for clarification because the current regulations state that after one year, a sprinkler fitter must submit a new application. Chairperson Greg Andersen replied that they do say that, and changes were made in the past to accommodate issues because of the regulations. The new regulations will address these differences.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

Public Guest Shawn Arballo asked if on the Pearson Vue exam results the applicants can't see their scores, only if they passed or failed. Chairperson Greg Andersen replied that with the new exam they are going to see their score and a breakdown of the different categories of the exam. This is to allow someone who failed the exam to identify the areas that they need to study more.

6. UPCOMING MEETING DATES

January 15th, 2025, 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM Pacific Daylight Time (PDT)
Office of the State Fire Marshal
715 P St, Sacramento, CA 95814

7. MEETING ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Member Vahe Zohrabian to adjourn the meeting, motion seconded by Member Amber Barrios; all in favor of adjournment. Chairperson Greg Andersen adjourned the meeting at 10:29 A.M. PDT.

DRAFT