
GENERAL FIREWORKS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday May 21, 2025, 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Meeting Minutes



Meeting Location

Natural Resources Agency
715 P St. – 2nd Floor – Room 2-301
Sacramento, CA 95814

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86841726717?pwd=LdZZ1GkBeQ4ufMEUFyu3Naicu5IjF9.1>

Meeting ID: 868 4172 6717

Passcode: GFAC

1. CALL TO ORDER

A. Welcome and Logistics Briefing

Chairperson Caleb Phillips welcomed everyone and called meeting to order at 9:02am. He informed those in the room of the exits and locations of the restrooms, along with remaining professional and courteous in discussions. Phillips also introduced Kemiko Tolon, the new Program Analyst.

B. Roll Call (Determine Quorum) and Introductions

Member Present:

Kevin Crews, Volt Live
Ian Gilfillan, Pyro-Spectaculars-North
Amy Nygren, Sacramento Metro Fire District
Janice Van Mullem, Huntington Beach Fire Department
Gary Brown, Pyro-Spectaculars
Linda Hass-Kreman, Phantom Fireworks
Julie Heckman, American Pyrotechnic Association
Dennis Revell, Revell Communications
Tad Trout, TNT Fireworks
Mark Holthaus, Friends of Amateur Rocketry

Members Absent:

Kevin Kelley, Disney Entertainment Productions
Sherry Souza, Fireworks & Stage FX America
Megan Quinn, Corona Fire Department
Antonio Solares, Orange County Fire Authority
Gregory McCanless, Jake's Fireworks
David Nordling, Reaction Research Society

OSFM Staff:

Chief Brice Bennett, CALFIRE, Acting Division Chief
Chief Jeff Schwartz, CALFIRE, Supervising Deputy State Fire Marshal III
Chairperson Caleb Phillips, CALFIRE, Deputy State Fire Marshall Specialist III
Vijay Mepani, CALFIRE, Deputy State Fire Marshall Specialist III

Cortney Walker, Staff Services Manager I
Kemiko Tolon, CALFIRE, Program Assistant
Christopher Dale, CALFIRE, Associate Governmental Program Analyst
Adam Stewart, CALFIRE Staff Services Analyst
Alex Galvez, CALFIRE, AB Analyst

Member Present:

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Vijay Mepani, CALFIRE, Deputy State Fire Marshall Specialist III
Cortney Walker, Staff Services Manager I
Kemiko Tolon, CALFIRE, Program Assistant
Christopher Dale, CALFIRE, Associate Governmental Program Analyst
Adam Stewart, CALFIRE Staff Services Analyst
Alex Galvez, CALFIRE, AB Analyst

C. Introduction of Non-Committee Members-Guests:

James Eadie, Rocket Motor Hobbyist
Frank Perez, Disney Live Entertainment, Senior Fireworks Designer
Frank Miuccio, Reaction Research Society

Kemiko Tolon conducted roll call and had everyone introduce themselves. Quorum was established; quorum established at 9:10 am with 10 members present.

D. Approval of November 20th, 2024, Meeting Minutes – (Attachment 1)

Chairperson Caleb Phillips requested approval of the meeting minutes from November 20, 2024. Member Tad Trout inquired whether a previously asked question would be addressed during the current meeting. Chairperson Phillips clarified that it would not, as the responsible unit was unavailable to provide a response.

Member Ian Gilfillan made a motion to approve the minutes, which was seconded by Member Dennis Revell. The motion passed unanimously with all present committee members voting in favor.

E. Announcements and Division Updates

Chairperson Caleb Phillips shared divisional announcements and updates. Chief Brice Bennet is now the acting Chief for the Fire Engineering and Investigations Division, as Chief Anderson prepares for retirement. Additional announcement of Kemiko Tolon as the permanent program assistant for Fireworks and Motion Pictures.

2. OLD BUSINESS

A. Fireworks Regulation Updates

Chairperson Caleb Phillips provided an update on the ongoing internal review of regulations, with a current focus on the safe and sane fireworks testing process. Internal meetings are held biweekly, and the review is approximately 60–70% complete. The team is still determining the appropriate source for testing standards and may consult Members Troutt and Revell for their expertise.

Once internal review is finalized, the regulatory package will move through the appropriate channels, including the chain of command, the Office of Administrative Law (OAL), and review by CAL FIRE legal counsel. No definitive timeline has been set.

Member Troutt volunteered to assist in the process, emphasizing the need to update regulations that have not been revised since the 1970s. Members Linda Haus and Mark Holthaus also offered to support the effort. In response to a question from Member Gary Brown about possible resistance to the process, Chairperson Phillips noted that most of the effort is focused on early-stage development to reduce complications later. Deputy Brice Bennett confirmed this approach.

Member Kevin Crews requested a draft of the proposed regulations; however, Deputy Bennett clarified that drafts cannot be shared prior to the formal process. The document will be made available during the 45-day public comment period.

B. Regulation Proposal for New Labeling Requirements

No motion has been made to create a workgroup for new labeling requirements for the seal of registration. Chairperson Caleb Phillips asked if the committee was ready to make a motion today. Member Troutt made a motion to establish a workgroup to look at the proposed label requirements. Member Dennis seconded the motion, with no opposition from the committee. The motion passed unanimously and has planned to have the first meeting in August 2025.

C. Interstate Compact White Paper

Chairperson Caleb Phillips asked Acting Division Chief Brice Bennett if he had an update on the Interstate Compact White Paper. Chief Bennett has not had a chance to address it, but he has had conversations with Member Dennis Revell and Chairperson Caleb Phillips and looks forward to having an update at the next committee meeting.

D. AB1403

Chairperson Caleb Phillips inquired if Deputy Brice Bennett had any updates to share. Deputy Bennett confirmed there were no updates at this time. Chairperson Phillips recommended tabling the Interstate Compact White Paper, AB 1403 update, and NERIS update until the next committee meeting.

A brief note was provided regarding NERIS, indicating continued progress, including review of the Plus One Codes. It was also noted that no representatives from CWPM were available to attend the current meeting.

3. NEW BUSINESS

A. Arson Bomb Update on Hazardous Materials/CUPA

Chairperson Caleb Phillips noted that no representative from the Arson and Bomb Unit was available for the meeting. As a result, this agenda item will be tabled until the next committee meeting.

B. IB 24-014: New and Renewal Cards to be Issued

SSMI Cortney Walker provided an overview of the updated renewal process for identification cards. The new system includes issuing a new card each year with a pre-printed expiration date, eliminating the use of renewal stickers. As a result, a new headshot photo must be submitted with each renewal.

She emphasized that the photo must be a proper headshot and **cannot** be:

- A photo of a previous ID or driver's license
- A photo of a photo

Submissions with incorrect photos will be rejected with an explanation provided.

Chairperson Caleb Phillips noted that this change primarily impacts pyrotechnic operators and does not affect other license types.

4. ROUNDTABLE

Member Kevin Crews initiated a discussion on the need for broader regulatory clarity regarding the use of metal racks in public display fireworks. He noted that the topic continues to be sidelined and emphasized the importance of formally addressing whether their use should be permitted or prohibited. Crews suggested the committee work with public display companies to determine acceptable standards and testing requirements, with final decisions documented in writing.

Additionally, Member Crews highlighted ongoing challenges related to licensing for special effects operators, particularly the limited number of licensees and barriers to entry under current Title 19 regulations. He advocated for creative solutions from the workgroup that ensure compliance while expanding access, including recognizing alternative experience methods. Crews also questioned the requirement for experience to be based in California, citing out-of-state festival work as relevant experience.

Member Gilfillan supported these concerns, noting the lengthy process to obtain a theatrical license and suggesting a model similar to commercial licensing to reduce delays without compromising safety. Member Gary expressed support for both Crews' and Gilfillan's remarks. Member Holthaus added that he is seeking updated insurance coverage for launching rockets and related activities; Crews may be able to assist with this.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

Frank Perez (Disneyland Resort) thanked Member Cruz for highlighting the ongoing shortage of pyrotechnic operators in California. He shared that Disney is currently struggling to find qualified operators and is exploring the development of training programs to help elevate more individuals to industry standards. Perez also expressed interest in joining the advisory committee. Chairperson Caleb Phillips clarified that participation in workgroups is open and not limited to advisory committee members.

The committee discussed James's presentation on rocketry. Chairperson Caleb Phillips requested a follow-up conversation offline with OSFM to explore potential implications under state law.

Member Ian Gilfillan reminded the committee that at the previous meeting, Chief Anderson suggested forming a task group on drone use. Chairperson Phillips explained that the item was removed from the current agenda pending consultation with Legal. Member Gilfillan informed the committee that the American Pyrotechnics Association (APA) has established a standing committee to address drone-related issues. Member Heckman thanked Gilfillan for the update and noted that several current committee members also serve on that APA committee.

Chairperson Phillips announced that the next committee meeting is anticipated to take place in August, subject to member availability. He inquired about interest in holding the meeting in Southern California. Several committee members indicated they would be able to attend.

6. UPCOMING MEETING DATES

August 20, 2025, 9AM-12PM,

(Meeting possibly held in Southern California)

Natural Resources Agency

715 P St. – 2nd Floor – Room 2-201

Sacramento, CA 95814

7. MEETING ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn meeting made by Member Amy Nygren second made by Member Dennis Revell at 10:01am.

This notice and copies of the written materials have been posted on the Office of the State Fire Marshal website <https://osfm.fire.ca.gov/>. For information concerning the Committee meeting, please email Caleb Phillips at Caleb.Phillips@fire.ca.gov. Any written reports being provided to the Committee members in advance of the public meeting will also be available to the public upon request.

In accordance with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, reasonable accommodations are available. Request for reasonable accommodations should be made at least five (5) working days prior to the meeting date. To request reasonable accommodations, including documents in alternative formats, please contact Caleb Phillips at Caleb.Phillips@fire.ca.gov.