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# GENERAL FIREWORKS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

## MEETING MINUTES- JANUARY 27, 2026, 1:30PM - 4:30PM

*Hybrid Committee Meeting Minutes*

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### **Meeting Location:**

#### **Office of the State Fire Marshal**

5<sup>th</sup> Floor, McKittrick Conference Room 512

3780 Kilroy Airport Way,

Long Beach, CA 90806

## **1. CALL TO ORDER**

### **A. Welcome and Introductions**

Division Chief Brice Bennett opened the meeting with a logistics briefing and stated that the committee meeting would be conducted in compliance with the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act. He requested that attendees keep their cameras on, when possible, mute microphones when not speaking to avoid audio interference, and state their name prior to speaking for the record. Chief Bennett also informed members of the public that there would be an opportunity for public comments, with remarks limited to three minutes. Additionally, he provided emergency instructions for in-person attendees.

Chief Daniel Berlant, California State Fire Marshal, addressed the committee regarding the need for regulatory updates to close loopholes exploited by illegal fireworks users. He noted that despite ongoing efforts by the Public Safety Fireworks Enforcement Task Force, seizures of illegal fireworks have significantly increased, exceeding one million pounds this year compared to the typical annual average of 250,000. Chief Berlant expressed appreciation for the committee's work and encouraged open dialogue to support public safety while balancing industry operations and advancing a regulatory package. He also emphasized the importance of inclusive committee engagement to ensure all perspectives are heard and considered.

### **B. Roll Call/Determine Quorum**

#### **Members Present:**

Chairperson Brice Bennett, CAL FIRE Division Chief

Co-Chairperson Caleb Phillips, CAL FIRE Deputy State Fire Marshal III (Specialist)

Kevin Crews, Volt Live

Janice Van Mullem, Huntington Beach Fire Department

Mark Holthaus, Friends of Amateur Rocketry

Ian Gilfillan, Pyro-Spectaculars-North

Amy Nygren, Sacramento Metro Fire District

Gary Brown, Pyro-Spectaculars

Julie Heckman, American Pyrotechnic Association

Alan Turner, Independent Pyrotechnic Operator

Linda Hass-Kreman, Phantom Fireworks

Dennis Revell, Revell Communications

#### **Members Absent:**

Antonio Solares, Orange County Fire Authority  
Tad Trout, TNT Fireworks  
Logan Herrera, Lander Challenge  
Frank Muccio, Reaction Research Society

**Office of State Fire Marshal (OSFM) Staff:**

Chief Daniel Berlant, State Fire Marshal  
Chief Andrew Henning, Assistant Deputy Director  
Chairperson Chief Brice Bennett, Division Chief  
Chief Jeff Schwartz, Deputy State Fire Marshal III (Supervisor)  
Vijay Mevani, Deputy State Fire Marshal III (Specialist)  
Jennifer Reese, Deputy State Fire Marshal III (Specialist)  
Larry Godbout, Supervisor I  
Cortney Walker, Supervisor I  
Kemiko Tolon, Analyst II  
Christopher Dale, Analyst II  
Thomas Setnan, Analyst II

**C. Approval of Meeting Minutes (September 15, 2025)**

Chairperson Brice Bennett requested approval of the meeting minutes from September 15, 2025. Member Dennis Revell asked the office to clarify the location for the fireworks seizure, which was in Commerce, CA. Chairperson Bennett requested a motion to accept the minutes as amended. Motion made by member Julie Heckman and seconded by member Ian Gilfillan. The motion passed unanimously with all present committee members voting in favor.

**D. Announcements and Division Updates**

Chairperson Bennett announced the addition of new personnel to the Fire Engineering and Investigations team. He introduced Larry Godbout, Supervisor I, who will oversee licensing and certification for the division, and Jennifer Reese, Deputy State Fire Marshal III (Specialist), who will support the Flame Retardant and Fabrics Program. He also introduced Leandria Gossett as the new Arson and Bomb Investigator.

**2. OLD BUSINESS**

**A. Fireworks Regulation Update**

Deputy Caleb Phillips provided an update on the Fireworks Regulation, reporting that the division has made significant progress through reviews and proposed revisions. He noted that the regulatory package is currently under management review and is anticipated to be completed within the coming months.

Chairperson Bennett opened the floor for questions, and committee member Dennis Revell inquired about an estimated timeline for completion of the package. Chief Henning responded that the package must proceed through several required stages, including incorporation of task force comments, completion of a fiscal impact statement, and coordination with the Office of Administrative Law (OAL). He stated that an additional update would be provided at the next committee meeting.

Gary Brown asked whether the task force had reviewed the proposed regulatory package. Chief Henning clarified that the package had not been reviewed by the task

force. He explained that once the task force report is finalized, recommendations from that group will be reviewed, and at that time, both the GFAC and Task Force recommendations will be evaluated internally to determine which items may move forward collectively.

## **B. NERIS Update**

Kate Kovanda provided an update on the CalSTATS program and reported on the transition to the new national system, the National Emergency Response Information System (NERIS). She explained that NERIS has expanded the available options for documenting fireworks as the cause of an incident. Ms. Kovanda presented the enhanced reporting categories but noted that a “safe and sane” fireworks classification is not currently available within the system. She emphasized that NERIS is designed to evolve and that additional classifications may be incorporated in future updates.

Chief Daniel Berlant added that while the U.S. Fire Administration has been receptive to considering this classification in future system updates, it may not align with reporting requirements in other states. The committee discussed the challenges of collecting accurate and meaningful data through a national reporting system that does not fully accommodate state-specific needs.

## **C. Public Safety Fireworks Enforcement Task Update**

Christine Reed, Chair of the Public Safety Fireworks Enforcement Task Force, provided an overview of the task force’s review of California’s fireworks laws and regulations conducted in response to the 2025 Esparto fireworks facility explosion. She reported that the task force developed recommendations across six categories, including, but not limited to, clarifying the definition of transit under the Health and Safety Code, aligning felony disqualification lists, requiring both ATF and local permits for state licensing, increasing fireworks-related training for local authorities, and enhancing penalties for individuals selling illegal fireworks.

Ms. Reed stated that the report is currently with the Office of the State Fire Marshal and is required to be reviewed by the committee, with comments due by February 2, 2026, to Chief Bennett and Deputy State Fire Marshal Phillips. She explained that the task force will incorporate committee input and submit the finalized report to the Office of the State Fire Marshal in late February 2026, with an anticipated publication date of March 2026. An Appendix A update report is scheduled to be presented in April 2026. Chief Daniel Berlant thanked Ms. Reed and the committee for their efforts and emphasized the importance of adhering to the established timeline and review process.

Committee member Janice Van Mullem inquired about the potential use of drones for enforcement to address illegal fireworks activity. Ms. Reed responded that this enforcement strategy was not specifically addressed in the task force’s recommendations.

Committee member Gary Brown expressed concern regarding the timeframe allotted for the GFAC Committee’s review of the report. Chief Berlant confirmed that the committee would have until the April committee meeting to complete its review.

Committee member Dennis Revell requested clarification on whether committee comments would be incorporated into the report and whether such input would affect the report's content. Chief Berlant explained that the document is a Task Force report and that committee feedback and ideas would be included in Appendix A. Mr. Revell also voiced concerns regarding the shortened review timeline and identified several key considerations he believed should be addressed. He proposed the following requests: operationalizing the Office of the State Fire Marshal's existing statutory authority related to inspections, records, and import notifications; dedicating a section to upstream interdiction efforts, including import monitoring, port and transit diversion detection, seizure-to-source investigation protocols; and defining success metrics based on outcomes such as container interdictions, prosecutions, and disruption of repeat offenses.

Committee member Gilfillan asked whether there would be an opportunity to influence the final report language if comments were submitted prior to the February 2 review deadline. Deputy Bennett, with confirmation from Ms. Reed, responded that there may be an opportunity for language revisions following the committee's review and incorporation of its input.

### **3. NEW BUSINESS**

#### **A. Update on Hazardous Materials/CUPA**

The agenda item was tabled until the next meeting, as the presenter was unable to attend.

#### **B. Budget Change Proposals**

Chief Bennett noted that the Budget Change Proposal had been requested as an agenda item regarding the task force or potential future enforcement developments; however, the Office is unable to provide comment, as these are internal documents. Chief Daniel Berlant emphasized the importance of continuing discussions on how to fulfill departmental responsibilities, acknowledging the challenges posed by the state's \$3 billion deficit. He highlighted that despite these financial constraints, the department has successfully maintained its resources and staffing levels.

#### **C. Addition of Assortments to GovMotus**

Deputy Phillips provided an update regarding the addition of product assortments for the retail industry. He explained that, under the current process, a letter with the requested assortments is sent to the program coordinator, who manually enters the information into the Safe and Sane Book prior to publication. Deputy Phillips proposed developing an application within GovMotus to automate this process, allowing information to auto-populate directly into the Safe and Sane Book. No comments were provided by committee members on this proposal.

#### **D. Import Notifications**

Deputy Phillips reminded applicants holding an import-export license to submit timely import notifications to the [FWX@fire.ca.gov](mailto:FWX@fire.ca.gov) email address. He also noted that the department may issue a reminder letter regarding the applicable statutory requirements.

#### **E. Recognition of National Rocker Motor Certifications**

James Eadie, Pyrotechnic Operator, Rockets Third Class, delivered a presentation on the proposal to recognize National Rocket Motor Certifications for purposes of California's classification system. He explained that these certifications are currently conducted at the national level and could be adapted for state recognition. Mr. Eadie proposed amending Title 19 to recognize certifications from three North American rocketry organizations as sufficient for state classification. He noted that the State Fire Marshal would retain authority to revoke classification if safety standards are not met. Potential benefits include reducing workload for the Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM), enabling smaller manufacturers to supply California, and providing hobbyists clarity regarding which rocket motors are legal and available. He also noted that there is currently no official list of classified rocket motors in California and referenced New Jersey as a model state with a similar system.

Committee member Mark Holthaus commented that the proposal would only benefit a small portion of the industry and that costs could increase for entities navigating the system. He also noted the presence of organizations operating illegally within California.

Mr. Eadie clarified that the purpose of the classification proposal is to rely on existing national-level data, thereby avoiding duplicative testing that does not provide additional safety benefits.

Chief Bennett asked Mr. Holthaus if there was a recommendation for establishing a workgroup. Mr. Holthaus indicated that a rocket organization exists and that they have provided input to Deputy Phillips regarding code changes.

Mr. Eadie requested clarification regarding national-level testing and whether OSFM would rely on it. Chief Bennett responded that there is no simple yes or no answer and proceeded to outline the regulatory process.

#### **4. ROUNDTABLE**

Steven Spivak, a San Jose community member and neighborhood leadership participant, addressed the committee and emphasized the need for coordinated efforts between state and local public safety organizations to interdict illegal fireworks before they reach cities. He referenced Section 6.4 of the proposed task force report and the non-point strategy for combating illegal fireworks throughout California, recommending that interdiction of supplies be a primary focus. Mr. Spivak also suggested establishing specific goals to include police department components in the proposed task force's outreach efforts. Christine Reed acknowledged these concerns, particularly regarding port authorities, and emphasized the need for improved communication.

Lee Miller, a Sacramento resident and chair of a neighborhood group addressing illegal fireworks, expressed concern that the proposed report does not include an Interstate California-Nevada Illegal Fireworks Task Force. She inquired whether this initiative has been discussed with the Governor's office to obtain authorization.

Chief Henning responded that OSFM engaged with the Nevada State Fire Marshal's Office in 2025. He explained that Nevada has statutory authority over 1.3G fireworks but not over 1.4G consumer fireworks, which are typically brought into California,

meaning Nevada lacks enforcement authority and funding to participate in a joint task force. Nevada has expressed no interest in participating.

Leanna Lincoln, a freelance pyrotechnician, suggested to Christine Reed that the report's language could be broadened to include contractors in addition to company employees. Christine Reed clarified the meaning of training for non-pyrotechnic personnel and expressed openness to considering broader language in the report.

Committee member Dennis Revell noted that the new State Fire Marshal, Marjorie Rodriguez, who previously served as a council member for the city of Sparksville, Nevada, had expressed interest in discussing a California-Nevada task force. He acknowledged the legislative challenges but emphasized that there is interest in pursuing the initiative and encouraged OSFM to continue efforts.

Chief Berlant stated that OSFM will continue discussions with federal partners regulating ports and with Nevada; however, both states must be willing participants, and currently, Nevada is not inclined to engage.

## **5. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Committee member Dennis Revell requested clarification regarding the deadline for submitting comments on the task force report. Chief Henning confirmed that the official due date is February 2, 2026; however, he noted that comments submitted by February 4, 2026, will still be considered by the task force. Chief Daniel Berlant emphasized that the committee has the opportunity over the coming months to ensure their input is incorporated into the report. He also noted that, prior to the task force finalizing its portion, OSFM requests that the committee provide comments by the stated due date, and that all member input will be included, as it is not subject to a vote.

## **6. UPCOMING MEETING DATES**

April 21, 2026 at 1:30 PM-4:30 PM  
California Natural Resources Building 2nd Floor  
Conference Room 02-201,  
715 P Street, Sacramento, CA

## **7. MEETING ADJOURNMENT**

It was moved by Member Janice to adjourn the meeting was made by Member Janice Van Mullem, seconded by Member Julie Heckman; all in favor of adjournment. Chairperson Bennett adjourned the meeting at 2:09 P.M. PST