
GENERAL FIREWORKS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Meeting Minutes – Thursday, July 21, 2026, 1:35PM – 1:45 PM

Public Committee Meeting



Meeting Location:

Office of the State Fire Marshal
5th Floor, OSFM McKittrick Conference Room 512
37800 Kilroy Airport Way, Long Beach CA 90806

1. CALL TO ORDER

A. Welcome and Introductions

Co-Chairperson Deputy Caleb Phillips 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. Deputy Phillips 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.

Committee members introduced themselves, including members from various fire departments, pyrotechnic operators, and representatives from CAL FIRE staff. The meeting began with roll call to confirm quorum.

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)
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
Linda Hass-Kreman, Phantom Fireworks
Dennis Revell, Revell Communications
Tad Trout, TNT Fireworks
Logan Herrera, Rocket Lander Challenge
Frank Muccio, Reaction Research Society

Members Absent:

Julie Heckman, American Pyrotechnic Association
Alan (Bruce) Turner, Independent Pyrotechnic Operator
Antonio Solares, Orange County Fire Authority

Office of State Fire Marshal (OSFM) Staff:

Chief Andrew Henning, Assistant Deputy Director
Chief Al Adams, Office of State Fire Marshal (Retired Annuitant)
Vijay Mepani, Deputy State Fire Marshal III (Specialist)
Ramero Rodriguez, Office of State Fire Marshal (Retired Annuitant)
Larry Godbout, Supervisor I
Cortney Walker, Supervisor I
Kemiko Tolon, Analyst II
Christopher Dale, Analyst II
Thomas Setnan, Analyst II

Public Guests:

James Eadie, Pyrotechnic Operator, Rockets Third Class
Bryan Johnson, Fire Marshal, City of West Sacramento
Traci Williams, Deputy Fire Marshal, Riverside County Fire

2. COMMITTEE BUSINESS**A. Approval of Past Meeting Minutes – April 21, 2026**

Co-Chairperson Caleb Phillips requested approval of the meeting minutes from April 21, 2026. The committee then discussed approval of the April 21st meeting minutes, with two corrections noted: Correction to the spelling of Member Revell's last name. Member Herrera asked to include the original request from OSFM to bring a plan for producing educational materials. A motion to approve the minutes as corrected was made by Member Brown and seconded by Member Nygren.

B. Announcements and Division Updates

Chairperson Brice Bennett thanked everyone for their attendance and participation, stating it is vital to updating regulations and moving industry in a safe and forward manner. He also encouraged guests to invite others who may want to participate in bringing updates or new ideas to the committee. He explained the meeting will involve conversation regarding statistics and fireworks causing fires, mentioning the celebration of Fourth of July and the 250th anniversary and its success, he also encouraged the public if they see something illegal or concerning to utilize the resources of contacting department personnel such as Deputy Vijay Mepani, Deputy Caleb Phillips or the Arson and Bomb Unit. Their contact information is located under the Fire Engineering Investigations Division in the fireworks program on the CAL FIRE website. Bennett provided an update on the regulations package, stating it has been submitted to legal and is currently under legal review. The team continues to improve course delivery, referring to Outdoor Aerial Public Display of Fireworks and the Motion Picture/Television Fire Safety Officer Course.

Deputy Mepani expressed starting in May 2026, the Office of State Fire Marshal has held five courses, one of them being a Motion Picture/Television Fire Safety Officer Course and the other four being an Outdoor Aerial Public Display of Fireworks Course, instructing 277 students in total. Deputy Mepani also mentioned we are always looking for venues to host any of the free courses that are offered. Chief Henning was asked a question by Member Trout regarding the timeline for the regulations packet, where Henning responded with the explanation of the regulatory process and the different phases it must go through, also stating it is still the goal for to be completed by the end

of the year. Supervisor I Courtney Walker explained Bulletin 26-005 which describes the new enhancement for GovMOTUS called Bulk Payment. This process allows users to pay for multiple applications or renewals at once, instead of doing multiple transactions.

3. NEW BUSINESS

A. Position Paper for Hybrid Rocket Motors

Michael Kramer presented a position paper on hybrid rocket motors using nitrous oxide as an oxidizer, proposing a classification system that distinguishes between commercially manufactured certified and amateur-built motors. He emphasized that the nitrous oxide used is well-regulated by the Department of Transportation and universities have established protocols for storage and handling. The paper suggests allowing inert fuel grains filled with nitrous oxide to be filled on the pad for safety reasons, as they are significantly cheaper and safer than liquid-fueled rockets and provide educational benefits. Kramer asked for the Office of State Fire Marshal General Fireworks Advisory Committee to consider the topic as a future agenda item, or get the statute changed, or provide internal guidance as a way of transitioning. He encourages the committee to review the paper for details. A question was posed by Member Van Mullem as to where the nitrous oxide would be stored, would it be inside or outside and what quantities? Kramer proceeded to explain how it would be contained in small cylinders, he also added how certain universities have their own policies when it comes to storage, so he is unable to be specific, as each is handled differently. Member Herrera asked for clarification on the request from the committee and the regulatory description. Kramer proceeded to explain that he is asking for the regulations to be changed to treat this specific hybrid of nitrous oxide with an inert fuel, in the same way California currently treats solid rocket motors. A certified hybrid made commercially would be in the purview of a Pyrotechnic Operator Rockets 3rd Class 3 and be treated just like a commercially purchased cell rocket motor. A homemade motor using nitrous oxide and an inert fuel grain, would be in the purview of a Pyrotechnic Operator Rockets 2nd Class and any hybrid utilizing a different oxidizer would be in the purview of a Pyrotechnic Operator Rockets 1st Class. Currently everything is under Pyrotechnic Operator Rockets 1st Class. breaking it down into several categories. James noted that proposed regulatory changes were submitted to include hybrid rocket motors under high-power rocketry in 2021. Deputy Phillips reviewed the proposed regulations from 2021, which states it would move hybrids to a rocket second class liquid, due to splitting Pyrotechnic Operator Rockets 2nd Class into a 2nd Class (solids) and a 2nd Class (liquids) license, which would allow hybrid use by Pyrotechnic Operator Rockets 2nd Class (liquids). He also clarified that current regulations do not specifically address commercially available hybrid rocket systems. The discussion concluded with a suggestion to provide interim guidance from CAL FIRE or the committee while waiting for regulatory changes to be finalized. Member Herrera made a motion to bring Michael Kramer's proposal to the existing rocket workgroup and then back to the committee in the fourth quarter with a more specific administrative request. This motion was seconded by Member Holthaus. The motion was unanimously passed.

B. License Renewal Letter Update

Deputy Phillips discussed the renewal letter that went out in March 2026 resulting in a Frequently Asked Questions document that was published. It was reviewed by the committee, then sent to the industry to address concerns from the initial article.

C. Fireworks Stats Update

Deputy Phillips shared fireworks statics, showing 1,302 fireworks-caused fires year-to-date with a total of 281 acres burned. 939 fires reported during the July 3rd-5th holiday weekend, with 107 acres burned. Relative to 2025, there were 621 fireworks related fires, 2024 concluded 874, 2023 there were 744, 2022 concluded with 509 and 2021 there were 675 fireworks related fires. Member Van Mullem made a comment referring to her city having dumpster fires related to safe and sane fireworks. Bennett mentioned the American Pyrotechnics Association's outreach for a safe way to put out safe and sane fireworks, and that he would share the information with the committee. The committee discussed fireworks safety and fire incidents, with a focus on experimental rockets causing fires due to lithium-ion battery failures in recovery systems. They noted that while statistics don't currently distinguish between legal and illegal fireworks, there are efforts to categorize fires at the national level with the U.S. Fire Administration. The group agreed to follow up with Chief Morlan regarding detailed statistics and to potentially provide better breakdowns at the next quarterly meeting. The group discussed the bucket brigade program, with Member Gilfillan raising concerns about awareness and distribution at the local level, leading to a discussion with a reply from Chief Bennett stating the campaign is not from the Office of State Fire Marshal, however we can only advise and recommend further outreach efforts.

D. Public Safety Fireworks Enforcement Task Force Recommendations Update

The Public Safety Fireworks Enforcement Task Force recommendations were reviewed, with over 30 recommendations being considered for regulatory and statutory updates, though Chief Henning explained they cannot publicly endorse legislation until authorized by the governor's office. Member Revell provided a document statement on behalf of the Fireworks Industry Members and the GFAC committee. Member Revell expressed appreciation to the Office of the State Fire Marshal for engaging industry stakeholders throughout the Public Safety Fireworks Enforcement Task Force process and acknowledged that many Task Force recommendations have been incorporated into SB 828. He stated support for the proposed regulatory improvements while emphasizing the advisory committee's responsibility to provide independent recommendations that further enhance public safety. The document notes that the Committee's role is not only to document the lessons of the Esparto incident but also to identify additional opportunities to prevent future catastrophic illegal fireworks incidents by improving early detection, interagency information sharing, import monitoring, intelligence coordination, and statewide enforcement efforts. Revell encouraged evaluating proposed reforms based on whether they would have increased the likelihood of identifying warning signs and preventing the Esparto incident and concluded by urging continued consideration of all reasonable public safety measures as SB 828 moves through the legislative process to strengthen California's ability to prevent future tragedies and reduce the burden on local public safety agencies. Members Brown and Gilfillan also provided statements on behalf of the Fireworks Display Industry. The statement reflects support for the California Office of the State Fire Marshal's (OSFM) existing fireworks regulatory and licensing system,

stating that it is among the most effective in the country. It also notes that the Esparto incident resulted from alleged criminal activity occurring outside the established regulatory framework, rather than deficiencies in current laws governing licensed operators. It emphasizes that additional regulations on compliant, licensed operators would not prevent similar incidents and instead advocated for increased enforcement of existing laws, enhanced interagency coordination, and additional resources to identify and stop illegal fireworks operations. The members urged that any future legislative or regulatory changes focus on strengthening enforcement against unlawful activity rather than expanding requirements for those already operating in compliance with existing regulations.

E. OSFM 4TH of July Recap

Deputy Phillips provided an update on a social media post created in conjunction with the community risk reduction program coordinator advocating for the purchase of safe and sane fireworks from legally licensed retail booths. Retail inspections were conducted with around 350 booths across California. Deputy Phillips noted the amount of pressurized water extinguishers that were not properly maintained. One booth found in northern California had one product that was not on the safe and sane list. A reminder was made that people under the age of 18 cannot work in retail booths. Around 270 post displays were received this year from commercial displays.

4. OPEN FORUM

Member Holthaus asked about display licenses for Tripoli and other similar companies and if they needed a public display license. Deputy Phillips has confirmed that any group doing a public display of fireworks will need a public display license. Member Brown recognized the rocket group and their presentation.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

Eric Elias asked if Deputy Mepani had updated license numbers. Deputy Mepani responded and noted he can provide that information at a later date as renewals have just ended. James asked if there was a target date for the rocket group to reconvene. Deputy Phillips anticipates early August.

6. UPCOMING MEETING DATES

October 21, 2026, 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM Pacific Daylight Time (PDT)
California Natural Resources Building 2nd Floor Conference Room 02-201,
715 P Street, Sacramento, CA 95814

7. MEETING ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Member Tad Trout to adjourn the meeting, motion seconded by Member Mark Holthaus; all in favor of adjournment. Co-Chairperson Deputy Caleb Phillips adjourned the meeting at 2:31 P.M. PDT.