

PROPOSAL

September 23, 2009

Robert MacIntyre

Objective

Establish a State standard for volunteer fire fighter qualifications using the *National Fire Protection Association Standard for Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications – Fire Fighter-I*, which can be delivered to volunteer firefighters within 108 hours.

Background

Historically, to be certified as a Volunteer Fire Fighter in California, fire fighters with rural fire departments completed the California State fire Marshal (CSFM) *Volunteer Fire Fighter Training Record*. This document was last updated in 1977.

Many volunteer fire departments today recognize that the existing *CSFM Volunteer Fire Fighter Training Record* may not sufficiently address the current volunteer fire fighter training needs and standards established by the *National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standard for Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications*. This standard state in section 1.1: “*This standard identifies the minimum job performance requirements for career and volunteer fire fighters whose duties are primarily structural in nature.*”

Furthermore, many volunteer fire departments do not understand that there is a difference between the *National Fire Protection Association Standard for Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications – Fire Fighter-I* and the *California State fire Marshal Fire Fighter-I* requirements. One simply need only to engage in discussing the issue with fire fighters from other states to realize that the CSFM Fire Fighter-I standard is more demanding than what is used in other areas of the country.

So, regardless of the ability of a volunteer fire fighter to be certified as a “Volunteer Fire Fighter” by the California State Fire Marshal, many volunteer fire departments will attempt to meet the requirements of *CSFM Fire Fighter-I* rather than the *CSFM Volunteer Fire Fighter* requirements, believing that this is the *only* standard that will *qualify* them as a “Fire Fighter-I” according to minimum job performance standards established by the NFPA. I believe this is a misconception that has lead to rural fire departments attempting to reach a career-based fire department standard.

PROPOSAL

September 23, 2009

Robert MacIntyre

The CSFM-Fire Fighter-I job performance standards have become the “industry standard” for fire departments in metropolitan and suburban communities in California; however they have become burdensome for most small rural departments to meet due to limited resources. Furthermore, these “career” standards are unique to California and include many tasks and jobs that, although they may be applicable to metropolitan and suburban fire departments, they may not be totally applicable to most volunteer fire departments.

Moreover, several states, including Alaska, Oregon, and Pennsylvania, have recognized the hardships faced by smaller rural communities attempting to meet the training and administrative requirements of their respective states. This recognition has led to the adoption of reasonable training standards for rural fire departments that prepare these departments to respond to fight fires within their communities.

Primary concerns:

- The existing *CSFM Volunteer Fire Fighter Training Record* may not sufficiently address the current volunteer fire fighter training needs and standards established by the *National Fire Protection Association Standard for Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications*.
- The existing *CSFM Fire Fighter-I Training Record* may not be totally applicable to most volunteer fire departments and as such may be burdensome for most small rural departments to meet due to limited resources.
- A typical volunteer fire company invests about 9-hours per month training at a frequency of: three, three-hour training sessions per month. At this rate it would take a volunteer fire company over three-years (37 months) to complete the existing *CSFM Fire Fighter-I* requirements.
- The existing *CSFM Volunteer Fire Fighter Training Record* may not sufficiently provide a clear service level pathway from a volunteer fire fighter to a (CSFM-Fire Fighter-I) career fire fighter.

PROPOSAL

September 23, 2009

Robert MacIntyre

Recommended Solution

- Use the *National Fire Protection Association Standard for Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications* to set the minimum standards for CSFM Volunteer Fire Fighter.
- Update the current California State Fire Marshal *Volunteer Fire Fighter Training Record* to reflect the Fire Fighter-I standards established by the *National Fire Protection Association Standard for Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications*
- Change the format of the current California State fire Marshal *Volunteer Fire Fighter Training Record* such that it will more closely resemble the format of the California State fire Marshal *Fire Fighter-1 Training Record* – including training Topics and training Times.
- Update the current California State fire Marshal *Volunteer Fire Fighter Training Record* to sufficiently provide a clear service level pathway from a volunteer fire fighter (CSFM Volunteer Fire Fighter) to a career fire fighter (CSFM Fire Fighter-I).
- Update the current California State fire Marshal *Volunteer Fire Fighter Training Procedure Manual* to clearly describe the California Volunteer Fire Fighter certification guidelines
- Develop a document that will identify the specific CSFM Fire Fighter-I lesson plans applicable to the Volunteer Fire Fighter, noting any time modifications.

Course of Action

Following are issues with corresponding course of actions:

Issue:

The California State Fire Marshal's office recognizes the CSFM Fire Fighter-I as the minimum training standard for municipal fire departments. To a large degree, this standard was based on the *NFPA Standard for Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications*, and developed under the assumption that career fire fighters will be able to meet this requirement without any hardship.

PROPOSAL

September 23, 2009

Robert MacIntyre

Action:

The California State Fire Marshal should pursue a training standard that recognizes the limitations of rural fire departments. This standard should be based on the NFPA *Standard for Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications* and must consider the reduced amount of time a volunteer fire department may have to invest in training.

Issue:

The lack of reasonably established volunteer fire fighter training levels encourages volunteer fire fighters to *compress* their locally delivered training to meet the CSFM Fire Fighter-I requirements, without fully experiencing the necessary training.

Action:

The California State Fire Marshal should peruse a training standard that can be delivered within 108 hours that meets the National *Fire Protection Association Standard for Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications – Fire Fighter-I*

Summary:

If the current volunteer firefighter certification offered by the California State Fire Marshal is updated using the *National Fire Protection Association Standard for Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications* as the referenced standard, the CSFM Volunteer Firefighter certification would more closely resemble the current CSFM Firefighter-I certification. In addition to making the Volunteer Firefighter credential a standards-based credential, it will provide a bridge to Firefighter-I and II.