



**OFFICE OF THE STATE FIRE MARSHAL  
STATE BOARD OF FIRE SERVICES  
DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION**

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**Date:** December 19, 2012

**To:** State Board of Fire Services

**From:** Michael J. Richwine, Assistant State Fire Marshal

**Subject/Agenda Action Item:** Evaluating the IAFF Fireground Survival Program for reciprocity with the State Fire Training Firefighter Survival FSTEP Course

**Recommended Action:** Information

**Background Information:**

In 2010 the course Fire Fighter Survival was approved for delivery. This is a 16 hour FSTEP course. Subsequent to approval of this course, we were advised of a similar course being developed by the IAFF. This course is entitled IAFF Fireground Survival Awareness. Previous discussions on this topic at the SBFS resulted in a request that State Fire Training evaluate the IAFF course for reciprocity with the FSTEP course.

At the July 20, 2012 STEAC meeting, the Marin County Fire Chiefs Association advised STEAC that they had recently hosted a train-the-trainer course to establish a cadre of instructors for the IAFF course. Additionally, they asked that State Fire Training grant the IAFF course reciprocity with the FSTEP course.

In light of the previous discussion at the SBFS and the request made by the Marin County Fire Chiefs Association at their July 20, 2012 meeting, STEAC moved to ask State Fire Training to convene a meeting of development cadre members from the FSTEP Fire Fighter Survival Course and the IAFF Fire Ground Survival Awareness course to evaluate the potential of reciprocity.

**Analysis/Summary of Issue:**

On September 12, 2012 the aforementioned meeting was conducted. Attendance included:

Name	Representing
Derek Alkonis	IAFF
Jim Brinkley	IAFF
Lou Paulson	CPF
Jim Hudson	SFT Cadre
Jim Mathias	SFT Cadre
Jon Woody	SFT Cadre
Mike Richwine	Assistant State Fire Marshal
Ken Wagner	Fire Service Training Specialist

## Curriculum

The IAFF curriculum is very detailed and includes a comprehensive on-line component along with a 24 hour instructor driven course delivery with emphasis on skills exercises. All materials are very professionally prepared and demonstrate a strong commitment to quality fire fighter training.

Meeting participants conducted a review and comparison of the two curriculum packages. The SFT Cadre identified three specific areas of instruction that are significantly different in the IAFF curriculum from what is contained in the FSTEP course material and Course Information and Required Materials Manual.

<b>Item</b>	<b>Cadre Concern</b>
Rapid (Head First) Ladder Escape	A directed decision was made that this technique would not be taught in California curriculum due to demonstrated safety concerns.
Emergency Hose Slide	The technique taught in the IAFF curriculum significantly differs from SFT curriculum in that hand placement is different at the point of exit and the IAFF teaches a head first exit where SFT does not.
SCBA Emergencies	The SFT curriculum contains instruction on this topic that is more in-depth than what is presented in the IAFF curriculum.

The IAFF representatives agreed to take these three areas of concern back to their development cadre this fall and discuss their interest in modifying their curriculum to more closely align with SFT curriculum. If these modifications were to be made, the SFT cadre expressed confidence that the IAFF Fire Ground Survival course delivered after these modifications were made would be equivalent to the SFT Fire Fighter Survival FSTEP curriculum. As a result, participants presenting a certificate of completion for the IAFF Fire Ground Survival course could be granted equivalency for the Fire Fighter Survival FSTEP curriculum and could use the course to meet prerequisite requirements for the FSTEP Command and Control of the RIC Deployment course.

## STEAC Action

STEAC endorsed this approach with a motion directing that if the IAFF were to make the aforementioned changes to their curriculum, SFT should move forward with establishing the IAFF Fire Ground Survival course as an equivalent to the Fire Fighter Survival FSTEP course. This would allow participants presenting a certificate of completion for the IAFF Fire Ground Survival course to be granted equivalency for the Fire Fighter Survival FSTEP curriculum and use the course to meet prerequisite requirements for the FSTEP Command and Control of the RIC Deployment course.

## IAFF Response

On December 18, 2012 SFT received a communication from Jim Brinkley, Director of Occupational Health and Safety, IAFF. This communication (copy attached) provided the IAFF response to the results of the October 19, 2012 STEAC meeting. A summary of the IAFF response is contained in the following table.

Item	IAFF Response
Rapid (Head First) Ladder Escape	The IAFF FGS instructors will only train California fire fighters in the "Hook2, Grab 4" technique and not the "Rapid (Head First) Ladder Escape.
Emergency Hose Slide	The IAFF FGS Hose Slide technique does not require a head first exit. The IAFF FGS technique requires the fire fighter to exit the structure using the "Window Hang" technique first, and then to transition to the hose for descent to ground level. Having the fire fighter's head out of the window protects the fire fighter's head and the SCBA face piece from the potential high heat (polycarbonate fails at 400 deg F) coming from inside the room. Teaching a fire fighter to return his/her head into a superheated room like the SFT skill prescribes is contradictory to what the skill is designed to do. The IAFF FGS skill will not be changed.
SCBA Emergencies	The IAFF FGS instructors will share the same SCBA Emergencies content found within the SFT curriculum when teaching in California.

Next Steps

SFT appreciates the thoughtful response from the IAFF. However, the IAFF takes exception to the SFT Cadre concern relative to the Emergency Hose Slide item. Therefore, staff must return this item to STEAC for further discussion and action. This item will be placed on the STEAC agenda for January 18, 2013 and staff will update the SBFS on this item at their next meeting.