



**DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION**

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**Residential Fire Sprinkler/Water Supply Task Force  
MINUTES**

*Wednesday, January 21, 2009*

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Dennis Mathisen, Roseville Fire Department (Co-chair)\*  
Ernie Paez, CAL FIRE, OSFM (Co-chair)  
Ray Bizal, National Fire Protection Association  
Jim Bollier, Nor Cal Fire Prevention Officers  
Heather Collins, California Department of Public Health – Drinking Water  
Darren Drake, Nor Cal Fire Prevention Officers  
Doug Dupree, So Cal Fire Prevention Officers  
John Graham, American Water Works Association  
Steve Hart, Consultant\*  
Richard Hinrichs, California Department of Public Health  
Bill Kirkpatrick, East Bay Municipal Utility District  
Ed Kriz, City of Roseville Water Utility\*  
Mark Krause, Desert Water Agency\*  
Bruce Lecair, National Fire Sprinkler Association  
Dave Luker, Desert Water Agency\*  
Ian Mac Donald, So Cal Fire Prevention Officers  
Paolini, Gene, California Building Officials\*  
Julie Spacht, Los Angeles Department of Water & Power

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Doug Hensel, Housing & Community Development  
Bob Raymer, California Building Industry Association  
Mike Stewart, Sacramento Metro Fire District  
Jennifer Whiting, League of California Cities  
Representative, So Cal Water Utilities Association  
Representative, American Water Works Association  
Representative, Northern California Water Association  
Representative, Regional Council of Rural Counties

**STAFF:**

Kevin Reinertson, Supervising Deputy State Fire Marshal, Code Development\*

**GUESTS:**

Dale Evenson, Riverside County Fire Department\*  
\*via telephone conference call

**INTRODUCTIONS**

The meeting began at 9:45, and self introductions were made by all present.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM DECEMBER 17, 2008, MEETING**

There were no changes to the minutes.

**SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS**

• **Connection Configuration**

Julie Spacht expressed her appreciation for the commitment of the task force members regarding the concept of residential fire sprinklers. The water agencies have a balancing act involving the interests of the fire service, their customers, and the cost of doing business. One of the major concerns of the water purveyors is reliability in providing water service 24/7 in all types of weather and in all areas from city to rural. Flexibility is a key to the water

utility's operation, thus there is a concern about how sprinklers might affect that flexibility of operation. Another major concern is water quality—particularly because Los Angeles Department of Water & Power for the most part does not have dual systems. One of the major challenges they face is the balancing act between storage and water quality. Storage is important for fire fighting and reliability, but it is an issue in regard to water quality. Thus, fire sprinklers--and any effect they might have on water quality--is a very important question for water purveyors. Bill Kirkpatrick reiterated how critically important the issue of water quality is in regard to residential fire sprinklers, and he suggested the group needs some hard facts on that issue. Jim Bollier stated that water sitting in sprinkler pipes for years might lose quality but would flow freely in the event of a fire. He also stated that the piping system's materials are all listed for potable water.

When it comes to cost, it is an individual issue with each water agency or home owner with a private well. With many water agencies, the more you use, the more you pay. One fairly universal policy is that facilities (i.e.; pumping stations) are paid for by the people served by those facilities. Politics also plays a big part in all water issue—at least in Southern California according to Julie.

Water supply can vary greatly from 40 to 360 pounds. Some residents just have water delivered to the property, and then it is the responsibility of the property owner to pump it from there. In some cases, property owners will use a booster pump or have a water storage facility. When the property owners have water storage facilities, they are required (by the California Department of Public Health) to have back-flow devices which are required to be tested annually.

Another water supply issue concerns circumstances which cause a reduced water supply, i.e.; water main work, fire hydrant repair, or a fire nearby. In those instances there may not be enough water pressure for fire sprinklers to operate, and this is of great concern to water purveyors.

**Julie said she would find a way to send the presentation to all the task force members.**

Dennis Mathison spoke briefly about the subcommittee template he had prepared for the purpose of having all four subcommittees produce an end product that is in the same format.

Ian McDonald suggested to the group that the domestic shut-off valve (which Bruce Lecair talked about in the December task force meeting) should negate the need for upsizing of the meter for the addition of fire sprinklers. At the International Code Council meeting in Minneapolis last year, one of the major issues discussed was perpetuating standby fees due to the upsizing of the residential meters—as well as the installation costs for the larger meters. If the domestic shut-off valve would negate the need for upsizing meters, then the group could focus on other issues. Bill Kirkpatrick wondered if the task force had enough information about the domestic shut-off valve yet to confidently say it would negate the necessity of upsizing meters. **Ian suggested the group address the issue of the valve to determine if it would work as reported in Bruce's presentation. Ray Bizal suggested the Connection Configuration Subcommittee apply the STEEP (social, technological, economical, environmental, and political) analysis to the shut-off valve to determine if it will work as suggested. Julie Spacht, chair of that subcommittee, said her group would be willing to take on that task.**

The discussion then went around the table and on the phone for comments concerning shut-off valves. Bill Kirkpatrick would like to know the device's track record, how many are in use, have any been activated, and who would service the device. Richard Hinrichs wondered if it would work as it is supposed to without being tested on a routine basis. Ray Bizal asked what maintenance would be required, and Ernie Paez said there is no Title 19 requirement for testing or annual maintenance. Ernie said the issue of maintenance would be addressed when the task force arrives at the design part of the task force mission. There will have to be some changes in Title 19 through the Office of Administrative Law. Steve Hart pointed out that right now there is only one shut-off valve manufacturer, and Ernie countered with the fact that there would be more if it became a requirement.

There was some discussion regarding whether you needed to have the valves at all, and the answer was that you don't in all cases. If you have plenty of water pressure, you won't need a domestic supply shut-off device. Bill Kirkpatrick stated that the shut-off valve would mean that his water agency could use smaller pipes for new home construction. Julie Spacht pointed out that in some cases the fire sprinkler system would need a larger flow of water than the residential side.

Another issue briefly discussed by the members was are all of the components used in a sprinkler systems compliant with the contamination requirement (NSF 61).

- **Laws & Regulations**

Steve sent out questionnaires to all the members of his the task force, but he received no responses. Bill Kirkpatrick said he planned on responding, but needed to take some time with his answers. Mark Krause said he was almost done with the questionnaire Steve sent out.

- **Process Efficiencies & Cost Impacts**

Steve Hart gave this subcommittee's report for Bob Raymer. Steve and Bob got together near the first of the year and one of the concepts they came up with was one-day workshops for the following groups:

1. Fire departments, fire prevention bureaus and building departments who deal with plan check, review, and inspections
2. Water purveyors dealing with plan review, inspections, and their requirements,
3. Home building (BIA chapters statewide) contractors who deal with plan preparation, submittals, and installations
4. Architects, professional engineers, League of California Cities, and rural counties' building departments and fire departments.

When the task force has completed its objectives, Steve and Bob thought it would be a good idea to convey some of the collected information through these one-day, state-wide workshops. The information could be disseminated through a team teaching effort by CALBO, the Office of the State Fire Marshal, CDPH, and CBIA. The goal would be to have the teaching completed at least one year prior to the effective date of the regulations. That would mean the classes would need to be held in January 2010. Ray Bizal thought it might be beneficial for plumbers to be part of these classes also. John Graham interjected that he felt it would be better received by the water purveyors if the American Water Works Association and/or CDPH were involved in this training.

**Steve said he is going to send a copy of this written concept to Ernie Paez and Dennis Mathison, and Ian McDonald asked that he send it to the entire task force. He already has sent copies to Tonya Hoover and Kevin Reinertson.**

Eventually, Steve said, Dennis and Ernie would need to set up a subcommittee to design an outline for the class. Steve Hart expressed two concerns that Bob Raymer has which are making sure we have enough installers and qualified inspectors. Steve said people need to be trained and educated so that they will have plans and processes in place for when the plans start coming across their desks

- **Process Efficiencies & Cost Impacts**

Steve Hart gave the report for Bob Raymer. Bob had emailed SFM Sprinkler Cost Offsets(draft for discussion) to the entire task force. One of the items mentioned in the report may not be something the task force would get involved in but the State Fire Marshal and Housing and Community Development might. When California went from the Uniform Building Code to the International Building Code, side yards for R-3's went from 3 feet to 5 feet. Bob wants to look at the possibility of California going back to the 3 feet side yards. Ian McDonald said that particular issue should be addressed after the group has vetted the shut-off valves and would more properly be address by fire operation people.

Ernie Paez mentioned that he has asked Assistant State Fire Marshal Tonya Hoover if the task force could delay the publishing of their recommendations. However, Kevin Reinertson said that would not work due to the June 30, 2009, deadline he is under to submit our proposal to the Building Standards Commission (BSC). Kevin went on to say internal approval process also takes time before our package can be submitted to the BSC. So, the end of April is the deadline for the recommendations from the group.

Ray Bizal mentioned that the National Association of Home Builders has a task force to address fire sprinklers from their perspective, and he would be interested in knowing who is on that task force. He believes they are going to submit final recommendations soon, and that could have an impact on California.

## **ADJOURN MEETING**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:45 p.m.