



DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION

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Residential Fire Sprinkler/Water Supply Task Force MINUTES *Tuesday, February 24, 2009*

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Dennis Mathisen, Roseville Fire Department (Co-chair)*
Ernie Paez, CAL FIRE, OSFM (Co-chair)
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
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
Ian Mac Donald, So Cal Fire Prevention Officers
Bob Raymer, California Building Industry Association*
Julie Spacht, Los Angeles Department of Water & Power

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Ray Bizal, National Fire Protection Association
John Graham, American Water Works Association
Doug Hensel, Housing & Community Development
Dave Luker, Desert Water Agency
Gene Paolini, California Building Officials
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:

Diane Arend, Deputy State Fire Marshal III, Code Development*
Judy Bankert, Office Technician, Support Services*

GUESTS:

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

INTRODUCTIONS

The meeting began at 10:00 a.m., and self introductions were made by all present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM JANUARY 21, 2009, MEETING

There were no changes to the minutes.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

- **Fees**

Bruce Lecair reported that his subcommittee met during the past month and created a list of preliminary recommendations, and from that Bruce crafted a rough draft which he shared with the group. The main points in the draft recommendations were:

1. Use the philosophy of best practices when applicable for making recommendations and suggestions.
2. Eliminate as a practice the combination of the domestic and fire sprinkler flows when calculating flows for meter sizes. (This recommendation will reduce the fire flow requirement and offset the need for a larger service.)
3. Recommend a statewide best practice for calculating fees for plan review of NFPA 13-D Residential Fire Sprinkler systems.
4. Identify common terminology used by stakeholders in the water purveyor industry for use in determining fees and making recommendations.
5. Identify methods of periodic inspections of NFPA 13-D Residential Fire Sprinkler systems such as during resale inspections or refinancing of residences to ensure that the quality of the systems exists throughout the lifetime of the system.
6. Identify and define liability protection for water purveyors with regard to NFPA 13-D Residential Fire Sprinkler Systems (Seek assistance from the SFM Office for legal opinions)
7. Consider removal of the monthly fee that some utilities charge for their water services for standby of fire protection systems. (The committee discussed the concern that water purveyors that charge consumers for such fees may be resistant to a cap or elimination of this fee.)
8. The committee discussed the backflow prevention requirement, which appears to be a way to provide savings for customers. (The primary concern is that some devices are not listed as back flow devices and are dual water supply shut-off valves intended to divert the water from the domestic to the fire sprinkler system.)

There was some discussion about the NFPA 13D Committee, the domestic shut-off valve, and the fees charged for plan review. The general consensus was that item 3 above would better fit in Phase II of the Residential Fire Sprinkler Task Force (Installation). There was also some discussion concerning the problems associated with periodic inspections. Ernie Paez said that issue might be better addressed in Phase II. Ernie asked the water purveyors if their perception of the stand-by fees had changed since the beginning of the task force. None of the water purveyors present at the meeting charge stand-by fees, but Doug Dupree said that the City of San Bernardino does. Bob Raymer wondered what might happen in regard to stand-by fees when residential sprinklers are mandated in new construction and become much more prevalent. Bruce Lecair said that is where the “best practices” established by this task force might be helpful. Bill Kirkpatrick said that item 7 above was unacceptable to him as written, as he would prefer justification for fees rather than elimination of fees.

There was extended discussion regarding water quality and back-flow and diverter devices among the group. Ed Kriz and Steve Hart both felt that number 8 above should be broken out into two parts to address back-flow and diverter devices separately. Ed Kriz said the City of Roseville used the provisions in NFPA 13 to have a fixture attached to the downstream end of a loop system which is continually flushed. This eliminates the contamination hazard to such a degree that you can eliminate the backflow device. Steve Hart summed up the situation by pointing out there will be a need for either a back-flow device or a diverter valve.

- **Process Efficiencies & Cost Impacts**

Bob Raymer told the group there is going to be a new version of AB 2288 this year (AB 660), but he has not yet seen it. There is also going to be an alternate bill to AB 2288 that does not yet have an author (AB 40). The bill would require every contractor licensed by the state as a C16 Fire Protection Contractor to employ at least one fire sprinkler supervisor for the purpose of supervising fire sprinkler installation on any project undertaken by the contractor which requires such installation. This bill would also set forth the qualifications for employment as a fire sprinkler supervisor. **Bob Raymer said he would email a copy of the alternate bill to the members of the task force.** His understanding is that this bill is sponsored by the American Fire Sprinkler Association. The effective date for this bill—if enacted—would be January 1, 2011. This was an information item for the committee rather than an action item; however, it will be something Phase II needs to deal with.

Bob Raymer and Steve Hart looked at a number of different sources in order to come up with a list of some possible cost offsets. Most of the cost offsets would fall under the heading of infrastructure and planning and possibly only one under the heading of building code changes. The possible building code change proposed by the California Building Industry Association to the State Fire Marshal and Housing and Community Development would be the return to the three foot lot line between the foundation and the property boundary. Due to the timeline of the code adoption process, Bob said the changes needed to be proposed now rather than waiting for Phase II of the task force. Bob remarked that Steve could not find much in the way of justification for going from three feet to five feet in 2006. With the installation of fire sprinklers in new homes being built, the possibility of fire spreading from one house to another is significantly reduced. Ian Mac Donald suggested the appropriate people to talk to about this proposed change would be the operations side of the California Fire Chiefs. Bruce Lecair suggested taking the

issue to the California Building Officials also. Bob Raymer said he would send the proposed code changes out to all the appropriate people within the next week or two, and Kevin Reinertson said he was planning a stakeholder meeting shortly where this information could also be disseminated. This whole issue was more or less an FYI item for the group according to Kevin and Bob.

Steve Hart recommended the group consider amending 13D to provide the basic bare-bones criteria for what working plans are. Ian Mac Donald said Phase II needs to look into the economic impact fire sprinklers will have on residents and on construction costs. How much money will it take to install these systems and who is going to have to pay? Other considerations are how much a life is worth and how many people die in fires in one and two-family dwellings in California. Ian feels this information is needed for a relevant cost/benefit analysis. Bob Raymer pointed out that the sprinkler mandate will be imposed whether cost offsets are in place or not. Ian commented he hoped the cost offsets would be approached methodically and carefully.

There was further discussion about items which will be dealt with in Phase II. Julie Spacht asked when Phase II was going to begin, and Dennis Mathison said the members were being recruited right now, and the first meeting would hopefully be held near the end of March or the beginning of April. Dennis also said he believed some of the Phase II people would be listening in on the last two meetings held by this group (Phase I).

- **Connection Configuration**

Julie Spacht presented her subcommittee's draft report which included the following recommendations for a configuration:

1. Single lateral feed from main; branching from the domestic supply at a point near where the domestic line enters the house. *Least cost, simplest design, provides greatest flexibility.*
2. Service sized based upon sprinkler demand or domestic demand worst case without concern for simultaneous demand. Usually 1 ½ - 2 inches. *Issues of simultaneous demand requiring shut-off valve unnecessarily complicates design for minimal benefit.*
3. Service lock out as per agency policy. *Yes, a house without potable domestic water supply is not technically habitable. Agencies should word shut-off notices to include potential loss of fire sprinkler protection.*
4. Metering per agency policy. *Meters, although not fire rated, typically fail to register or under register. Strainers necessary to fire rate meters will add excessive head loss.*

By allowing maximum flexibility in the service configuration, agencies may use existing policies, procedures and material resulting in minimal cost. The Connection Configuration subcommittee supports the industry standard that facility costs are 100 percent captured in the fees associated with installation. Monthly billing, however, is a local policy issue. The subcommittee finds no additional capacity or system need to require a standby charge.

The subcommittee's report also included STEEP (social, technological, economical, environmental, and political) analysis of the following:

1. Type/listing of meter; meter size/arrangement; meter versus no meter
2. Rural versus municipal supply
3. Backflow protection
4. Water supply criteria—pressure/flow/duration
5. Liability
6. Consistency—although configurations would not be consistent from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, configurations would be flexible to situations and circumstances.

There was discussion among the members regarding meter size and how it relates to cost and water flow in addition to discussion about back flow devices and water pressure. The task force members agreed that they do not want any kind of mandate regarding what type of meter water purveyors must install.

- **Laws & Regulations**

Steve Hart asked the water purveyors—whether public or private—if they were governed by the Brown Act or the Bagley-Keene Act regarding holding public hearings for fees and regulations. Julie Spacht answered that you were either covered by the Brown Act or the Public Utilities Commission (PUC), and Ed Kriz agreed with that statement.

Steve briefly went through his report which he had provided to the group. In that report, he provided some information regarding the following:

1. Ralph M. Brown Act
2. Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act

3. General Order No. 103, Section I-6.a thru f (California PUC – Water Branch—having to do with the water purveyor shutting off water supply for non payment)
4. California Safe Drinking Water Act (Health and Safety Code, Section 116270-116275)
5. Backflow/Cross-Connection (Health and Safety Code, Section 116800-116820)
 - Health and Safety Code, Section 13114.5 and 13114.7
 - Title 17, CCR, Section 7583-7605 (Steve asked for a copy of this, **and Ian Mac Donald said he could get it to him.**)
6. California Plumbing Code, Title 24, Part 5, Chapter 6 (pages 109-128), Section 603.4.16
7. Connection Fees/Charges (Government Code Section 66013)
8. Water Meter Arrangements (NFPA 13D, 2007 Edition, Section 6.2, pages 13D-10/11, Annex A, Figures A.6.2 (a), (b), and (c))
9. Water Meter Sizing (California Plumbing Code, Title 4, Part 5, Chapter 6, page 123, Section 610.8)

Several of the code sections Steve found in his research are very old, outdated or confusing, and in need of revision.

IDENTIFY DELIVERABLES FOR NEXT MEETING

Dennis Mathison asked the leaders of the subcommittees to work on any refinements to their reports which they feel are necessary and email those revised reports to the entire task force prior to the next meeting for a final review.

ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

Bill Kirkpatrick and Julie Spacht said it would be helpful to have some sort of template for their final subcommittee reports. Dennis Mathison suggested they use a Word document similar to the Fees' subcommittee report presented at this meeting. Ian Mac Donald thought it would be a good idea to have a conduit or a venue through which the committee can obtain information after its work is over. ***Ernie Paez said his suggestion would be passed on.***

ADJOURN MEETING

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