



DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION

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**Residential Fire Sprinkler/Water Supply Task Force
MINUTES
Wednesday, December 17, 2008**

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*
Doug Dupree, So Cal Fire Prevention Officers
John Graham, American Water Works Association*
Steve Hart, Consultant
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
Darren Drake, Nor Cal Fire Prevention Officers
Jim McGowan, Housing & Community Development
Paolini, Gene, 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:

Vickie Sakamoto, Division Chief, Fire & Life Safety North
Kevin Reinertson, Supervising Deputy State Fire Marshal, Code Development

GUESTS:

Dale Evenson, Riverside County Fire Department
Henry Chang*
Paul Schwartz, University of Southern California*
*via telephone conference call

INTRODUCTIONS

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM NOVEMBER 20TH, 2008, MEETING

Bill Kirkpatrick pointed out a change needed on page 3, paragraph 3. As previously worded: *Bill Kirkpatrick told the group that EBMUD did a series of cost of service studies which were then published. The document breaks down what it cost to serve over time, and he later shared that document with the group.* As corrected: **Bill Kirkpatrick told the group EBMUD did a series of cost of service studies—breaking down what it cost to serve over time—which were then published.**

Kevin Reinertson addressed the group regarding the timelines for the 2009 model codes which will become the 2010 California codes within which any residential sprinkler provisions (one- and two-family dwellings) will reside. The work

from this task force will hopefully end up as amendments to the California Code. Bob Raymer added that he feels Housing and Community Development will be moving forward with the first ten chapters of the International Residential Code. Kevin Reinertson further explained that all of the California statutory regulations go into one of 29 different titles. Title 24 is building standard regulations and Title 19 is non-building standard regulations. Bob Raymer advised that the National Association of Home Builders recently met in Chicago and appealed the International Code Council's (ICC) recent mandating of residential fire sprinklers nationwide. They objected to the voting process when the ruling was recently made in Minneapolis; however their appeal was turned down by the four-member ICC appeals committee. Bob said that ruling is likely to be upheld by the full ICC board at their upcoming meeting.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

- **Laws and Regulations**

Steve Hart, subcommittee chair, reported he had sent out a questionnaire to his subcommittee, but he had not received back any replies. He asked if the group thought it would be a good idea to send the questionnaire to the whole task force, and the general consensus was it was a good idea.. **Steve said he would get a copy to Judy Bankert, and she could send it out to the entire group.** He felt the feedback from the questionnaires would help the fire service understand the water purveyors' perspective and vice versa.

- **Process Efficiencies & Cost Impacts**

Bob Raymer, subcommittee chair, said he had mailed out two documents to the task force: *Design Alternatives Relevant to One- and Two-Family Residential Sprinklers* and *Incentives for Installing Residential Fire Sprinklers*. He remarked that the two documents combined suggest about 30 different options local jurisdictions, water purveyors, or the State of California could consider carrying out to help reduce the cost of installing sprinklers in one or two-family dwellings. **Bob plans to get together with Steve Hart in the last week of December and condense these two documents down into a simplified list and send the list—along with the full documents—to the task force for feedback he hopes to receive prior to the January 21, 2009, task force meeting in Ontario.**

Steve Hart commented that every state is probably doing work similar to what this task force is doing. In particular, New York has been working diligently during the past six months to put together a package, and they are currently on their fourth revision. **Steve was going to try to get a copy of the latest revision and share it with anyone in the group who wanted to see it.** Bruce Lecair remarked that Hawaii is watching and waiting to see what California comes up with. He also mentioned his subcommittee was going to be using a STEEP analysis in order to arrive at their recommendations. STEEP is an acronym for social, technological, economical, environmental, and political. **Ernie Paez asked Bruce to send him information regarding the STEEP analysis for possible use in the template he and Dennis Mathison will create to use for the task forces' final recommendations. Bruce said he would do so.**

- **Fees**

Bruce Lecair, subcommittee chair, stated his group had met on December 2 to look at the following areas:

- List and subsequent information on best practices from other water purveyors
- Identify what would a reasonable water flow demand be for a sprinkler system
- Compare services for emergency and non-emergency use
- Look at meters and see if five-eighths and one-inch would provide the necessary water flow through the sprinkler system

Bruce said it would be very helpful to have some information from the water purveyors regarding what and how they work and the distinctions between public and private agencies. **He encouraged the water purveyors to prepare a presentation for the next meeting to educate the non water purveyors on the task force.**

Bruce handed out a home fire sprinkler DVD, some information on residential and quick response sprinklers, and fire sprinkler facts. **Anyone not at the meeting who would like to receive the material he handed out can send him an email at lecair@nfsa.org, and he will mail the information to them.**

Bruce then showed those at the meeting—and those on the conference phone watching through *Go To Meeting* on their computers—an informative audio-visual presentation about residential fire sprinklers and how effective they are at saving lives, reducing firefighter injuries, and decreasing water use and property damage. Reduced property damage results in less waste material being sent to landfills and less new materials needed for rebuilding.

One of the items featured in the presentation was a residential domestic shut-off valve. The valve makes water available on demand to the domestic system and acts as a check valve for the fire protection system. When the fire sprinkler system operates in the home, the supply to the domestic system is automatically shut off and the available water is directed to control the fire.

Ian McDonald interjected a ROUNDTABLE item since he needed to leave the meeting early. He suggested if the group will be discussing design incentives regarding the operational ability of the fire service to respond to different areas and jurisdictions, then we probably need to involve the operations section of the California Fire Chiefs Association.

There was some discussion regarding inspection, testing, and maintenance of sprinkler systems by home owners, and Ernie Paez said he would like that issue to be addressed later in the second phase of the task force. Bob Raymer asked how much additional training would be needed to get an average plumber with 10 years experience in order to obtain a C16 license. Bruce Lecair reminded Bob that the installer did not need to have a C16 license but the contractor the plumber worked under would need one. Bruce further stated this was an issue he hoped to see addressed after the first of the year in a strategic plan as part of our overall need to address education issues. Doug Dupree asked about the possibility of a special license (rather than the C16 or C36) being issued, and Steve Hart replied it was very unlikely the Contractors State Licensing Board would create a separate classification. The impending need for a large quantity of qualified sprinkler installers was discussed. Jim Bollier spoke about an apprenticeship program that takes 3 years to train residential fire sprinkler installers with most of that time being spent learning on the job in the field.

Bruce Lecair then showed the first (approximately) 30 minutes of an informative DVD featuring the following:

- Most fires are in the home
- Sprinklered versus non-sprinklered fires
- Flashovers
- Myth of not needing sprinklers when there are smoke alarms
- Myth that mostly older homes burn
- Benefits to firefighter safety
- What a residential sprinkler system is
- Myth of all sprinklers activating at the same time
- Myth of sprinklers being prone to leakage and mold
- What about backflow

Bruce gave everyone at the meeting a copy of the DVD, **and he said he would be happy to provide copies to anyone not at the meeting or come and speak to any groups who would benefit from the presentation.**

Bill Kirkpatrick asked if the fire sprinkler system cost range of \$1500 to \$2500 (mentioned in the presentation) for new construction in California was accurate. Bob Raymer said it depended on the jurisdiction, there was a huge variation in cost throughout the state, and sometimes the prices were much higher due to add-ons to the basic required system.

- **Connection Configuration**

The subcommittee had not met during the past month and had no report.

DENNIS MATHISON – FINAL PRODUCT TEMPLATE

Dennis had prepared a draft template for the subcommittees to use for their final reports and recommendations for the task force, but it was not yet complete. **He asked Bruce Lecair to send him the information on the STEEP analysis to help with the template, and Bob Raymer was going to send Dennis the nine-point criteria the Building Standards Commission uses. Dennis hoped to get the template out to all the members within the next couple weeks.** Ernie Paez suggested the group might want to add legal to the STEEP analysis.

IDENTIFY DELIVERABLES FOR NEXT MEETING

- Subcommittee reports – Bruce Lecair, Julie Spacht, Steve Hart, and Bob Raymer
- Final product template – Dennis Mathison

SCHEDULE FUTURE MEETINGS

The next meeting will be held in Ontario, California. **Judy Bankert will send details to all members. At the January meeting, the meetings for the next few months will be scheduled.**

ROUNDTABLE

Ernie summarized some of the action items:

- **Bruce Lecair will send Ernie information on the STEEP analysis.**
- **Steve Hart will be forwarding a questionnaire to Judy Bankert who will send it out to all the members.**
- **Bob Raymer will be sending Judy a Consolidated Cost Offset List which she will forward to the group.**

Steve Hart commented that when residential fire sprinklers are mandated, it is going to take a lot of coordination between the building industry, the fire service, and the water purveyors. The whole process involving residential fire sprinklers will need to be expedited because time is money and in order to keep the whole mandated fire sprinkler program from falling flat on its face. Mark Krause said the residential domestic shut-off valve could possibly solve some of the challenges faced by the water purveyors in regard to residential fire sprinklers. **Bruce Lecair reiterated how helpful it would be to have a presentation from the water purveyors which would present their side of this whole issue. Bill Kirkpatrick said he would give Julie Spacht a call and see if they could come up with a short presentation.**

Bill Kirkpatrick cautioned we need to be sure our approach and goals have four prongs: fire service, water purveyors, builders, and home owners. Steve Hart observed we have been going beyond phase 1 and into phase 2 as a task force, but Dennis Mathison pointed out some of the areas we have covered are helpful to the water purveyors during phase 1. Dale Evenson recounted that during the 20 years his city had a sprinkler ordinance, people rarely—if ever—exercised those valves, and yet there was never a failure he was aware of. Bill Kirkpatrick added if the success rate of valves was 94 percent (as mentioned in Bruce Lecair's presentation), instead of needing regulations to encourage the exercising of valves you could perhaps use a best management practices approach instead. Ernie Paez said it could be as simple as a self-check list attached to the riser.

Jim Bollier related that the PEX piping could not be used with the domestic shut off valve. He also said he would be interested in the water purveyor's view on PEX piping at a future meeting. Doug Dupree mentioned he appreciates what he is learning on this task force and being able to take what he learns back to the So Cal Fire Prevention Officers. Dennis Mathison mentioned the future need for the fire service to educate the many fire marshals in the various fire districts.

Kate Dargan, State Fire Marshal, dropped in to briefly speak to the group. Kate expressed her appreciation for--and the importance of--the work the task force is doing. She anticipates the end product of this task force as something she can look back upon as a major accomplishment during her tenure as State Fire Marshal. She stated she is very committed to the home builders and making the implementation of residential fire sprinklers as close to a net zero cost as possible through valving technologies, hydrant spacing, or street standards. Kate remarked the implementation of residential fire sprinklers will be a tremendous advance in California's public safety.

ADJOURN MEETING

The meeting was adjourned at 12:50 p.m.