

Virginia Fire Services Board

Live Fire Training Structure Committee

Tuesday, April 21, 2026

Virginia Department of Fire Programs

1005 Technology Park Drive, Glen Allen, VA 23059

10:00 AM

MINUTES

A meeting of the Live Fire Training Structure Committee was held at the Virginia Department of Fire Programs in Glen Allen, Virginia. The meeting was called to order by Committee Chair James Calvert, and a quorum was present.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

James Calvert, Committee Chair – Industry (SARA Title III/OSHA)

Billy Hanks – Local Fire Marshal

Carla Keesee – Virginia Chapter, International Assoc. of Arson Investigators

Jess Rodzinka – Virginia Professional Fire Fighters

JM Snell II – Virginia Board of Housing and Community Development

Charles Sterne – General Public

Steve Sites – Virginia Municipal League

Keith Johnson – Chair – Virginia Fire Chiefs Association, *ex officio*

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT

Jerome Williams – Certified Fire Service Instructor

AGENCY MEMBERS PRESENT

Jamey Brads, Deputy Director

Marc Brade, Chief of Training and Operations

David Jolly, Chief Safety Officer

Zeina Altaha, Grants Program Manager

Spencer Willett, Government Affairs Manager

Greg Cavalli, Policy Analyst

GUESTS PRESENT

Mike Matthews

Robby Dawson

Joe Bailey

Joe Kratochvil

Committee Chair James Calvert convened the meeting, asked the clerk to call the roll, and then called a brief recess to allow a member to arrive before proceeding.

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CHANGES IN THE AGENDA

Board Clerk Spencer Willett recommended the presentation on the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1400 standard be moved from New Business to earlier in the meeting to precede the discussion on the Live Fire Training Structure Grant Program Policy.

Motion: To move the NFPA 1400 presentation to immediately prior to the discussion on the Live Fire Training Structure Grant Program Policy.

Motion: Rodzinka **Second:** Sites

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: The change to the agenda was made.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No public comment was provided.

CONSENT AGENDA

No consent agenda was considered since the April meeting was a specially called meeting. Draft minutes will be considered at the next committee meeting.

REPORT FROM VDFP ADMINISTRATION

Committee Chair Calvert provided Virginia Department of Fire Programs (VDFP) Deputy Director Jamey Brads with the floor. Deputy Director Brads stated that there is nothing to report due to the special meeting.

COMMENTS FROM THE COMMITTEE CHAIR

Committee Chair Calvert voiced his appreciation for the committee's hard work on this issue. He thanked Joe Crosby for his help with the presentation for the meeting and congratulated Chief Marc Brade on his promotion to VDFP Chief of Training and Operations. Deputy Director Brads explained some of the restructuring VDFP has undertaken.

PRESENTATION ON NFPA 1400

Committee Chair Calvert began a presentation on the NFPA 1400 standard, which is the new streamlined standard governing live fire training that combined seven existing standards into one new standard. He asked how long it takes VDFP to adopt a new standard. Chief Brade replied that it typically takes two years. Committee Chair Calvert stated that, given that amount of time

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and effort, he believed it would benefit the committee members to learn more about what the standard contains.

Committee Chair Calvert said that he believes the new combined standard will benefit the fire services by providing a single authoritative standard, increasing understanding and removing ambiguity. He reviewed the previous individual standards, particularly NFPA 1402 as the standard that governed fire training facilities while NFPA 1403 set standards for live fire training. The new NFPA 1400 standard also incorporated NFPA standards 1404, 1407, 1408, 1410, and 1451. He asked if all of those were adopted by VFDP historically. Deputy Director Brads replied that they were. He believes consolidation will make it easier for Training and Operations to adhere to standards.

Committee Chair Calvert noted that new NFPA 1400 minimum standards are retroactive, meaning that existing facilities may need to be evaluated for compliance and, if necessary, be upgraded to meet these new standards. However, the standard also permits the retroactive requirements be waived if they are deemed impractical in the judgment of the authority having jurisdiction (AHJ). This raises possible liability concerns for localities if the Board were to approve a building that does not meet the standard. Steve Sites gave the NFPA definition of authority having jurisdiction, noting that the building official is not the AHJ because they deal with compliance with the building code, not the NFPA standards. Sites stated that determining who would be the AHJ in the case of facilities built through the VFDP program could be difficult. Mike Matthews of The Structures Group added that NFPA 1400 is the first time an NFPA standard specifies “in accordance with the building code”. He does not believe that 1402 and 1403 can be separated by committee, to which Calvert agreed. Chief Brade outlined the defined safety roles under 1403. Calvert stated that the Board could help the agency with adopting those enhanced definitions or roles.

Calvert noted the addition of specialized training chapters and the standardization of terminology used in the standard, which improves understanding of and use of the standards, making it easier to communicate in training. Operating under the standard should save money on structure repairs. He outlined several recommendations, including the initiation of a statewide awareness campaign to inform fire services about the transition to NFPA 1400, identifying and allocating resources to assist departments in meeting the new requirements, a workgroup to develop model training programs aligned with NFPA 1400 that can be shared statewide, reviewing the fire instructor certification programs to ensure they are aligned with the qualification requirements within NFPA 1400, and a legislative/policy review.

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UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a. Live Fire Training Structure Grant Program Policy

Committee Chair Calvert said that this special meeting originated in the February VFSB meeting. The committee was planning on making changes to the policy at that time but, with the release of the new NFPA standard, the decision was made to wait and evaluate the new 1400 standard before proposing changes to the VDFP grant program. There was a subcommittee which offered recommendations for revisions to the program, and the committee will review those recommendations now. Sites asked if NFPA 1400 would be adopted in its totality or whether the policy will specify applicable chapters. Board Clerk Willett noted that the document is a draft so changes can be made without motions. At the end of the meeting, there can be one vote to adopt the changes as discussed in the meeting.

JM Snell asked if there had been any time in the past where the Board or VDFP had officially adopted NFPA 1402. Calvert said his understanding is that the agency has traditionally adopted within two years of revised standards, and Deputy Director Brads agreed. He added that the other chapters of the new 1400 also apply to agency-provided training, and the Training and Operations Branch strives to meet these standards. Snell replied that there is a difference between striving to meet the standards and having a formal process to adopt them.

Board Clerk Willett pointed out that the Board's authority stops with the grant program process. The Board can advise but does not have the authority to require compliance with NFPA 1400. VDFP could enforce by informing localities that a failure to comply with the NFPA 1400 standard would result in noncertification of that locality's firefighters. VFSB Chair Keith Johnson stated that the grant program provides money to assist localities. Localities which do not receive money to build a facility can, and do, build facilities however they want. He also noted that there are other NFPA standards which few fire departments in Virginia comply with. Chair Johnson does not view the option of refusing to certify training by departments with out of compliance facilities as feasible due to the likelihood of many facilities being out of compliance. He added that the agency and the Board do need to set rules in the program criteria, so that localities will adhere to the program criteria in order to receive funding.

Robbie Dawson of NFPA spoke next on how he has seen this topic addressed in other states. Sites suggested using language referencing the specific sections of NFPA 1400 that are needed in the policy. Deputy Director Brads pointed out that NFPA standards are not the same as codes. They are more similar to guidelines that represent an aspirational goal, and that VDFP is not a

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regulatory agency. Carla Keesee agreed, saying that the Board only decides grant awards and does not enforce usage. Calvert noted that adoption could affect accreditation. Matthews prefers to leave the language “applicable chapters” rather than specifying which those will be. Sites suggested using the term “standard” instead of “code”.

For Section 13, Program Criteria, the first and fourth recommendations from the subcommittee were incorporated into the first item. Willett outlined what those recommendations entailed. Matthews questioned the definition for registered design professional (RDP), stating that his issue with the program criteria has always been that the vendors’ stamped drawings are not the same as Engineering/Architect (E/A) firm stamped drawing. He maintained that localities need to use the services of an E/A and noted Chilhowie as a locality that followed the process he recommends. Committee Chair Calvert asked if Section 8, Item 3b’s requirement that grant recipients contract with a qualified E/A covers what Matthews is referring to. Matthews affirmed this but maintains that this requirement is not being enforced. Johnson asked Matthews for clarification about what criteria separates vendors from E/A firms. Sites said he believes the RDP term used in 3b was intended to specify engineer. Keesee said that E/A is defined in the policy and RDP is not and suggested using the E/A definition consistently. Calvert agreed that the definition of E/A firm from the definitions section of the policy would be used throughout.

Section 16 has a proposed change based on the second recommendation from the subcommittee report, which creates a process to resolve disputes between the locality’s contracted E/A and VDFP’s primary E/A regarding the approval of plans for construction, maintenance, or repair of facilities. There were no objections from the committee.

Section 17 was updated to require that designs must be in accordance with the applicable chapters of NFPA 1400. Deputy Director Brads added that the term “firm” should be struck, leaving only “E/A”.

For Section 19, Committee Chair Calvert discussed the requirements for documentation storage. The documentation is useful in evaluating applications for repair grants. Keesee asked if there is a timeframe for retention or whether there should be a repository for these records instead of requiring localities keep them. Calvert asked if providing storage would be an unreasonable burden for the agency. Deputy Director Brads said it would. However, he agrees that retention is necessary. He stated that some of the burden should be on the localities.

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Calvert added that the documentation of usage is also important. Per the policy, live fire structures have a 20-year lifespan. He believes that could be the required retention period, or perhaps it could be two 5-year inspection cycles for a time span of 10 years. Deputy Director Brads cautioned against making a specific section reference because those numbers may change. He also noted that the standard uses the term “inspection intervals” rather than timelines. Committee Chair Calvert agreed with the proposal to require five years of retention. Sites suggested adding that every five years after the structure is placed in service, there is no confusion about only needing inspection records one time after construction.

Keesee asked about using “rather” than “may” certify for training. Willett noted that the Board does not have the authority to certify or not certify. Matthews pointed out that localities often do not know the requirements of the program. Sterne wants both sentences to read may rather than will.

VSFB Chair Johnson asked about program criteria changes. Johnson expressed frustration that the criteria had not changed since the issue at hand, thermal lining requirements, are contained in these criteria. After discussion concerning why the program criteria had not been changed, the committee took a thirty-minute recess for lunch.

At the conclusion of the recess, the committee reviewed the list of 51 existing program criteria to identify those which are already specified in NFPA 1400, which would then be deemed redundant and stricken from the policy. For each of the line items identified as potential deletions, Board Clerk Willett read the text of the item and asked the committee if there were any specific objections to striking said item from the policy. After this review, the committee members agreed to strike program criteria numbers 5, 6, 25, 26, 31, 32, 37, 38, and 41 through 45. Committee Chair Calvert then called a ten-minute recess for committee members to think over the proposed changes to the policy. When the meeting reconvened, he asked for a motion to recommend approval of the draft policy.

Motion: To recommend approval of the draft policy to the Board

Motion: Sternes **Second:** Hanks

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: The committee recommends the Board approve the draft policy at the next meeting in June.

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NEW BUSINESS

There is no new business.

ADJOURNMENT

Clerk of the Committee

Spencer Willett

Minutes completed by Greg Cavalli

Documents related to this meeting of the Virginia Fire Services Board may be requested by contacting the Government Affairs Division by emailing PolicyOffice@vdfp.virginia.gov

