

## **NFPA “TURNOUT TIMES” UNDER REVIEW**

What should the “turnout time” be for fire department personnel, especially for those municipal fire departments that also happen to be career fire departments?

The discussion over whether the one-minute turnout time objective currently in the National Fire Protection Association’s (NFPA) standards is appropriate or should be replaced by a 90-second standard is happening now as part of a regular review process.

The NFPA standards are essentially a collection of “best practices” which often figure into calculations for insurance along with the benefit of bolstering public safety and fire prevention efforts. Section 1710, laid out in 2001, looks to define levels of service and staffing levels – along with deployment capabilities – for “substantially” career fire departments. Municipal officials and others interested in the NFPA standard for career fire department turnout time objectives and minimum staffing levels have until November 26, 2007 to propose changes in the current NFPA 1710 standard to address such questions.

An NFPA technical committee charged with reviewing public proposals and developing its own recommendations met in September to discuss possible changes, as well as amendments, to explanatory materials that accompany the standard. One issue that has been brought to the committee’s attention is the proposal to modify the existing 60-second turnout time objective by increasing it to 90 seconds. Turnout time is the time it takes for the first crew to depart a fire station after the emergency call is placed.

Other suggestions include having different objectives for day and night calls and fire and emergency medical operations.

Representatives from the National League of Cities (NLC), the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), the International Association of Fire Chiefs, the International Association of Fire Fighters, and others interested in the standard serve on the committee.

A complication in evaluating this time objective is the technology available to actually measure the time required to turnout. The Center for Public Safety Excellence, the organization that accredits fire and emergency service agencies, will survey companies to collect data to support the review process.

Another consideration is whether to provide guidance in the standard’s explanatory materials on deployment capability for medium-hazard occupancies such as apartments, offices, mercantile and industrial occupancies, and high-hazard occupancies such as schools, hospitals, nursing homes, explosive plants and refineries. The current standard specifies the full alarm assignment capability needed to respond to a structural fire in a typical 2,000 square foot, two-story, single-family home.

NLC and ICMA representatives emphasized that a one-size-fits-all approach to standard setting does not work and the standard must continue to recognize that attainment of the various objectives is affected by local circumstances, including the response personnel who are not on duty, the location of fire station facilities, traffic congestion, water supply and population density.

The standard revision process occurs every five years and extends over a two-year period.

For information on the standards-making process, contact NFPA at (617) 984-7249, or contact Cathy Spain, director of member programs for NLC, via e-mail at [spain@nlc.org](mailto:spain@nlc.org), or by calling (202) 626-3123.

Written proposals must be submitted on an NFPA form and include new or revised wording as well as a statement of the problem resolved by the recommendation and substantiation for the proposal. A copy of the form can be obtained by contacting Trevor Lashua, VLCT Senior Associate, at [tlashua@vlct.org](mailto:tlashua@vlct.org) or (800) 649-7915.

*Adapted from an article written by Cathy Spain, Director of Member Programs, National League of Cities.*

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