

Federal Fire Working Group Meeting

Federal Emergency Management Agency/U.S. Fire Administration

16825 South Seton Avenue, Emmitsburg, Maryland 21727

May 17, 2012 Time: 9:00-12:00 (Noon)

ATTENDEES

Donald Warner
Lt. Col Thomas Bongiovi
Ross Mowery
Anthony Hamins
Gordon Sachs
Rohit (Rik) Khanna
Shivani Mehti
Dave Frable
John Erichsen
Vivian Green
Mike Pritchard
K. King
P. Larrimer

ORGANIZATIONS

Air Force
Air Force
EPA
NIST
USFS
CPSC
CPSC
GSA
ARMY
FAA
Navy
Navy
Veterans Affairs

USFA ATTENDEES

Alex Furr
Sandra Facinoli
Rebecca A. Ryan
Bruce Hensler
Larry McKenna

Director, National Fire Programs Division, USFA
Chief, P&I Branch/NFP
Fire Program Specialist, P&I/NFP
Fire Program Specialist, P&I/NFP
Fire Program Specialist, NFDC/NFP

PRESENTATIONS:

Rik Khanna, CPSC
Larry McKenna, USFA
Bruce Hensler, USFA
Gordon Sachs, USFS
Anthony Hamins, NIST
Ron Face, NETC/USFA

Alex Furr, Director, National Fire Programs Division, USFA, welcomed all to the meeting and explained that USFA Administrator Mitchell and Deputy Administrator Gaines were unable to participate due to testimony on the Hill concerning reauthorization of USFA. Both had looked forward to the meeting.

The following presentations were provided to the members.

Rik Khanna, Fire Program Area Team Leader
Office of Hazard Identification & Reduction, CPSC
Presentation: *Firepot/Gel Rulemaking*

Rik provided an overview of the firepot/gel fuel issue. He noted that there are three types of alcohol fuels used in these firepots: ethanol, isopropanol (IPA), and mixtures of ethanol and IPA. There have been 55 incidents reported in 2011.

All ages are at risk when using firepots. There are no stability requirements for firepots. Fire pots can be tipped or knocked over causing the spread of flaming gel. If you should get splattered with fuel and catch on fire, Stop, Drop, and Roll is ineffective. Warning labels seem to have little effect.

Burn injuries from firepot incidents can cause fluid loss and infection which can cause painful delayed death. Extensive scarring, permanent disfigurement and functional impairment, as well as severe psychological trauma can result from accidents with firepots.

The CPSC Commissioners voted 5-0 to publish an advanced notice of proposed rulemaking (ANPR) to initiate rule-making that was published in the Federal Register on 12/27/11.

Larry McKenna, Fire Program Specialist
Data Center/NFP/USFA
Presentation: *Home Smoke Alarm Research*

Mr. McKenna presented information on home smoke alarm research sponsored by USFA and CPSC at Oak Ridge National Laboratories. Research to date shows clearly that improvements to residential smoke alarms are possible with current technology. Simple improvements can provide earlier warning, fewer nuisance alarms, and can awaken sleeping children and older adults better than current alarms. He pointed out that, like everything in life, better performance will come at a higher, but not unreasonable, price. This research is ongoing, and is scheduled to be completed in early 2013. Details, and a copy of the interim report, are available on USFA's website: http://www.usfa.fema.gov/fireservice/research/dsn/home_smoke_alarms.shtm

Bruce Hensler, Fire Program Specialist
Prevention & Information Branch/USFA
Presentation: *National Master List*

Mr. Hensler's presentation, "National Master List" explained the background and process of the Hotel and Motel Fire Safety Act of 1990. The Hotel & Motel Fire Safety Act of 1990 mandates FEMA maintain a National Master List (NML) for lodging. This NML is managed by USFA. There are approximately 50,000 lodging properties with 15+ guestrooms in the United States. Of those 50,000 approximately 43,500 lodging properties are on the NML. The NML also includes extended-stay lodging and apartments. The GSA uses this NML for annual per diem rate survey.

Gordon Sachs, Fire & Aviation Management
U.S. Forest Service
Presentation: *2011 Fire Season Review/2012 Fire Season Outlook*

Mr. Sachs provided an informative presentation on the 2011 wildland fire season and a preview of the 2012 fire season. He explained that the Wildland Fire Community is comprised of several agencies or departments to include the USFA Forest Service; U.S. Department of the Interior (Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and the Bureau of Indian Affairs); local fire departments and states represented through the National Association of State Foresters. All these groups are linked together through a comprehensive interagency system that was implemented the 1970s.

Gordon mentioned that in 2011 there were 1,655 significant wildland fires destroying 8,711,367 acres. Significant fires meaning they require mobilization of wildland firefighting resources from outside the affected Geographic Area. Also, in 2011, we experienced 7 days at Preparedness Level (PL) 4. This means that 2 or more geographic areas are experiencing incidents and areas are competing for resources. As of April 30, 2012, the U.S. has had 17,857 fires destroying 373,479 acres of land. The most recent outlook for 2012 shows drought conditions, fuel conditions and above normal temperatures pose a serious threat for wildland fires.

Dr. Anthony Hamins, Chief/Fire Research Division
Engineering Laboratory/NIST
Presentation: *Recent Research Activities at NIST*

Dr. Hamins gave an in-depth overview of NIST's recent fire research initiatives to include: an update on SCBA research; an ember fire research overview; reduced flammability of upholstered furniture project report; and the status of NIST's National Fire Research Laboratory (NFRL) expansion.

SCBA Research

NIST, with funding from DHS/USFA, studied the conditions encountered by firefighters and recommended a new test methodology and performance criteria to the NFPA technical committee. NIOSH identified multiple firefighter fatalities in which thermal degradation of the SCBA face piece lens was likely a contributing factor. NFPA drafted a Safety Awareness Notice

for SCBA face pieces noting that SCBA lenses may deform or degrade in severe firefighting conditions; over the last 30 years firefighting environment changed significantly; turnout gear now has higher thermal performance; and modern structure fires produce significantly higher heat release rates. Consequently, NFPA 1981, *Standard on Open-Circuit Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus for Emergency Services*, has been revised to incorporate the following in their 2013 edition: additional convective heat and flame test at higher temperature for the whole SCBA and radiant heat test specifically for the face piece lens.

Ember Fire Research

The 3rd annual NIST experimental campaign on ember fire ignition hazards was conducted from February to May 2012 in the Fire Research Wind Tunnel Facility at the Building Research Institute in Tsukuba, Japan. Recent experiments examined ignition of decking and firebrand generation from burning structures. Cedar, Douglas-Fir, and Redwood deck ignition occurred after several minutes and accumulated glowing firebrands caused ignition.

Upholstered Furniture Project

The project objective for reduced flammability of upholstered furniture is to develop, by 2014, the measurement science to allow prediction of peak heat release rate for a wide range of upholstered cushions based on the component material properties used in the construction. In addition, developing and maintaining standard tests for reducing ignition by cigarettes and a standard for the effectiveness of fire barrier materials will be explored.

RUF (residential upholstered furniture) will be quantified as to its contribution to U.S. fire loss in several ways:

- Estimate fire losses (deaths, injuries, and property) utilizing existing NFIRS data
- Survey groups of people responsible for coding NFIRS forms to determine how items are coded when presented with pictures or descriptions of various conditions.
- Organize an NFIRS Special Study focused on RUF Fire Behavior in the Room of Origin. A few carefully formulated questions could be developed for incorporation into the NFIRS questionnaire for a 1-year pilot study on this topic.
- Probabilistic modeling of RUF room fires incorporating experimental observations can be performed.

National Fire Research Laboratory

NIST's National Fire Research Laboratory (NFRL) has been improved with the addition of a 20,000 sq. ft. addition providing capability to test the performance of real-scale structures under realistic fire/mechanical loading in controlled conditions. The total floor area of the existing laboratory was 10,800 sq. ft. and the new laboratory has 21,400 sq. ft. of floor area. This new addition triples the floor space available for testing.

**Ron Face, Director, NETC Management,
Operations, and Support Services/USFA
Presentation: *Facility and Employee Security***

Mr. Face reminded everyone that safety and security are mutually supportive but often viewed as “speed bumps” to getting the “priority of the moment” accomplished. Many times short cuts become the standard:

- Using extension cords vs. hardwired outlets; we should be extra diligent in checking electrical outlets, electrical cords, etc.
- Permitting unprocessed contractors and visitors access to federal building and facilities;
- Permitting unprocessed delivery drivers unescorted access to federal building and facilities, i.e., food service deliveries; refreshment and newspaper vending machine attendants; parcel delivery services and sanitation management services to name a few.

The participants were reminded that we need to be careful about what is discussed out in public...the bad guy is listening! Federal facilities are a symbol of the Federal Government and are attractive targets for terrorists. A successful terrorist activity most always results in fire and EMS response which usually attracts the media...just what terrorists thrive on! We must be more cautious and develop plans to better protect ourselves as we go about our daily business of providing fire and EMS responses to incidents in our buildings and on our facilities.

Round Robin

Don Warner, Air Force, noted that they are experiencing a rash of false smoke alarms and this has become a big issue with them. He appreciated hearing about the research being done with smoke alarms and agreed that technology will make a difference. He is especially looking at response from a risk assessment angle and looking for best practices.

Ross Mowery, EPA, asked if Glenn Gaines was going to address violence in the workplace. Alex responded that she was not aware of what Glenn was going to talk about, but certainly would make him aware that it could be discussed at the next meeting.

**The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for the October/November timeframe. We would welcome a ½ day off-site meeting in the Washington metro area for ease of commuting and are looking for volunteers to host the gathering. Please notify Ms. Ryan if you are willing to host this meeting. Vivian Green, FAA, has tentatively offered to host, but we will entertain any/all offers.