

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS
DIVISION OF FIRE SAFETY
NEW JERSEY FIRE SAFETY COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING**

Meeting of January 15, 2025

The New Jersey Fire Safety Commission meeting was held on Wednesday, January 15, 2025 at the New Jersey State Firemen's Association in Wall Township, New Jersey.

Commission Members Present:

Mr. Kevin Krushinski, Chairman
Mr. Lawrence D. Wood
Mr. Armando Roman
Mr. George Aleu
Mr. Arthur Hayducka
Mr. Richard Blohm
Mr. Charles Siedenburg
Mr. Charles Maria
Mr. Karl Spinner
Mr. Steve O'Gorman
Mr. Raymond Heck

Commission Members Excused:

Mr. Arthur Londensky
Mr. Kevin Bellew
Mr. Daniel DeTrollo
Mr. Gerard Naylis
Ms. Kathleen O'Leary
Mr. Frederick Collender
Mr. Nelson Wiest

DCA Staff Members Present:

Richard J. Mikutsky, State Fire Marshal
Louis Kilmer, NJDFS
Timothy Weiss, NJDFS
Charles Lavin, NJDFS
Greg Kirkham, NJDFS
Don Nelsen, NJDFS
Steven Taylor, NJDFS
Steve Dyl, NJDFS
Jason Spiecker, NJDFS

Guests:

Ronald McGowan Jr.
Tom Pizzano
Mark Regan Jr.
Ryan LaVigne
Brian Kubiel

Matthew Janora
Vincent Corsaro
Dennis Allen
Brian Pericone
Chip Stockton Jr.
Craig Bierbaum

John Garton
Ryan Dullea
Roger Hull
Jerry Critelli
Kenneth Andersen

A. Call to Order

Chairman Kevin Krushinski called the meeting to order at 10:06 AM. He led the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence for those recently lost in the line of duty and the men and women serving our nation overseas.

B. Approval of Minutes

The Fire Safety Commission approved the minutes of the regular meeting of November 20, 2025. Chairman Krushinski noted that the minutes were in today's meeting packets for all to review.

C. Correspondence

Chairman Krushinski noted that any and all correspondence for today's meeting was contained in the Commission packets.

D. Public Comment I

Chairman Krushinski opened up the meeting to any members of the public present wishing to address the Commission at this time. The first members of the public recognized were from Medical Essential Diagnostics – Jacqueline and Larry. They gave a comprehensive presentation of their “Save My Life Program”, which provides thorough and extensive testing to frontline workers and state employees to ensure they are in optimal health while serving our communities and into their retirement. They have six clinics throughout New Jersey – in Marlton, Morristown, Englewood, Princeton, Secaucus, and Wall. Materials on the program were distributed to all present.

With no additional members of the public wishing to comment at this time, the meeting was moved to Division of Fire Safety Activities.

E. Division of Fire Safety Activities

Director Richard Mikutsky began his report by talking about the biggest highlight for the NJDFS since the previous meeting - and probably for all of 2024 - which was the passage of Senate Bill 2580 / Assembly Bill 3894. It passed both houses and was sent to the Governor on December 19, 2024. Director Mikutsky thanked Senator Bucco for his unwavering support, and to Chief Kilmer and his staff for all their hard work on this legislation.

On November 21st, the NJDFS held their annual Holiday Fire Safety Demo at Monmouth Fire Academy. Director Mikutsky thanked the academy staff, Dave Kurasz and the NFSA, Commissioner Kevin Bellew, and Sprinkler Fitters Local 696 for another great holiday safety demonstration.

Director Mikutsky reminded everyone that January is Firefighter Cancer Awareness Month. Every January, the Firefighter Cancer Support Network (FCSN) provides firefighters with essential tools and guidance to develop life-saving protocols for cancer prevention and supports those with cancer diagnoses within their departments. This year's theme is "Doing it Right," which aligns with the guidance FCSN released in its September 2024 white paper entitled: Doing it Right- Reducing Cancer in the Fire Service: a Groundbreaking Resource for Firefighters, EMS Providers, and Their Families. This white paper provides recommendations that apply to all firefighters. Recommendations are focused on what firefighters, fire department leaders, and local government leaders can do to reduce cancer risks.

Director Mikutsky reported that the Office of Training & Certification issued 19,013 total certifications for 2024. The Code Enforcement SME Group is working on revisions for the Fire Inspector credentialing program to bring it up to the 2018 IFC adopted code. They have already updated the JPR Skill Sheets and Written Exam questions. The SME Group will work on the Fire Official credentialing program once the work on the Fire Inspector credentialing program has been completed. Train-the-trainers will be scheduled for early 2025. All Instructors must attend the Train-the-trainer to be approved to run this course.

The RIC Subject Matter Expert Group is currently scheduling Train-the-trainer sessions for January/February 2025, at the Burlington County ESTC, the Morris County PSTA, and the Gloucester County Fire Academy. The notice will be sent out shortly. All Instructors will need the prerequisites of Firefighter 2, Fire Instructor 2, Drill Ground Instructor, and a letter of support from their respective Academy Director or career fire department stating these Instructors are the instructors that teach all/most of the RIC programs.

Director Mikutsky also reported that a notice for a meeting with the Firefighter Physical Agility Group will be sent out soon to try and get together for a face-to-face meeting before the next Fire Safety Commission meeting in March. Also, the New Jersey FMBA conference is scheduled for February 4-6 in Atlantic City. There will be numerous educational classes run over the three days. The NJDFS will be issuing CEU's.

Several Train-the-trainer classes will be scheduled for this year. Instructor requirements for these courses will be sent out with the Train-the-trainer notices. The classes will be:

- *Hazardous Materials: Awareness & Operations
- *Hazardous Materials: Incident Commander
- *Hazardous Materials: Technician
- *Fire Officer
- *NFA – Incident Safety Officer
- *Basic Fire Police Officer

The 2025 New Jersey Weekend at the National Fire Academy will be Friday, May 30th, Saturday, May 31st, and Sunday, June 1, 2025. The Real ID Act will be in effect, and a

Real ID/Passport/Passport Card/Federal ID will be needed to enter the NFA facility.

There are 7 courses to choose from:

- *Residential Sprinkler Plan Review (Code Enforcement/Instructor)
- *New Fire Chief: Administrative Issues (Instructor)
- *Command and Control for Company-Level Operations (Instructor)
- *Introduction to Unified Command for All-Hazard Incidents (Instructor)
- *Building Resilience in Leadership: Strategies for Growth and Confidence (Instructor)
- *Safety for Hazardous Materials Incidents (Instructor)
- *Fire Investigation: Fire as a Weapon (Code Enforcement/Investigator/Instructor)

Director Mikutsky reported that the NJDFS has been communicating with NJ Learn for a little more each year. Training & Certification was asked by NJ Learn to verify the fire service personnel certifications before people are given access to NJ Learn. You must have either a Firefighter 1, EMT, Police Officer, or Fire Police Officer certification to be eligible for access to NJ Learn. Director Mikutsky reminded everyone that the fax machine in the office – 609-341-3469 – has been disconnected and removed from service. Please use the new fax number – 609-292-6831.

Director Mikutsky gave a report from the Bureau of Fire Department Services, including the following statistics from 2024:

*Notifications-multiple alarms	1010
*Emergency responses	151
*Exercises	108
*Special Events	121
*Fire department assistance	360
*Trainings	221
*Fire department complaints	139

The Office of Fire Department Preparedness reported that there were multiple fire incidents and water emergencies over the holiday. These incidents impacted all four regions. On Christmas Day alone, one region had four multiple-alarm fires. Two major water emergencies had the Regional Coordinator assisting with response plans and the deployment of tender for multiple operational periods. Office of Fire Department Preparedness personnel are also finalizing county mutual aid plans. They are working to get these electronically. The reviewed plans will be utilized for FIFA working group response plans as related the upcoming World Cup and Club World Cup games.

On January 9th the quarterly New Jersey Forest Fire Service meeting was held at Coyle Field. On January 13th, NJDFS staff we met in Trenton with NJDEP on the foam take back program and legislation. The collection plan is in development, and they are currently out for bid on collection and disposal. They are aiming to complete collection in Fall 2025. The upcoming meeting of the State Fire Coordinators will be held on January 25th at 9:00am at the Middlesex County Fire Academy.

Director Mikutsky reported that there are nine scheduled FIFA Club World Cup games at MetLife Stadium from June 15th through July 9th. NJDFS personnel are assigned to the FIFA Emergency Preparedness, Fire / Rescue, and Safety & Security working groups. In addition, there are currently 27 ongoing fire department complaint investigations, dual investigations, or referrals with NJDOL/PEOSH/NJ DOH/AG OPI.

Director Mikutsky reported that the 21st Annual Anthony R. Braig Conference on Youth Fire-setting was held on December 5th & 6th at Middlesex County Fire Academy. It ran successfully with approximately 135 attendees from 14 different states. DCA Commissioner Suarez attended and spoke during the Conference's opening. Many thanks to Charles Lavin for putting on another tremendous and informative event. Next year's conference has been booked for December 4-5, 2025.

The Operation Save-a-Life program for 2025 will kick-off in New York City on February 19th. We are hopeful to receive more alarms this year, but Charles Lavin has also been working with the American Red Cross to bolster our supply. Several alarms were picked up from their Tinton Falls office just last week, so departments in need can contact Charles and they will be assisted on a first come/first serve basis. In addition, planning has begun for the 18th Annual New Jersey FIRE Bowl competition. We are currently canvassing school districts to see who will be participating. The program will run from February through May. More details to come.

Director Mikutsky gave a report on the Investigations / K-9 Unit. For 2024, they had 305 investigations that broke down into the following categories: 92 Incendiary; 74 Accidental; 3 Natural; 136 "Undetermined" (due to multiple potential causes or pending further exam / confirmation). The unit also reported the following statistics for 2024:

- *Wildland Investigations w/ NJ Forest Fire Service – 36
- *K-9 Ignitable Liquid Deployments – 62
- *Duty Officer Notifications – 530
- *Firefighter Injury Cases Reported – 75
- *Firefighter Line-of-Duty Deaths Reported - 4
- *Arson Case Arrests – 11
- *Court Testimony/Depositions – 7
- *Staff/K-9 Trainings – 46
- *Meetings Attended – 52
- *OPRA Requests Received – 13
- *K-9 Events/Demos - 43

Director Mikutsky reported that NFIRS Unit Staff have trained approximately 510 fire service members in Fire Incident Report Writing Classes. The delivery method included all in person classes including six for Kean University and 38 local delivery classes. These training classes encompassed 43 different fire departments, both volunteer and career departments. This is a 2% increase in Fire Service members being training from 2023 and approximately a 72.09% increase in outreach of fire departments from 2023.

NFIRS Unit Staff have audited, processed, and released 374,216 incident reports to the United States Fire Administration for Data Analysis. Only 502 of the 702 (71%) of fire departments have reported any NFIRS Reports for 2024.

NFIRS Unit Staff received and reviewed 513 Civilian Burn Reports, 71 School Fire Reports, 112 Lithium-Ion Battery Fire Reports and 56 Fatal Fire Reports totaling 61 fatalities for 2024. Of the 61 fatalities, there were eight (8) double fatalities, and two (2) triple fatalities. Forty-one (41) were in 1 or 2 family dwellings, eight (8) were in vehicles, two (2) were in High-Rises, one (1) was outside in the woods, one (1) was on a boardwalk, and eight (8) were in multi-family dwellings. Lithium-Ion Battery Fires, Micro mobility devices (e-bikes, scooters, hoverboards, etc.), power tools, and portable electronics incidents totaled 125 for the year. In over 80% of the incidents, the battery was indoors, and almost half the time the battery was not charging at the time of the fire.

NFIRS Unit Staff calculated Property Loss Estimation of Fires in New Jersey at approximately \$275,902,100.00 during 2024 emergency responses. Director Mikutsky reported the following statistics for 2025, so far:

- *Civilian Burn Reports: 21 (+ 6 from last week)
- *Total Fatal Fire Reports: 3 (+ 1 from last week)
- *Residential Fatal Fires : 3 (+ 1 from last week)
- *School Fire Reports: 3 (+ 3 from last week)
- *Lithium-Ion Battery: 3 (+ 2 from last week)

Director Mikutsky also gave a quick snapshot of Fatal Fires over last five years:

2020 = 69
2021 = 107
2022 = 62
2023 = 71
2024 = 61 (lowest of the past five years)

Director Mikutsky reported on the NJ Fire/EMS Lifeline activities for both November 2024 and December 2024:

NOV, Peer/ Prevention Training/Events: 5 Events /135 Participants
NOV. NJ Fire/EMS Lifeline Peer Support Counseling Cases: 44 Firefighters Served
DEC. NJ Fire/EMS Lifeline Peer Prevention Training/Events: 1 Events / 5 Participants
DEC. NJ Fire/EMS Lifeline Peer Support Counseling Cases: 37 Firefighters Served

Director Mikutsky also followed up on items that were discussed at the November meeting of the Fire Safety Commission. There was a question in regard to the new NERIS reporting system and how TIC use would be captured. Director Mikutsky reported that NERIS (version 1) does not have any special studies. The local vendor may use a special study for the local fire department but it will not be imported to NERIS. It would be for local use only, which is the same as it was prior to March 1, 2024. Director Mikutsky also discussed the Puffs tissues commercial that was brought to light by the Youth Firesetting Prevention Advisory Council. This has been forwarded to the National

Association of State Fire Marshals for their awareness and review, and pursue action with the manufacturer if needed.

Commissioner Blohm asked what the chiefs of fire departments obligations were as far as cancer screenings, etc. Director Mikutsky answered that, pending legislation, he is not sure how enforceable that is. Commissioner Blohm asked John Garton from the Department of Labor and he said he would look into it and follow up via email.

Bureau Chief Louis Kilmer began his report by saying that 2024 was a fantastic year for the New Jersey Division of Fire Safety and the fire service as a whole. The new Dynamics computer system continues to work smoothly and staff continues to make tweaks and improvements. Chief Kilmer said the new system has gotten revenue to drastically increase and streamline the flow of communications to the fire service.

Chief Kilmer said that it is now Annual Report time, as they are due on January 30, 2025. There is nothing in the regulations that allows for extensions, so Chief Kilmer urged the locals to stay on top of this and if there is an issue Local Assistance will be glad to help. The sooner Local Assistance is contacted, the better. Chief Kilmer also spoke about how the Contractors Service Portal, which is now up and running, is not yet mandatory. Fire Department Access is up and running, which has a lot of information available for departments to take advantage of.

The 2018 Fire Code is now in effect, and Chief Kilmer reminded everyone to purchase the New Jersey Edition when buying the new books. There has been an issue with the shipping of books from New Lisbon, but the NJDFS is working to straighten the problems out going forward. Also, Chief Kilmer reported that the NJDFS continues to receive/review numerous ordinances for shared service agreements and asked that those who do need to get these done to give the Division plenty of lead time.

Chief Kilmer spoke about the legislation regarding fire/smoke dampers and the need for those working on them to be licensed. The NJDFS has pulled it back and re-proposed it with corrections. As Director Mikutsky reported, Chief Kilmer spoke about the importance of the Fire Safety Act and anticipates Governor Murphy to sign it soon.

The School Fire Suppression Survey still has roughly 900 schools that have not responded. In order to get the survey completed the NJDFS must issue a report, so staff has been allocated to go out and obtain the needed information. Chief Kilmer also spoke about the bulletin regarding food trucks, which is still under the review of the Attorney General's Office.

Chief Kilmer spoke about the recently-adopted 2018 Code and the idea of bypassing the 2021 Code. There have been discussions of moving straight to the review process of the 2024 Code to get completely up to date. This has been talked about at the Codes Advisory Council meeting and Commissioner George Aleu will be making a motion that the Fire Safety Commission support this move. One thing that will be added to the 2024

Code is the alternative power source labeling that has been discussed at previous meetings.

Chief Kilmer reported that the Peer Review Board is going to be meeting within the next couple months, with at least four individuals who will be brought before the Board. These are for ongoing deficiencies and will be taken very seriously. Chief Kilmer spoke about the ongoing challenges of getting new inspectors hired simply due to the lack of interested and qualified candidates. Despite staffing issues, the Bureau of Code Enforcement completed 19,265 initial inspections in 2024, as well as 16,709 re-inspections. They issued 37,200 violations and issued 3,764 event permits. Chief Kilmer thanked the entire staff for all their hard work this year. The number of initial inspections is projected to surpass 23,000 in 2025. Chief Kilmer also reported that, this coming Thursday, Assembly Bill 4266 will be heard – which has to do with licensing fire escape contractors.

Commissioner George Aleu asked about what had happened with a bulletin from the NJDFS related to food trucks. Chief Kilmer answered that both he and Director Mikutsky had been reaching out to the Attorney General’s Office on this and several other topics. They are aware of the issue, but unfortunately it takes time.

F. Advisory Council Reports:

1. Codes Advisory Council

Commissioner George Aleu reported that the bulk of the Codes Advisory Council report had been covered by Chief Kilmer under the Division of Fire Safety’s report. He also noted that the Codes Advisory Council was in support of moving directly from the 2018 Fire Code to the 2024 Fire Code. Chairman Krushinski asked that he hold off on making a motion on this until New Business.

The next meeting of the Codes Advisory Council is scheduled for February 19th at Middlesex County Fire Academy at 10am.

2. Training and Education Advisory Council

Commissioner Charles Siedenburgh reported progress and noted that the previously scheduled meeting of the Training and Education Advisory Council on December 17th had been cancelled.

The next meeting of the Training and Education Advisory Council is scheduled for February 18th.

3. Statistics and Information Advisory Council

In the absence of Commissioner Gerard Naylis, Secretary Charles Lavin gave the following submitted report on his behalf: “The USFA transition to NERIS from NFIRS

continues. Our understanding is that USFA is addressing issues discovered in the transition. As always, we urge all FDs to continue reporting their data.”

4. Master Planning and Research Advisory Council

Commissioner Raymond Heck and Commissioner Lawrence Wood reported progress and noted that there would be a re-alignment of roles within the Master Planning and Research Advisory Council. Chairman Krushinski asked that this move be officially proposed under New Business.

5. Public Education Advisory Council

In the absence of Commissioner Paul McGrath, no formal report from the Public Education Advisory Council was available at this time.

6. Firefighter Safety and Health Advisory Council

Commissioner Richard Blohm reported that the Firefighter Safety and Health Advisory Council had met on November 26, 2024, at Middlesex County Fire Academy. Commissioner Blohm announced that John Garton had been promoted to Chief of Enforcement at the Department of Labor and that Rob Read would be taking his place on the Advisory Council. Commissioner Blohm also noted that the Newark case and forest firefighter injury cases are still open.

The Advisory Council discussed what was a reportable injury to the NJDFS and Council Liaison Lenny Inzerillo would be checking on this. Commissioner Blohm also reported there was conversation on the physical agility test that was being discussed, its impact on the volunteer fire service, and if academies would be mandated to use the test or would they be able to opt out.

Commissioner Blohm noted that the minutes of the November 26th meeting were in the meeting packets for all Commission members to review. The next meeting of the Firefighter Safety and Health Advisory Council is scheduled for January 23rd at Middlesex County Fire Academy at 10am.

7. Youth Firesetting Prevention Advisory Council

Chairman Kevin Krushinski reported that the Youth Firesetting Prevention Advisory Council had met on January 9th virtually on MicroSoft Teams and the minutes of that meeting were in the packets for all to review. Chairman Krushinski noted that Director Mikutsky had covered the 21st Annual Anthony R. Braig Conference on Youth Firesetting and thanked Charles Lavin for his work on the event.

The next meeting of the Youth Firesetting Prevention Advisory Council is scheduled for March 13th at Monmouth County Fire Academy in Freehold at 10 am.

G. Committee Reports

1. Residential Sprinkler Committee

In the absence of Commissioner Gerard Naylis, Secretary Charles Lavin gave the following submitted report on his behalf: “The Committee continues to encourage looking for ways to incorporate automatic sprinkler protection in residential structures.”

2. Ad-Hoc Committee on Legislation

There was no report available at this time.

3. NJ Statewide Utility Safety Team

Commissioner Steve O’Gorman reported that the New Jersey Statewide Utility Safety Team held four meetings throughout 2024 and has made significant progress in connecting with several utility companies. Meetings for 2025 are scheduled at Morris, Glassboro, Ocean and Somerset County Fire Academies. They will also be presenting at the NJEPA Conference in Atlantic City on April 8th.

4. Electric Vehicles Working Group

In the absence of Commissioner Gerard Naylis, Secretary Charles Lavin gave the following submitted report on his behalf: “I have had a conversation with Walter Nugent of New Jersey City University. He has a class scheduled for the spring semester and the class will have a project to examine electric vehicle charging in parking garages. Additionally, the NJ Chapter of the Society of Fire Protection Engineers (NJSFPE) will be holding a dinner meeting on February 10 at the Hanover Manor where the educational topic will be EVs in Parking Garages. The meeting starts at 5:30 pm.”

H. Old Business

Commissioner Raymond Heck asked about the Train-the-trainer programs that are upcoming and whether there would be enough capacity in the classes to get everyone in that wants to be certified. Director Mikutsky referred the question to Steve Taylor from the NJDFS Training & Certifications Unit, who answered that they would be doing the RIC Train-the-trainers differently – it will be delivered to folks from the academies (3 seats per), who will then deliver it to their people at their own academies.

I. New Business

Commissioner George Aleu made a motion that Matthew Janora be added to the Codes Advisory Council. Mr. Janora’s resume had been submitted to all Commissioners for review previously. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Steve O’Gorman and passed unanimously.

Chairman Krushinski explained that Director Mikutsky and Chief Kilmer would be having scheduling conflicts with the Fire Safety Commission meeting schedule going forward due to duties attending meetings with DCA Commissioner Suarez. After some discussions amongst the Commission members, it was determined that – going forward – Fire Safety Commission meetings would be moving to the third THURSDAY every other month, rather than the third Wednesday. Therefore, the meeting dates for the remainder of the year would be March 20, May 22, July 17, September 11, and November 20. Secretary Lavin will work with all venues to ensure meeting dates are changed and have the new schedule posted on the NJDFS website.

Chairman Krushinski spoke about recent fires in Hawaii that were caused by youth firesetting incidents involving fireworks, and spoke about the dangers that legalizing fireworks has had on the youth firesetting problem. Chairman Krushinski asked the Commission members how this might be remedied and the general consensus was that it would need to be done legislatively, just as the legalizing of them was done several years back. Chief Kilmer suggested coordinating with the legislative members of this body for support on this.

Chairman Krushinski thanked the New Jersey State Firemen's Association for hosting today's meeting at their facility, as well as the New Jersey Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board (David Kurasz) and Sprinkler Fitters Local 696 (Kevin Bellew) for sponsoring the coffee and refreshments this morning. Chairman Krushinski also noted that the 2025 Holiday Burn Demonstration at Monmouth County Fire Academy is scheduled for November 24th.

At the request of Commissioners Raymond Heck and Lawrence Wood, Chairman Krushinski reversed their roles within the Master Planning & Research Advisory Council. Commissioner Wood would assume the role of Chairman and Commissioner Heck would assume the role of Vice-Chairman.

Commissioner George Aleu made a motion to support the New Jersey Division of Fire Safety moving straight from the 2018 Fire Code to the 2024 Fire Code as was referenced earlier by Chief Kilmer. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Heck and passed unanimously.

There being no further New Business to conduct at this time, the meeting was moved to Public Comment II.

J. Public Comment II

Chairman Krushinski opened up the meeting once again for any member of the public wishing to comment at this time.

Craig Bierbaum spoke about a renewed look into the challenges of the fire service, and stressed the need for better attendance and participation at all levels. Mr. Bierbaum cited poor attendance by many members of the Fire Safety Commission and Advisory

Councils, and asked that if anyone is unwilling to be involved and rise to the occasion, then they should step aside and allow for new blood to step in. Mr. Bierbaum added that there is too much at stake as we head into 2025 and the focus needs to be the health and safety of our firefighters and citizens.

Matthew Janora, Toms River Fire Official, announced that there would be a free in-building radio seminar at Toms River Fire Academy on February 20. Anyone interested in attending can contact him. It begins at 9am, lunch included.

K. Adjournment

With no further discussion requested, Chairman Kevin Krushinski called for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Armando Roman made the motion, which was seconded by Commissioner Steve O’Gorman and passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 11:12 AM.

#####