

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

Meeting of March 20, 2025

The New Jersey Fire Safety Commission meeting was held on Thursday, March 20, 2025 at the New Jersey State Firemen's Association in Wall Township, New Jersey.

Commission Members Present:

Mr. Kevin Krushinski, Chairman
Mr. John Wisniewski, Vice-Chairman
Mr. Lawrence D. Wood
Mr. George Aleu
Mr. Arthur Hayducka
Mr. Richard Blohm
Mr. Charles Siedenburg
Mr. Charles Maria
Mr. Karl Spinner
Mr. Steve O'Gorman
Mr. Arthur Londensky
Mr. Daniel DeTrollo
Mr. Gerard Naylis
Ms. Kathleen O'Leary
Mr. Frederick Collender
Mr. Nelson Wiest

Commission Members Excused:

Mr. Armando Roman
Mr. Kevin Bellew

DCA Staff Members Present:

Richard J. Mikutsky, State Fire Marshal
Louis Kilmer, NJDFS
Charles Lavin, NJDFS
Greg Kirkham, NJDFS
Don Nelsen, NJDFS
Steven Taylor, NJDFS
Leonard Inzerillo, NJDFS
Dan Timmerman, NJDFS

Guests:

Ronald McGowan Jr.
Elizabeth Sweeney
Brian Pericone

Matthew Janora
Joseph Signorello Jr.
Charles Moran
Gregory Lallo

Richard Foster
Tom Penn
David Boehning

A. Call to Order

Chairman Kevin Krushinski called the meeting to order at 10:01 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 January 15, 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. With no members of the public wishing to comment, the meeting was moved to Division of Fire Safety Activities.

E. Division of Fire Safety Activities

Director Mikutsky began his report by congratulating Louis Kilmer, who was recently promoted from Bureau Chief to Deputy Division Director. Deputy Director Kilmer has been a valuable member of the New Jersey Division of Fire Safety for many years, consistently demonstrating dedication and expertise in Code Enforcement. Throughout his tenure, Director Kilmer has made significant contributions to the fire service. In his new role as Deputy Division Director, Lou will be responsible for overseeing the general operations of the division.

Director Mikutsky reported that on February 3rd, Governor Murphy signed A3894/S2580 into law as P.L.2025, c.19. This took effect immediately. The Uniform Fire Safety Act upgraded the Fire Inspector/Fire Official certifications to licenses upon signing. The Office of Training & Certifications is working on revising all documents to reflect this change. New licenses will be issued when all changes are approved.

On March 7th, the National Fire Academy was closed as part of a Trump Administration effort to evaluate its programs and align them with Administration programs. The NFA is closed, and all on and off campus training is canceled. Director Mikutsky urged firefighters to contact their Senators and Representatives and ask them to support re-opening the NFA. This could affect the upcoming New Jersey Weekend at the end of May if it is a prolonged closure. NFA courses paid for by the states can continue to run. The NFA has cancelled all contract instructor assignments, and the dining hall was closed

on Saturday, March 8th. NFA has emailed cancellation notices to all registered students. Director Mikutsky noted that he had spoken to U.S. Fire Administration Acting Deputy Administrator Eriks Gabliks last week and was advised that he will be attending a meeting today (3/20/25), with the Administration to discuss the possibility of reopening.

Director Mikutsky reported on recent fires involving e-bikes in Perth Amboy. The incidents, which have snowballed over the course of the past month because of the fraudulent UL stickers that were discovered on the vehicles, and the investigation has expanded widely ever since. Several agencies are involved including NJDFS, NJ State Police, ATF, FDNY, NYPD, etc. The investigation is ongoing and includes thousands of vehicles that have been discovered to be fraudulent. Director Mikutsky asked everyone to reach out if they find anything like this in their municipalities.

Division of Fire Safety personnel continue to support the preparations for the FIFA Club World Cup games at MetLife Stadium, which will take place between June 15th and July 9th. Staff are currently assigned to the Emergency Preparedness, Fire/Rescue, and Intelligence Safety & Security Working Groups. NJDFS staff assist with the preplanning, site visits, and collection of mutual aid response plans for the confirmed team base camps, training facilities, and hotels.

Director Mikutsky and staff attended a Local Leaders Forum presented by the Naval Postgraduate Studies, Centers for Homeland Defense and Security and New Jersey State Police Command Staff. The full-day forum consisted of briefings and presentations by NJSP and FIFA personnel to discuss the impact on the region and first responders. Approximately 250 participants were in attendance. Opening remarks were made by Governor Murphy.

Division of Fire Safety staff continue to support the state SAVER (Standardize Active Violent Event Response) working group as it continues to progress with the ASIM-B Active shooter classes. NJDFS instructors are assisting NJSP and OHS&P instructors with those deliveries. There have been 119 ASIM-B courses delivered and 2,600 first responders trained to date. Also, the NJDFS approved the purchase of 25 Strike Boards. The Strike Boards are an integral part of the ASIM-B hands-on portion of the active shooter training. The Strike Boards will be issued to each county fire academy as well as the Department of Health and Department of Corrections.

The NJDFS's Office of Fire Department Preparedness continues to investigate fire department and personnel complaints. Currently there are 53 active complaints with several certification revocations in the appeal process and complaint co-investigations with the Department of Labor. The Division of Fire Safety continues to progress with the development of a Public Standards and Integrity Unit to specifically address these complaints. The OFDP has also responded to numerous emergency incidents recently, including a 5-alarm fire in Paterson and a 3-alarm mulch storage fire on State property in Hudson County. OFDP staff has attended numerous meetings and trainings at both the State and County level.

Director Mikutsky reported the following Year-to-date stats from the Arson Investigations/K-9 Unit: 63 Fire Investigations, 9 Incendiary Cause (2 with youth firesetter), 139 notification calls, 23 firefighter injuries reported, 3 K-9 deployments, 2 case arrests, 1 K-9 demo, 13 trainings, 31 Meetings, 12 OPRA responses, and one deposition.

The Arson Investigations/K-9 Unit staff will be attending the IAAI National Training Conference next month in Atlantic City. The unit is working with other partner agencies to help provide fire investigation and K9 assistance as needed to minimize any response delays during this conference. They also continue to work with the New Jersey Forest Fire Service personnel to investigate multiple large wildfires that have occurred over the past few weeks. A busy spring fire season is anticipated because of statewide drought conditions.

Director Mikutsky reported that there are two youth Firesetting trainings upcoming: Youth Firesetting Intervention Specialist (April 7-8, Middlesex Co. Fire Academy) and Youth Firesetting Program Manager (May 6-7, Monmouth Co. Fire Academy).

The Operation Save-a-Life program for 2025 kicked off in New York City on February 19th. The NJDFS now awaits smoke alarm donations from Toyota and First Alert. Once received, they will start the distribution process for 2025. Kidde, although they are no longer affiliated with Operation Save-a-Life, will also be donating alarms to us this summer as part of their own outreach program.

The 18th Annual New Jersey FIRE Bowl kicked off on March 10th with all participating school districts receiving their textbooks and source materials. A couple key dates for this year's program: May 1st - "Academy Day" Field Trip for all students to Middlesex County Fire Academy; and May 21st - State Championship event at Kean University's STEM Building. Director Mikutsky added that the Fire Focus Online Newsletter for Spring 2025 would be posted and distributed this coming Monday, March 24th.

Director Mikutsky gave the following 2025 Year-to-Date statistics from the Fire Incident Reporting Unit: 122 Civilian Burn Report, 18 Total Fatal Fire Reports, 13 Residential Fatal Fires, 13 School Fire Reports, and 26 Lithium-Ion Battery Fires.

Director Mikutsky reported that the Office of Training & Certification have issued over 1,800 certifications for 2025. Also, Training received an email late Friday, March 7, 2025, regarding the decision made by FEMA to ensure alignment with current Administration policies which includes the closing of the NFA.

Director Mikutsky reported the Code Enforcement SME has revised the Fire Inspector program to the 2018 IFC (International Fire Code), NJ Edition. Updated programs were sent to all existing Fire Inspector courses. The Code Enforcement SME has started meeting on updating the Fire Inspector program to the 2024 IFC – NJ Edition, and the new NFPA 1030 Standard for Professional Qualifications for Fire Prevention Program Positions. The PPT will be completely revised, and the textbook will change to the

IFSTA Fire Inspection & Code Enforcement, 9th Edition. The written exam questions and JPR Skill Sheets will be revised and cited to the new codes.

N.J.A.C. 5:71 – Fire Code Enforcement – proposed regulations will reflect the change from “certification” to a “license” for Fire Inspector and Fire Official, the testing and course hour requirements for Fire Official, the experience requirements for Fire Inspector and Fire Official, and mandating the code update requirement to include all fire inspectors and fire officials.

N.J.A.C. 5:73 – Standards for Fire Service Training and Certification – The proposed regulations will include the requirement for Incident Management Level 2 certification for all chief officers, the requirement for Incident Management Level 1 certification for Hazardous Materials: Incident Commander certifications, the creation of the Junior Firefighter Auxiliary training rules, and include mandatory FF1 cert for all future firefighters.

SME Groups will be meeting to review/update NFPA Standard changes:

- NFPA 1010 – (old NFPA 1001, 1002, 1003, and 1005) – Firefighter – Apparatus/Driver Operator – ARFF – Marine Firefighter
- NFPA 470 (old NFPA 472, 473, and 1072) – Hazardous Materials
- NFPA 1030 (old NFPA 1031, 1035, and 1037) – Inspector – Fire & Life Safety Educator/PIO/Youth Firesetter titles – Fire Marshal
- NFPA 1020 (old NFPA 1021 and 1041) – Fire Officer – Fire Instructor

Director Mikutsky reported that, with the start of 2025, the NJ Fire & EMS Lifeline Program had a strong and active launch, continuing to deliver numerous trainings, attend outreach events and conventions, and develop new resources to support the program’s growth. Throughout February, the NJ Fire & EMS Lifeline team remained dedicated to supporting first responders and their families through peer support services. The lifeline had 201 contacts last month, including peer intervention, support calls, chats, and emails.

Deputy Director Louis Kilmer began his report by announcing that the NJDFS is working to adopt the 2024 Fire Code, which is gone through the legal review at the Department of Community Affairs and is now at the Attorney General’s Office and then will move on to the Governor’s Office. This is the first time the NJDFS is adopting the most recent edition of the fire code. Deputy Director Kilmer also spoke about the moving from certification to licensure for fire inspectors and fire officials, as well as the standards for fire service training and certifications. There have been a lot of movement on these items and they are on their way to being in the New Jersey Register. Deputy Director Kilmer asked all present and their organizations to voice their support for them.

Deputy Director Kilmer reported on revenue for FY2025, which is very close to last year’s numbers – which is a positive sign given all the progress that has been made by the Compliance Unit. Deputy Director Kilmer also spoke about food trucks and how they are regulated/inspected/etc. This is a complicated issue given the movement of the trucks, but

there is a proposed bill out there on them. A working group is in the process of being formed to examine the issue and come up with a plan going forward.

Deputy Director Kilmer spoke about the issue of combustible mulch. A lot of outreach has been done with various groups to make sure that everyone is up to speed on the new regulations, where it applies, etc. It does not apply to owner-occupied one- and two-family dwellings, but it does apply to all other buildings (R-2s, commercial structures, etc.). Further guidance will be sent out in regard to this by the end of the week in the form of a NJDFS memo. The NJDFS has also been keeping a close eye on Assembly Bill 4972 which concerns allowing single-exit additions in certain types of structures. The NJDFS has significant concerns about this and will be keeping a close eye on the legislation. Deputy Director Kilmer also gave an update on the Dynamics computer system, which is continuing to work well and being maintained. At this time, it will not be expanded any further.

Annual Reports Season went exceedingly well. Deputy Director Kilmer thanked Anthony Doyley (Supervisor of Local Assistance) and his team for all their work on getting all the reports in smoothly and with no extensions granted. Deputy Director Kilmer also spoke about the Contractors Service Portal, which will be mandatory. This is where contractors submit their fire test reports into a state portal automatically. The NJDFS is also in the process of reviewing numerous ordinances for shared services.

Deputy Director Kilmer spoke about the passage of the Fire Safety Act that Director Mikutsky reported on earlier and mentioned specifically the documentation needed for change of occupancy and the removal of fire extinguishers. The NJDFS held a webinar to try and get the word out on all the changes as much as possible. Also, the last School Suppression Survey came in earlier this morning and all the data will now be reviewed and a formal report will follow. This survey goes back to the Christie administration.

Deputy Director Kilmer spoke about the Codes Advisory Council continued work on mobile fueling issue, which the new code does have provisions for. The NJDFS is also continuing to work on the junior firefighter regulations, as well as bringing in new inspectors. Several interviews are scheduled for later today.

The NJDFS continues to work with the Department of Transportation and the New Jersey Turnpike Authority regarding fire department connections on the state's highways. There has been a lot of debate on this as far as who owns them, is responsible for maintaining them, etc. Vice-Chairman John Wisniewski mentioned that he had attended the last meeting of the Turnpike Authority and had raised this issue. The chief engineer there was unaware of the issue and Vice-Chairman Wisniewski asked that he be kept in the loop. Deputy Director Kilmer asked that he pass along his contact information after the meeting. Vice-Chairman Wisniewski asked if there was anything regarding residential sprinklers in the 2024 Fire Code. Deputy Director Kilmer answered that there is language in the code that does not allow for this, as the fire code is a maintenance code and cannot force the installation of residential sprinkler systems.

Vice-Chairman Wisniewski asked about the guidance that the NJDFS will be sending out regarding the new mulch regulations at homes near the shore that are rented out occasionally in the summer. Deputy Director Kilmer answered that a change has been submitted to exclude these buildings as one- or two-family homes as it was intended to originally. Vice-Chairman Wisniewski suggested using clear language in whatever guidance document is set out so there is no ambiguity as to what should be enforced.

Commissioner George Aleu asked about the legislation allowing for single stairways exits and what the Division of Fire Safety's stance on this was. Director Mikutsky answered that the NJDFS is on record as being opposed to the legislation and this has been made clear to the bill's sponsor as well. Director Mikutsky added that the National Association of State Fire Marshals has a position paper on this matter as well formally opposing this.

Chairman Krushinski asked about the training (webinar) for fire officials on the updates regarding change of occupancy. Deputy Director Kilmer answered that once they get the memo on mulch completed and distributed, they will work on getting out guidance on fire extinguishers, etc. to the fire officials.

With no further business to discuss regarding Division of Fire Safety Activities, the meeting was moved to Advisory Council Reports.

F. Advisory Council Reports:

1. Codes Advisory Council

Commissioner Arthur Londensky reported that no meeting of the Codes Advisory Council had been held since the previous Fire Safety Commission meeting. However, all of the subcommittees within the Codes Advisory Council are continuing their reviews and report progress.

2. Training and Education Advisory Council

Commissioner Nelson Wiest reported that the Training and Education Advisory Council met on February 18th. Deputy Director Kilmer was in attendance and spoke on many of the topics he covered today, as is reflected in the meeting minutes that were distributed. Commissioner Wiest expressed concern about the closing of the National Fire Academy and hopes to see it reopen as soon as possible. New Jersey Weekend is currently scheduled to take place there later this spring.

3. Statistics and Information Advisory Council

Commissioner Gerard Naylis expressed concern that, with the sunset of NFIRS, fire departments will no longer be able to track who/how many firefighters responded to a given incident. Director Mikutsky said he would direct this question/concern to Vincent Campagna, the New Jersey State Lead for NERIS, and would have him look into it.

Director Mikutsky did add that, unlike NFIRS, the NERIS system will see ongoing updates and modifications as it goes forward.

4. Master Planning and Research Advisory Council

Commissioner Lawrence Wood reported that a Zoom meeting of the Master Planning and Research Advisory Council was held in February. However, it was very lightly attended and the Council is searching for new members and looking to re-appoint former members. The roster is a work in progress.

Commissioner Wood also requested that an NJDFS liaison be assigned to the Master Planning and Research Advisory Council. Director Mikutsky said he would look into it and get someone to assist with this Advisory Council.

5. Public Education Advisory Council

Chairman Krushinski noted that Commissioner Paul McGrath had relocated out of state, so for all intents and purposes Commissioner Daniel DeTrollo would serve in the role of Chairman of the Public Education Advisory Council going forward. Commissioner DeTrollo noted that Director Mikutsky had covered all of the items related to Public Education in his report.

6. Firefighter Safety and Health Advisory Council

Commissioner Richard Blohm reported that there are two sets of minutes in the Commission meeting packets for the Commission members to review. Commissioner Blohm spoke about a few items from the minutes, including the adding of reporting firefighter injuries even when they did not go to the hospital and a study on protective hoods.

Commissioner Blohm also covered a meeting on the recruit firefighter physical agility program, most notably what the New Jersey Civil Service Commission uses. What had started as a timed event is now simply a pass/fail test. Commissioner Blohm highlighted the fact that all this discussion is regarding recruit firefighters, NOT existing firefighters. A report on the meeting, held on March 13th, was provided in today's Commission packets for all to review. Chairman Krushinski asked about the possibility of establishing a permanent, centralized testing center. Director Mikutsky answered that the Civil Service Commission was looking at a few locations for this, but he is not aware of any decision forthcoming from them on this. A discussion followed regarding the future of the recruit firefighter physical agility program with another meeting of this committee scheduled for May 2, 2025.

7. Youth Firesetting Prevention Advisory Council

Commissioner Kathleen O’Leary reported that the Youth Firesetting Prevention Advisory Council had met on March 13th at Monmouth County Fire Academy and the minutes of that meeting were in the packets for all to review. A good portion of the Youth Firesetting Prevention Advisory Council was covered under NJDFS Activities, especially relative to the upcoming NFA classes being held in April and May.

Commissioner O’Leary noted that the 22nd Annual Anthony R. Braig Conference on Youth Firesetting is now scheduled for December 4-5, 2025, at the Middlesex County Fire Academy in Sayreville – and asked that everyone save the date. Commissioner O’Leary also regretfully announced the shutting down of Camden County’s FireWatch program, which has been operating for many decades. The county, unfortunately, has pulled the plug on this long-standing successful program.

The next meeting of the Youth Firesetting Prevention Advisory Council is scheduled for June 5th at Monmouth County Fire Academy in Freehold at 10 am.

G. Committee Reports

1. Residential Sprinkler Committee

Commissioner Gerard Naylis commented on the Fire Code getting aligned with the 2024 cycle and pointed out that the best opportunity for getting residential sprinklers is keeping it in the International Building Code. He suggested speaking with Codes & Standards on keeping this in the code and getting residential sprinklers that way. Commissioner Londensky asked that Commissioner Naylis send him what he has on this and he would look into it from there.

2. Ad-Hoc Committee on Legislation

Vice-Chairman John Wisniewski reported progress for the Ad-Hoc Committee on Legislation.

3. NJ Statewide Utility Safety Team

Commissioner Steve O’Gorman reported that the New Jersey Statewide Utility Safety Team would be at the Emergency Preparedness Conference in Atlantic City coming up on April 8th – they will . Commissioner O’Gorman reminded everyone that all gas companies throughout the state offer training to fire departments and, if anyone is in need of training they can just reach out to them locally. This training is free of charge.

The next meeting of the New Jersey Statewide Utility Safety Team is scheduled for April 16th at Gloucester County Fire Academy.

4. Electric Vehicles Working Group

Commissioner Gerard Naylis gave an update on the Working Group's partnership with New Jersey City University, who will be researching electric vehicle fires in parking structures. The group is also looking into information on how electric vehicle fires are fought. Commissioner Naylis hopes a more formal report will be available from them at the subsequent meeting.

H. Old Business

Chairman Kevin Krushinski opened up the meeting for any Old Business to be discussed at this time. There being none, the meeting was moved to New Business.

I. New Business

Chairman Krushinski opened up the meeting for any New Business to be discussed at this time. Commissioner Londensky made a motion that John Drucker be appointed to the Codes Advisory Council. That motion was seconded by Commissioner Naylis and passed unanimously.

Commissioner Wiest made a motion that Daniel Arroyo be appointed to the Training & Education Advisory Council. That motion was seconded by Vice-Chairman Wisniewski and passed unanimously.

Chairman Krushinski thanked the New Jersey State Firemen's Association for hosting today's meeting on short noticed. Chairman Krushinski also thanked Vice-Chairman Wisniewski for sponsoring the coffee and breakfast for everyone at the meeting.

Commissioner Naylis made a motion that a letter be sent to the Department of Homeland Security regarding the reopening of the National Fire Academy. A discussion on this followed and Vice-Chairman Wisniewski shared a draft letter in support of the reopening of the National Fire Academy and suggested that it be sent to New Jersey's legislature as well. With that amendment, the motion was seconded by Commissioner Londensky and passed unanimously.

Commissioner George Aleu raised the issue of a lack of carbon monoxide protection in one- and two-family homes. He expressed concern about the current requirements in the Uniform Construction Code and recommended mandating putting CO alarms on every level. Commissioner Aleu also asked that the members present do what they can to educate the public on this and raise awareness that only one CO alarm in the home may not be sufficient. A discussion followed on possible courses of action and the rules on this related to a change of occupancy.

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. There being none, the meeting was moved to Adjournment.

K. Adjournment

With no further discussion requested, Chairman Kevin Krushinski called for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Gerard Naylis made the motion, which was seconded by Commissioner George Aleu and passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 11:25AM.

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