

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

Meeting of July 16, 2026

The New Jersey Fire Safety Commission meeting was held on Thursday, July 16, 2026 at the Surf City Volunteer Fire Department in Surf City, New Jersey.

Commission Members Present:

Mr. Kevin Krushinski, Chairman
Mr. Lawrence D. Wood
Mr. George Aleu
Mr. Gerard Naylis
Ms. Kathleen O’Leary
Mr. Raymond Heck
Mr. Steve O’Gorman
Mr. Nelson Wiest
Mr. Peter Goldring

Commission Members Excused:

Mr. John Wisniewski, Vice-Chairman
Mr. Kevin Bellew
Mr. Arthur Londensky
Mr. Armando Roman
Mr. Richard Blohm
Mr. Frederick Collender

DCA Staff Members Present:

Wayne Wolk, State Fire Marshal
Louis Kilmer, NJDFS
Charles Lavin, NJDFS
Greg Kirkham, NJDFS
Donald Nelsen, NJDFS
Lenny Inzerillo, NJDFS
Steve Dyl, NJDFS
Dan Timmerman, NJDFS
Steven Taylor, NJDFS
Nihari Kesireddy, NJDFS

Guests:

Robert Tharp
Charles Lind Jr.
Matthew Janora
Alan Pine
Robert Reed
Anthony Cirz

Michael Whalen
Michael Maloney
Joseph M. Lenarski
Rich Mikutsky
Christopher Tamayo
Anthony Burnett
Michele Anderson
William Hollingsworth

Robert Hill
V. Adamkiewicz
William Quinn
Todd MacLennan
Bryant Curry
Christopher Weniger
Marc Strauss
Adam Ellender

Roger Hull
Paul T. Dansbach
Edward Mullen

Philip Drangula
Anthony Correia

Paul Rice
George Wade

A. Call to Order

Chairman Kevin Krushinski called the meeting to order at 10:03 AM. He led the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence for those lost in the line of duty this past year and the men and women serving our nation overseas.

B. Approval of Minutes

The Fire Safety Commission unanimously approved the minutes of the regular meeting of May 21, 2026. 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 the meeting to any members of the public present wishing to comment. Former State Fire Marshal Richard Mikutsky spoke briefly to thank all the Commission members for their dedication and support during his time at the helm of the New Jersey Division of Fire Safety. Subsequently, Chairman Krushinski – along with NJDFS Director Wayne Wolk – made a special award presentation to honor Mr. Mikutsky for his eight years of service as New Jersey's State Fire Marshal. Mr. Mikutsky thanked them and wished them well in their endeavors for the fire service going forward.

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

E. Division of Fire Safety Activities

Chairman Krushinski called attention to the NJ Division of Fire Safety Activities Report that was distributed to all Commissioners earlier this week via email and was also available in printed form in today's meeting packets.

Director Wayne Wolk began his report by speaking about the Bureau of Fire Department Services. Personnel from the Bureau have played an integral part with the planning, organization and operations for fire protection at MetLife Stadium (NYNJ stadium). Included within the Fire working group, NJDFS personnel are responsible for HazMat and Decon responses.

Chief Tynan, Senior Planner Nelsen, and Senior Planner Dyl are responsible for Command and control of approximately 105 personnel for those tasks. Personnel are comprised of members from multiple Bergen County Fire Departments, Meadowlands Fire Department, Rutgers University Emergency Services, Bergen County Hazmat team, NJ Department of Corrections COBRA Team, NJ Forest Fire Service, and FBI Newark WMD CT squad. Personnel are staged at Meadowlands FD, Carlstadt FD and River Barge Park for all FIFA matches at the stadium.

Senior Planner Barrella and Inspector 2 Dreiblatt are staffing the ESF 4 desk at the SEOC (State Emergency Operations Center) during the matches to assist with any coordination of fire resources that may be required. Program Specialist 2 Campagna is staffing the ROIC ACC (Area Command Center). His responsibility is the integration of the fire service with law enforcement and the intelligence information agencies. Including county, state and federal partners, as well as the other host FIFA cities. Senior Planner Berkman is staffing the NJ Transit EOC (Emergency Operations Center). His responsibility is to liaison with NJ Transit and their partners with transportation of passengers and any emergencies that may arise during the FIFA matches.

From the Training & Certifications Unit, Director Wolk reported that from January 1, 2026, to July 1, 2026, the Office of Training & Certifications issued approximately 8,058 licenses and certifications.

The unit has scheduled more InfoShare Training for Chief Officers and Eligible Organizations for August and September. Details are as follows:

- Tuesday, August 18 – Vineland Fire Dept.
- Thursday, August 20th – Middlesex County Fire Academy
- Thursday, August 27th – Bergen County L&PSI
- Tuesday, September 1 – Burlington County ESTC
- Thursday, September 3rd – Monmouth County Fire Academy
- Tuesday, September 8 – Warren County Fire Academy
- Thursday, September 10th – Atlantic County Fire Academy (still waiting on final confirmation)
- Tuesday, September 22 – Gloucester County Fire Academy
- Thursday, September 24th – Morris County PSTA (still waiting on final confirmation)
- Tuesday, September 29 – Ocean County ESTC

The meetings above are scheduled for 3pm and 7pm. Director Wolk also noted that ProBoard is scheduled for a re-accreditation visit around December this year.

Director Wolk reported that the Code Enforcement SME is working to finalize the Fire Inspector licensing program and start scheduling Train-the-Trainers towards the end of summer. Also, Hazardous Materials (Awareness, Operations, Mission Specific PPE and Product Control) Train-the-Trainers will start being scheduled towards the end of summer.

The Office of Training & Certification will stop taking paper applications and rosters into the office on September 1, 2026. All applications and rosters need to start being submitted through the Division portal. Also, the NJDFS has submitted its final recommendations for the Physical Readiness Agility Assessment as of this week.

Director Wolk reported that the Community Risk Reduction Unit continues to work on the 23rd Annual Anthony R. Braig Conference on Youth Firesetting, which is set for December 3-4, 2026 at Middlesex County Fire Academy. We are currently on pace to begin registration sometime in mid-September, which is ahead of schedule from the usual October 1st kickoff date.

From the Fire Investigations/K9 Unit, Director Wolk reported that Fire Investigator Braulio “Woody” Villegas had submitted a letter of resignation effective July 17th. He is one of our south region investigators and has been with the unit since 2022 after retiring from the Camden Fire Department as their Fire Official. We wish him well in his new endeavors.

The NJDFS was notified of a Fire Police LODD on June 16th from Middlebush Fire Department in Franklin Twp., Somerset Co. A 46-year fire service veteran, Donald “Butch” Van Deursen (78), passed away at home due to a cardiac emergency within 24 hours of responding to fire calls the prior day. As such, it appears that the case would be considered an LODD in accordance with the federal “Hometown Heroes” provisions of the Public Safety Officers Benefit (PSOB). The NJDFS provided the fire chief with LODD info and support, and reported the incident to other state and federal agencies for their follow-up as applicable. This is the 2nd LODD for 2026, and our condolences to the Middlebush FD.

Director Wolk reported that the NJDFS was notified of a Probationary Firefighter LODD on July 10th from the Malaga Fire Co. in Franklin Twp., Gloucester Co. Here, 23-year-old FF Robert Reider was responding in his POV to the station for a fire call, when his truck left the roadway and struck a tree. He suffered traumatic injuries and his fire company diverted there to extricate him and provide life saving measures. He was airlifted to a trauma center, where he remained in critical condition until his passing on July 10th. We provided the fire chief with LODD info and support and reported the incident to other state and federal agencies for their follow-up as applicable. This is the 3rd LODD for 2026, and our condolences to the Malaga FD. The services are scheduled for tomorrow morning, July 17, at Clayton Baptist Church in Clayton, NJ.

Unit K9 Teams attended the annual Firefighters Memorial Service at the NJ Fire Museum in Allentown, Monmouth Co on June 6th. This special event recognized NJ fallen FFs, and honored past DFS K9 Titan with a commemorative engraved paver along their memorial area. K9 Titan was partnered with Fire Inv. Letts from 2012 until his passing in 2023 from a sudden illness. Also, unit staff have been providing operational support to the FIFA World Cup operations, during recent Fan Fest activities in Camden, and also at SI Stadium in Harrison and MetLife Stadium during games.

The NJDFS K9 Teams are scheduled to attend multiple fire and police summer camp programs, to provide the kids with an overview and demonstration of our Ignitable Liquid Detection K9s. These programs are always very well received, and the kids enjoy getting to interact and take photos with our K9s.

Director Wolk reported on the following statistics from the Fire Incident Report Unit. These numbers are 2026 year-to-date as of July 10th:

- *Civilian Burn Reports: 322 (+10 from last week)
- *Fatal Fire Total: 43
(28 residential, 1 high rise, 7 vehicles, 1 condo, 5 apartments, 3 outside)
- *Lithium-Ion Battery Fire: 82
- *School Fires: 40
- *Firefighter Burn Reports: 20
- *Line of Duty Deaths: 3

Deputy Director Louis Kilmer gave a report on the Bureau of Code Enforcement's operational activity for the first half of Calendar Year 2026, covering the period of January 1, 2026, through June 30, 2026.

During the reporting period, Bureau personnel continued to carry out the Division's mission of protecting life and property through the enforcement of the New Jersey Uniform Fire Code. The following statistics reflect the Bureau's inspection, enforcement, permitting, and public service activities:

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Total</u>
Inspections Completed	8,426
Re-Inspections Completed	6,610
Violations Cited	24,352
Event Permits Issued	1,683
Smoke Detector Certificates Issued	1,295
Complaints Investigated	285

During the first six months of 2026, Bureau personnel completed a combined total of 15,036 inspections and re-inspections, demonstrating a continued commitment to ensuring compliance with the New Jersey Uniform Fire Code. These inspection activities resulted in the identification and documentation of 24,352 fire code violations, reflecting the Bureau's proactive approach to identifying and correcting fire and life safety hazards.

In addition to routine enforcement activities, Bureau staff processed 1,683 event permits, helping to ensure the safe operation of public events throughout the State. Personnel also issued 1,295 smoke detector certificates and investigated 285 complaints, providing timely responses to public concerns and supporting the Bureau's public safety mission.

Deputy Director Kilmer reported the following numbers from the Compliance Unit:

*336 Invoices on Suspended Status as of 7/3/2026

*Issued 680 DJ Warning Notice Since January 1, 2026

*Issued 208 Docketed Judgements Since January 1, 2026

*Collected \$3,192,420.55 in Fiscal Year 2026

From the Local Assistance Unit, Deputy Director Kilmer reported that they assisted with the receipt and review of documentation related to shared service agreements between Delaware Township and Lambertville Fire District No. 1, as well as Tewksbury Township, Readington Township, and Raritan Township. The Unit also assumed jurisdiction of the Local Enforcing Agency (LEA) for Brigantine City and Weehawken Township due to the Fire Officials operating with expired Fire Official licenses. They received 117 complaints between January and June 2026. They also resolved 56 complaints, with the remaining 61 complaints currently under review and being addressed; and issued 49 monitoring reports between January and June 2026.

Deputy Director Kilmer reported that the NJDFS Fire Code Specialist has been very busy working on regulations and gave the following statuses on several:

- N.J.A.C. 5:70
 - Adoption Notice under review by the Commissioner's Office.
 - New proposal being drafted, to be submitted after current adoption is finalized.
- N.J.A.C. 5:71
 - Adoption Notice under review by the Governor's Office.
- N.J.A.C. 5:73
 - Adoption Notice under review by the Attorney General's Office.
 - New proposal being drafted, to be submitted after current adoption is finalized.
- N.J.A.C. 5:74
 - New proposal being drafted.
- N.J.A.C. 5:75
 - Adoption Notice under review by Attorney General's Office.

Director Wolk reported that the NJDFS's monitoring is in the process of being revamped to get it on a more regular schedule. They will be working from the towns that have had the longest span of time since being monitored and working forward.

Commissioner Gerard Naylis asked about the NJDFS assuming jurisdiction over Brigantine and Weehawken as outlined in the distributed report. He was wondering if there is a process or timeline by which the NJDFS would plan on returning jurisdiction to the local enforcing agency. Deputy Director Kilmer answered that, as written, it is a five-year period but there are internal discussions being held to examine that timeline. Situations in different towns obviously vary. Commissioner Naylis also asked about the monitoring of sprinkler systems and their equipment, citing a large fire in an assisted living facility in Massachusetts where Omega sprinklers had been recalled approximately 20 years earlier. He urged looking into this proactively to prevent a similar tragedy.

Director Wolk asked that Commissioner Naylis forward this information to him so that they can examine this from an NJDFS perspective and see how they can work towards monitoring this type of thing going forward. Deputy Director Kilmer added that there is certainly a training element to this to ensure fire officials and inspectors are aware of any situation like Commissioner Naylis described. Commissioner George Aleu asked if there was a specific check-box on the report if there was a recall when doing an inspection. Deputy Director Kilmer answered that, whether it is specifically spelled out in the form of a check-box or not, this is a specific type of thing that inspectors need to be looking for. Commissioner Naylis added that this is something the Fire Safety Commission and NJDFS can work together on going forward.

Commissioner Aleu asked about the number of lithium-ion battery fires that Director Wolk had previously reported, and whether there was a breakdown available of what types of occupancies they had taken place in. Director Wolk answered that he didn't have that specific breakdown handy at the moment, but would get it from the Fire Incident Reporting Unit and share it as soon as possible.

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 George Aleu reported that the Codes Advisory Council met on June 25th at the Middlesex County Fire Academy in Sayreville. The minutes of that meeting were distributed in today's meeting packets for all Commission members to review. In addition to the matters already covered during the Division of Fire Safety Activities report, a big topic of discussion at the meeting was the future food truck portal and proposed code language for it.

The next meeting of the Codes Advisory Council is scheduled for August 19th at the Middlesex County Fire Academy in Sayreville at 10 AM.

2. Training and Education Advisory Council

Commissioner Nelson Wiest reported that the Training & Education Advisory Council met on June 16th at the Burlington County Emergency Services Training Center in Westampton. The minutes of that meeting were distributed in today's meeting packets for all Commission members to review.

Commissioner Wiest highlighted the work being done by the subject matter expert groups on the upcoming ProBoard reaccreditation process, as well reminded everyone that the RIC member challenges ended on June 30th.

The next meeting of the Training & Education Advisory Council is scheduled for August 18th at the Burlington County Emergency Services Training Center in Westampton.

3. Statistics and Information Advisory Council

Commissioner Gerard Naylis reported that the fire service's transition to the new NERIS system is ongoing and urged the Commission members to do everything in their power to get all fire departments participating. Commissioner Naylis highlighted the importance and power of the data that the fire service collects. He illustrated the difference between data collection processes and traditions between law enforcement and the fire service – making the point that incident reporting and data collection is the best tool the fire service community can have to advocate for itself. It will result in more resources, support, and funding.

Commissioner Naylis also spoke about the Division of Fire Safety's "Fire Focus" newsletter and working with Charles Lavin on developing and supplying educational content for the fire service going forward. He also suggested putting in timely notices for the fire service's information when the need should arise.

Director Wolk added that there is now 81% participation statewide in the NERIS reporting system, which is obviously not where we want to end up numbers-wise but it is headed in the right direction. There was a discussion on the mandating of reporting statewide and the difficulty of getting to that point.

4. Master Planning and Research Advisory Council

Commissioner Lawrence Wood reported that no meeting was held since the previous Fire Safety Commission meeting, so there was no formal report to be given. Commissioner Wood reported progress.

5. Public Education Advisory Council

In the absence of Commissioner Armando Roman, no formal report was available at this time.

6. Firefighter Safety and Health Advisory Council

In the absence of Commissioner Richard Blohm, no formal report was available at this time. Commissioner Blohm did supply the minutes of the most recent meeting of the Firefighter Safety and Health Advisory Council for today's meeting packets. They are available for all to review.

7. Youth Firesetting Prevention Advisory Council

Commissioner Kathleen O'Leary reported that the Youth Firesetting Prevention Advisory Council had not met since the previous Fire Safety Commission meeting in May.

However, Commissioner O’Leary reported that two Youth Firesetting Prevention & Intervention Specialist classes were successfully held the week of June 8-11 in Ocean and Union Counties. Approximately 40 students completed the course. Also, Commissioner O’Leary reported that the NJDFS continues to put together the 23rd Annual Anthony R. Braig Conference on Youth Firesetting - scheduled for December 3rd and 4th at Middlesex County Fire Academy. Registration information for the two-day event will be available at the September meeting.

The next meeting of the Youth Firesetting Prevention Advisory Council was scheduled for September 16th at 10 AM and will be held virtually.

G. Committee Reports

1. Residential Sprinkler Committee

Commissioner Gerard Naylis reported that there was nothing new from the Residential Sprinkler Committee at this time and reported progress.

2. Ad-Hoc Committee on Legislation

Commissioner Raymond Heck reported that, it being summer, there was nothing to report on related to legislation concerning the fire service. He will have something at the Wildwood meeting in September.

3. NJ Statewide Utility Safety Team

Commissioner Steve O’Gorman reported that the Team recently created a video for the forest fire service to raise awareness of utilities present in the areas where they are working and responding.

Commissioner O’Gorman also asked if there was a representative from the New Jersey Forest Fire Service that attends Fire Safety Commission meetings regularly. There being none, he asked that the Division of Fire Safety extend an invite to them and share the meeting schedule going forward. Director Wolk agreed and would direct his staff to do so.

Commissioner George Aleu asked if the NJ Statewide Utility Safety Team was looking into the large fiberglass telephone poles that are now starting to go up. Commissioner O’Gorman answered that they would look into it going forward.

4. Electric Vehicles Working Group

In the absence of Vice-Chairman John Wisniewski, no formal report was available at this time.

5. Recruit Firefighter Physical Agility Program

Commissioner Nelson Wiest asked that Secretary Charles Lavin distribute the final draft document that the Committee has put together on the recruit firefighter agility assessment for all Commission members to review. Once everyone has had a chance to review the document and the fire service has had a chance to voice their questions and concerns at the upcoming meetings, the Commission members will be able to vote on it at the September meeting. Commissioner Wiest thanked all those present who have assisted with this document, including NJDFS staff and the Commissioners themselves.

Director Wolk reported that two public meetings have been scheduled to discuss the Recruit Firefighter Physical Agility Program. They will both have a Zoom option for remote participation, and the link/sign-in information will be provided to all and posted on the Kean Fire Safety website. The in-person meetings will be as follows:

August 5th – 7pm – Bergen County Fire Academy

August 12th – 7pm – Burlington County Fire Academy

H. Old Business

Chairman Krushinski opened up the meeting to discuss any Old Business. There being none, the meeting was moved to New Business.

I. New Business

Chairman Krushinski took this opportunity to thank Chief Kyle Costable and the Surf City Volunteer Fire Department for hosting today's meeting. He also thanked Charlie Lind and the New Jersey Deputy Fire Chief Association for providing the refreshments and former State Fire Marshal Mikutsky for taking care of all the on-site setup.

Chairman Krushinski appointed Commissioner George Aleu as the Chairman of the Codes Advisory Council, and Commissioner Peter Goldring as Vice-Chairman.

Commissioner Gerard Naylis called everyone's attention to the new training that is being put out by Underwriters Laboratories on lithium-ion batteries. This training is free and can be found at the UL website.

There being no further New Business to discuss, 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. Chief Robert Tharp from the Florence Fire Department spoke to strongly support the Recruit Firefighters Agility Assessment program. Chief Tharp added that this should be a no-brainer to support for the Fire Safety Commission, for the benefit of both the career and volunteer fire service alike.

Anthony Correia from Burlington County spoke in agreement with Chief Tharp and commented that he is glad to see that the NJDFS and Fire Safety Commission has put so much work into this over the years. He gave specific examples of what they do in Burlington County and cited specific examples of the health benefits and safety benefits for firefighters because of the steps taken.

Christopher Weniger submitted a report from the New Jersey Fire and EMS Institute:

“Legislative Activities/Bill Statuses:

*Statewide EMS Plan (S1772/A2384) – Met with Senator Troy Singleton on June 23rd to discussed the proposed plan. Positioned the Institute as an unbiased resource representing street-level clinicians and recommended the necessity of an outside consultant to conduct the study. Senator Singleton is open to our feedback.

*Third-Party Building Inspections (A2137/S3174) – We oppose this bill, which allows bypassing local enforcement. Permit owners, agents, or other persons to elect to contract with private on-site inspection agencies to complete inspections under the construction code; provides for charging of a separate inspection fee. Current code language only allows third-party inspections if the local construction office cannot provide the requested inspection within three days. The proposed bill will allow third-party inspections immediately. Allowing third-party inspections can create issues with proper oversight and set a dangerous precedent. Utilizing external inspectors may create operational inconsistencies and increase the risk of misaligned business practices.

*Single-Exit Stairwell / “One Way Out” Bill (A1536/S2968) – Maintained strong opposition due to occupant and responder safety hazards. Issued follow-up letters to sponsors, initiated outreach to federal representatives, and distributed the IAFC Legislative Action Too to statewide chiefs’ associations. Email sent to state chief organizations to express opposition to this bill to state political leaders.

*Lithium Battery Training Bill (A3946) – Sent a formal letter for this legislation, which explicitly names NJFEMSI as part of the oversight team to develop training.

*Volunteer Stipends (A2038) & Medicaid Reimbursement (S1421) – Letters of support have been successfully processed and transmitted.

*Volunteer Cancer Screening Bill – Currently under active board review to determine the appropriate course of action to support this legislation.

Division of Fire Safety (DFS) Regulatory Updates:

*Monitored the status of submitted comments regarding Incident Management/Safety Officer requirements, adoption of the 2024 International Fire Code, upgrading certifications to licenses, and junior firefighter language updates. All proposals are currently under review at the executive state level, with a 6-month grace period anticipated upon adoption.

Major Accomplishments & Events:

*Legislative Meet and Greet – Successfully hosted an event at the State House on June 11th, engaging with political leaders to promote organizational branding and visibility.

*Insurance Coverage Secured – Securing comprehensive annual general liability coverage.

*League of Municipalities Re-Engagement – Conducted a highly successful meeting on June 24th to revitalize the joint partnership. Collaborated on developing a 1.5-2 hour conference session (“From the Fire Station to Town Hall”), a joint survey for municipal leaders, and an upcoming September educational webinar.

*Federal Advocacy – Initiated plans to conduct virtual briefings with the New Jersey congressional delegation regarding the Congressional Fire Service Institute (CFSI) and federal asset engagement.

Strategic Initiatives & Emerging Issues:

*Strategic Planning Committee – Need to form a dedicated work group to construct a formal, structured strategic plan to define top organizational priorities and establish operational standing committees. Need member engagement to join the committee.

*EMS Representation Expansion – Will be launching a targeted initiative to unify the statewide EMS voice. Planning a comprehensive EMS Meet and Greet to bring together county coordinators, the EMS Task Force, and other EMS personnel throughout the state.

Membership & Public Involvement:

Membership renewal letters will be sent out. We highly encourage emergency service personnel and leaders to join the Institute. Individual member dues are \$10 annually, which allows full participation in standing and special committees. Membership applications are available on the website: www.NJFEMSI.org. The next meeting is September 19th at the Wildwood Convention Center at 1:30pm”

Paul Dansbach spoke about the potential information being sent out from the Division of Fire Safety regarding a recall on sprinkler heads/sprinkler systems that was discussed earlier in the meeting. He urged caution on generalizing the information to a particular company, especially since this issue goes back many many years.

K. Adjournment

With no further discussion requested, Chairman Kevin Krushinski called for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Naylis made the motion, which was seconded by Commissioner Aleu and passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 11:13 AM.

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