



Codes and Standards for a Safer World

Safety is “Everybody’s Business”

Disasters can occur anywhere, and they often occur when we least expect them. Fortunately, **NFPA codes and standards** are there to provide us with ways to prevent their occurrence and protect us. One of the most notable features about NFPA’s codes and standards making process is that it is a full, open, consensus- based process. “Full Consensus” means that everybody can participate and expect fair and equal treatment. This is because **safety is everybody’s business.**

A Uniquely Open Process

Today’s NFPA codes and standards trace their origins to the nineteenth-century development of automatic sprinklers. From the beginning, sprinklers performed well as extinguishing devices; however, they originally were installed in so many different ways that their reliability was uncertain.

In 1895, a small group of concerned citizens representing sprinkler and fire insurance interests gathered in Boston, Massachusetts, USA to discuss these inconsistencies. They knew that nine radically different standards for piping size and sprinkler spacing could be found within 100 miles of the city. This plumber’s nightmare had to be resolved.

NFPA’s unique code development process incorporates a balance of interests, ensuring that all affected parties have a voice.

The group eventually created a standard for the uniform installation of sprinklers. This standard, which eventually became NFPA 13, “Standard for the Installation of Sprinkler Systems,” was NFPA’s first safety document. Today some 300 safety related codes and standards are maintained by the NFPA.

NFPA codes and standards can be found in use throughout the world. Whether it’s in a computer room in the Pentagon, a research station in Antarctica, a power plant in the Middle East, the space shuttle, or perhaps a historical library in Scotland, NFPA codes and standards are used to provide safety to life and protection of property.

What the NFPA Codes and Standards Process Can Do for You.

Who is the NFPA?

Founded in 1896, the NFPA grew out of that first meeting on sprinkler standards. The Bylaws of the Association that were first established in 1896 embody the spirit of the codes and standards development process and, in Article 2, state in part:

“The purposes of the Association shall be to promote the science and improve the methods of fire protection and prevention, electrical safety and other related safety goals; to obtain and circulate information and promote education and research on these subjects; and to secure the cooperation of its members and the public in establishing proper safeguards against loss of life and property.”

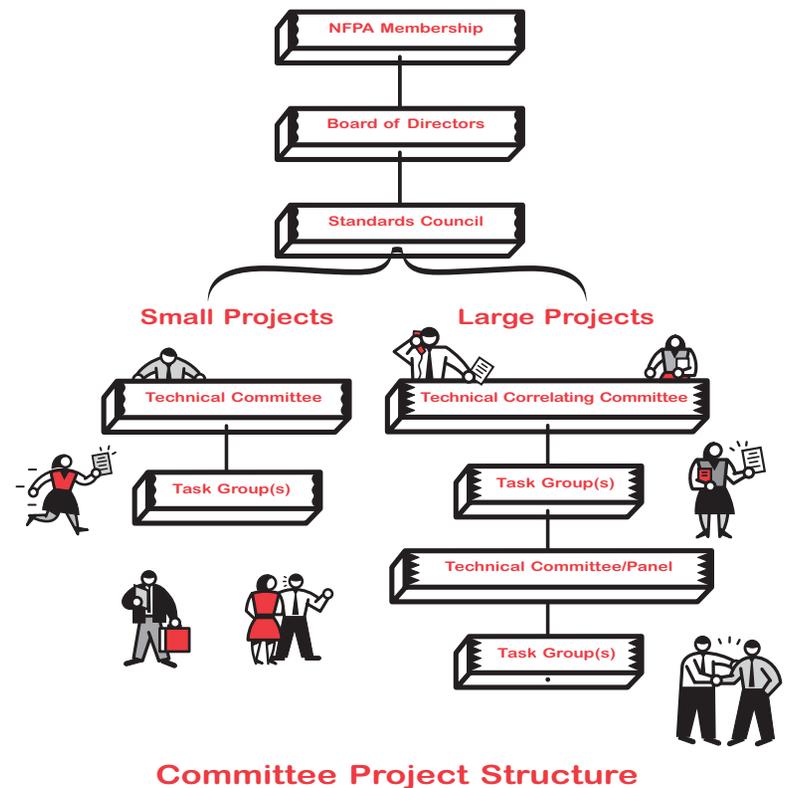
The NFPA mission today is accomplished by advocating scientifically based consensus codes and standards, research, and education for safety related issues. NFPA’s *National Fire Codes*® are administered by more than 225 technical committees comprised of approximately 6,500 volunteers, and are adopted and enforced throughout the world. NFPA is a nonprofit membership organization with more than 75,000 members from 70 nations, all working together to fulfill the Association’s mission.

What type of people are NFPA members? The NFPA membership is comprised of architects and engineers (8%); business and industry (20%); health care facilities (11%); fire service (24%); insurance (6%); federal, state and local government (7%); safety equipment manufacturers and distributors (6%); trade and professional associations (2%); and other fields and disciplines (16%).

For more than one hundred years, NFPA has kept in step with the needs of the international safety community, serving as an authoritative source for information, technology, and timely research.

The Making of an NFPA Code or Standard

The NFPA Board of Directors has general charge of all NFPA activities, and they have final approval on the Regulations Governing Committee Projects (published in NFPA’s annual Directory), under which all committees involved in making NFPA codes and standards operate. The Board also appoints a 13-person Standards Council to oversee the Association’s codes and standards development activities and regulations. Members of the Standards Council are intimately familiar with the codes and standards development functions of the Association and are selected from a broad range of appropriate interests. The Secretary of the Council is a member of the Association staff and a nonvoting member of the Council.

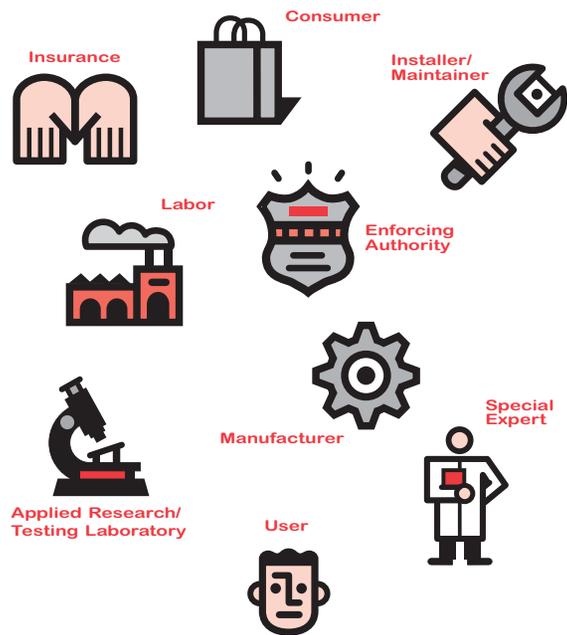


Starting a New Project

Anyone can submit a proposal for a new safety related project. Such requests are forwarded to the Standards Council for a preliminary review. If deemed appropriate, the Council directs that a notice be published in a variety of publications, including *NFPA News*, one of the Association's membership newsletters. This announcement asks for:

- *comments on the proposed project;*
- *information on organizations that may be involved in the subject matter of the proposed project;*
- *a listing of available resource material; and*
- *an indication of who is willing to participate in the project if it is approved by the Standards Council.*

The Standards Council then reviews the proposed project and any public comments generated by the announcement.



Classification of Committee Members

Establishing the Consensus Body

If the Standards Council does determine the need for the proposed project, it either assigns the project to an existing technical committee or establishes a new committee. Regardless of whether the committee is new or is one already in existence, its membership reflects a balanced representation of affected interests.

One way NFPA achieves this balance is by classifying each committee member by different categories reflecting his/her interest. These categories are summarized on the facing page. The committee is purposely structured so that *a single interest is not represented by more than one-third of the committee*. The Standards Council also assigns a scope of activity to each committee to avoid conflict or duplication of effort.

If the project is large enough to span the scope of more than one committee, the Council may appoint a technical correlating committee. As shown in the chart on preceding page 3, a correlating committee directs the activities of the technical committees that have the primary responsibility for the development and revision of documents assigned to them. The technical correlating committee makes sure that there are no conflicts between the technical committees, and that all material developed by the applicable technical committees are consistent with each other.

The mission of the nonprofit NFPA is to reduce the burden of fire and other hazards on the quality of life by providing and advocating scientifically-based consensus codes and standards, research, and education.

With regard to new codes and standards, once the technical committee is in place, it will develop an initial draft of the new document. The process then becomes essentially the same, whether it's the development of a new document or the revision of an existing document. Either way, NFPA will issue public notices—which appear in *NFPA News*, U.S. Federal Register, the American National Standards Institute's *Standards Action*, and relevant national and international trade journals—asking for any interested persons to submit specific proposals to be included in the document. Interested parties have approximately twenty-four weeks to respond to this Call for Proposals.

The Document Revision/ Development Process

At first glance, the NFPA codes and standards process may seem complex. Yet the essence of this process is comprised of four basic steps:

- 1) *Report on Proposals (ROP);*
- 2) *Report on Comments (ROC);*
- 3) *NFPA May and November Meetings (Association Meeting);*
- 4) *Standards Council Issuance.*

Each of these steps provides ample opportunity for anyone to participate and to pursue a proposed change. Safety is everybody's business, and only a process that allows full consensus on technical safety issues will generate highly credible and respected documents. The NFPA codes and standards making system is such a process.

Step 1 - Report on Proposals

Following the Call for Proposals period, the technical committee holds a meeting to consider all the submitted proposals and listen to anyone wishing to address the committee. The committee also develops its own proposals and incorporates them into its report. With respect to public proposals, if the committee revises or rejects a proposal in whole or in part, it must include the reason for the change. *All* public proposals for the document, without exception, are acted upon by the committee.

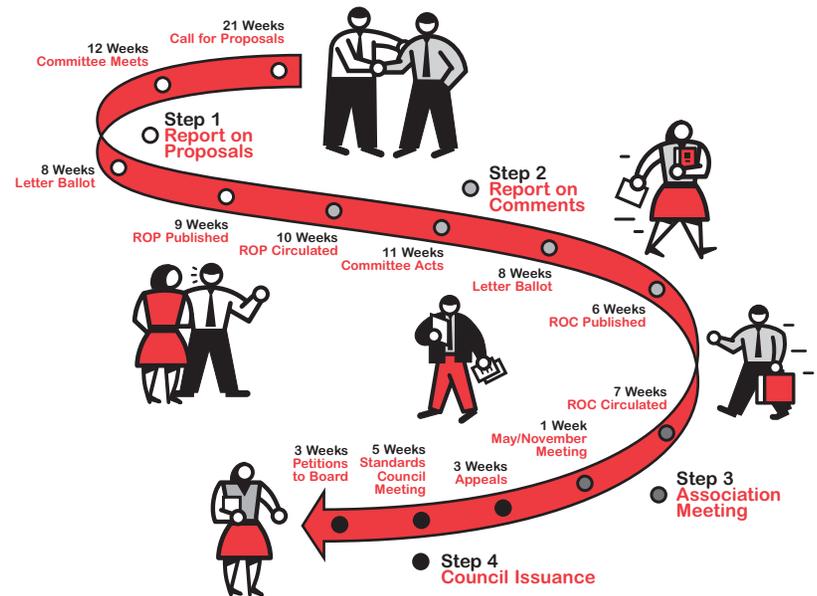
The committee report is then published in a document called the Report on Proposals (ROP). The committee members are required to approve their report by ROP letter ballot. If two-thirds of all committee members eligible to vote approve, the process continues to the next step. If the committee's ROP ballot does not receive two-thirds approval, its report in the ROP returns to the committee and is not published.

The ROPs are published twice a year, and they include the ROP reports of all the documents being processed in that particular revision cycle. Once the committee's report is successfully balloted by the technical committee, all the proposals are then published in the ROP. These ROPs are sent automatically free of charge to all who submitted proposals and each respective committee member, as well as anyone else who requests a copy.

Step 2 - Report on Comments

Once the ROP becomes available, there is a 60-day comment period during which anyone may submit a public comment on the proposed changes in the ROP. Blank public comment forms are included in the front of the ROP publication. The committee then reconvenes at the end of the 60-day period and acts on all comments. Once again the meeting is open to anyone who wishes to address the committee.

As before, a two-thirds approval vote by letter ballot of the eligible members of the committee is required for approval of actions on the comments. The committee must again publish reasons for revising or rejecting any public comment. All of this information is compiled into a second publication, this time called the Report on Comments (ROC), which is again made available to anyone for review for a seven-week period. Like the ROPs, the ROCs are also published twice a year, and they include all the ROC reports of the documents in that particular revision cycle.



**Codes and Standards Making Process
104 Weeks Total**

Step 3 - NFPA May and November Meetings (Association Meetings)

The separate printed portions of the ROP and ROC that were generated by a specific committee on their assigned code or standard is referred to as the “Technical Committee’s Report.” This overall report is then given by the technical committee at the NFPA Association Membership Meeting in May, or in November, and thus allow further public review and open debate of the committee’s action.

Anyone, regardless of whether he or she is an NFPA member or not, may attend the May or November Meeting and present his/her views on the Technical Committee Report. The only amendments that may be proposed from the floor at an NFPA May or November Meeting are those that have been previously published as proposals in the ROP or comments in the ROC. The proposer of the amendment must be either the submitter of the original proposal or comment, or a duly authorized representative.

Anyone, however, may propose that an entire committee report be returned to the committee. Furthermore, anyone may propose that a portion of an ROP or ROC be returned to the wording in the previous edition of the document, assuming there has been a change in that portion of the document between the release of the ROP and the release of the ROC.

After the debate, the NFPA membership votes to recommend either the approval, amendment, return of a portion of the report to the committee, or return of the entire report to the committee. However, only NFPA members of record for at least 180 days may vote on the membership recommendation to adopt the reports. The technical committee then is letter balloted on any amendments made at the NFPA May or November Meeting to further establish its viewpoint.

Codes and Standards Development Facts

- Almost 6,500 volunteers serve on NFPA Technical Committees.
- Each Technical Committee has up to 30 voting member representing a variety of interests.
- Approximately 250 different Technical Committees are responsible for document development.

Step 4 - Standards Council Issuance

As already mentioned, the Standards Council is the 13-member body appointed by the NFPA Board of Directors to oversee the entire codes and standards making system. One of its primary responsibilities is to assure that due process and fairness are upheld throughout the creation or revision of all NFPA codes, standards, and related documents.

Among its various duties, one of the most significant is that the Council is the issuer of all NFPA codes and standards. Following the public input and vote of the NFPA membership at an NFPA May or November meeting, the Standards Council will meet and consider appeals on any unresolved issues. The entire process takes approximately two full years to complete.

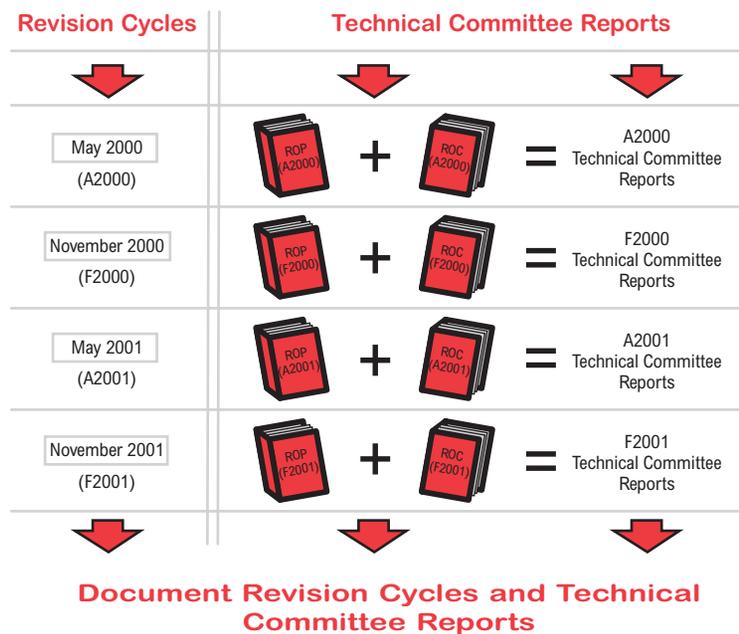
Documents are typically issued by the Council without question unless someone brings forth an appeal within 20 days of the May or November Meeting. Each year, the Council hears approximately 2 to 3 dozen appeals on various issues. Equal time is given for arguments that are made at these hearings by those supporting and opposing the appeal. Based on the entire record before it, the Council adjudicates all outstanding items and then issues the documents.

This process has evolved after more than 100 years, and delivers full consensus technical codes and standards that aptly serve the needs of society. Many examples offer testimony to the inherent strength of this process. For instance, NFPA codes and standards have been involved with all levels of judicial scrutiny (including the U.S. Supreme Court), lending further credence to the Association’s tradition of openness and fairness. This and other characteristics provide a proven track record that this process works and works well.

Whether it’s a new or existing document, all revisions to an NFPA code or standard must go through the same consensus-based public review process.

Codes and Standards Development Facts

- Codes and Standards are wholly revised every three to five years.
- The Life Safety Code® and National Electrical Code® are in use in all 50 states in the U.S. and in numerous other countries.



A particular document's revision cycle is identified by the date when it is scheduled to report before the general NFPA membership at an Association Meeting (see step 3). This is used to designate which ROP and ROC contains the applicable proposals and comments. For example, if a particular code is presenting its report at the May 2002 Association Meeting (i.e., step 3), then the Technical Committee's Report is comprised of all of the proposals on that document in the "A2002-ROP" and all of the comments in the "A2002-ROC".

It takes approximately 2 years (104 weeks) for an NFPA document to complete a revision cycle. All NFPA codes and standards have their revision cycles scheduled so that a new edition is issued at least every 3 years, but no longer than every 5 years.

NFPA provides free training to building and fire officials as part of its code adoption services

Sequence of Events Leading to Issuance of an NFPA Committee Document

Step - 1 Report on Proposals (ROP)

- ▼ Call for Proposals to amend existing document or for recommendations on a new document.
- ▼ Committee meets to act on Proposals, to develop its own Proposals, and to prepare its Report.
- ▼ Committee votes by letter ballot on Proposals. If two-thirds approve, Report goes forward. Lacking two-thirds approval, Report returns to Committee.
- ▼ Report is published for public review and comment (*Report on Proposals—ROP*).

Step - 2 Report on Comments (ROC)

- ▼ Committee meets to act on public comments to develop its own comments, and to prepare its report.
- ▼ Committee votes by letter ballot on comments. If two-thirds approve, Supplementary Reports goes forward. Lacking two-thirds approval, Supplementary Reports return to Committee.
- ▼ Supplementary Report is published for public review (*Report on Comments—ROC*).

Step - 3 Association Meetings

- ▼ NFPA membership meets (May or November Meeting) and acts on Committee Report (ROP and ROC).
- ▼ Committee votes on any amendments to Report approved at NFPA May or November Membership Meeting.

Step - 4 Standards Council Issuance

- ▼ Notification of intent to file an appeal to the Standards Council on Association action must be filed within 20 days of the NFPA May or November Membership Meeting.
- ▼ Standards Council decides, based on all evidence, whether or not to issue code or standard or to take other action, including hearing any appeals.

Why NFPA Documents are “State-of-the Art”

NFPA documents are constantly evolving based on extensive public input and the dedicated involvement of highly qualified committee volunteers. NFPA Technical Committees and others work to keep their documents current with the latest knowledge and technologies, and this is greatly facilitated by state-of-the-art resources available through NFPA. The following discussion offers ten distinct examples of NFPA resources that help make NFPA documents “state-of-the-art”, and ultimately, to help achieve the NFPA’s mission of making the world a better place to live:

1) Statistical Data

The **NFPA One-Stop-Data-Shop** (OSDS) is the NFPA statistical data archive that publishes reports measuring the size and characteristics of a certain safety related problem. The data from the OSDS is utilized for the compilation of customized data which may be requested by technical committees regarding a specific hazard or safety issue. The OSDS uses data from NFPA’s annual survey, the United States Fire Administration’s National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS), and various other fire data resources from around the world. Anecdotal information is available from NFPA’s Fire Incident Data Organization (FIDO).

2) Event Analysis

The **NFPA Fire Investigations Department** conducts on-site investigations of disasters or near-disasters occurring all around the world in order to provide new information as to the effectiveness and actual application of NFPA codes and standards. After completing a thorough investigation of an incident site, the department publishes a comprehensive report on that particular incident. The report includes a thorough analysis of the event (e.g., fire or explosion) focusing on how NFPA codes and standards were utilized, the effectiveness of these guidelines during the event, and how NFPA codes and standards might have provided additional protection in cases where the documents were not followed.

3) Research

The **Fire Protection Research Foundation** (FPRF) is an integral part of the NFPA codes and standards making process. The FPRF continually conducts independent research on risk based technologies and strategies. Research reports are constantly being published and are utilized by technical committees as a primary resource for pertinent up-to-date information. From time to time, technical committees will directly seek specific research to be done

regarding the subject covered by their document. The FPRF will determine whether or not the specific study has been done before, and if it has not, they can facilitate obtaining the needed information from research, testing, consulting, or other institutions.

4) Empowerment Through Education

The **NFPA Public Education Division** produces quality safety materials suited to every age group and developed through a rigorous process that includes review and input from technical, educational and creative experts.

The newest addition to NFPA’s educational product line is **Risk Watch™**, a school-based all-injury prevention curriculum. Risk Watch brings together schools, fire and police departments, SAFE KIDS® Coalitions, and other community safety advocates to teach important safety measures for children in preschool through grade eight: The subjects covered include safety issues involving: fires and burns; motor vehicle crashes; choking; suffocation and strangulation; poisonings; falls; unintentional firearms incidents; bike and pedestrian hazards; and water hazards.

To address the needs of people most at risk, NFPA’s Education Division has established the **Center for High Risk Outreach**. The Center integrates high-risk initiatives with broad-based public education programs for use in areas where they are needed most.

NFPA is the official sponsor of **Fire Prevention Week** each year to increase public awareness of the importance of fire safety education. Fire Prevention week is held throughout the U.S. and Canada during the week of October 9, to commemorate the anniversary of the Great Chicago Fire. For more than 70 years, NFPA has established the theme and developed the proclamation signed by the President of the United States each year. NFPA also devotes resources to a campaign of theme-related products and materials to help communities promote local programs related to Fire Prevention Week.

5) Literature Archives

The **Charles S. Morgan Technical Library** is one of the main resources utilized by the technical committees to obtain both current and archival information pertinent to any particular code or standard. The library comprises the largest collection in the United States dealing with fire safety, and it is one of the largest of its kind in the world. Included is a comprehensive collection of over 3000 books, 6500 technical reports, 200 periodicals, films, videocassettes, and NFPA-published archives dating from the Association’s founding in 1896.

6) Member Conferences

NFPA's **World Fire Safety Congress and Exposition™** takes place each May, and the Fall Professional Education Conference is held every November. In addition to featuring guest speakers and technical programs, these meetings provide a forum for the general public to participate in the code- and standards-making system, and NFPA's membership with an opportunity to vote on codes and standards.

7) Worldwide Communications

The **NFPA Website** provides direct support for the codes and standards process, including the online submission of proposals and comments. Simply access the NFPA website at www.nfpa.org/Codes/index.asp. One of the most useful features of the website is the ability to track a particular code or standard of interest, including current revision cycle and processing deadlines, along with additional related information.

8) Community Partnerships

To better serve the safety community, other constituents, and its members, NFPA has established **Regional Offices** throughout North America, and an **International Operations Department** which has offices in South America and Asia. NFPA endeavors to reach every audience with necessary safety information, and publishes a wide range of handbooks, reference books, textbooks, videos, field guides, and training manuals.

9) Advisory Service

NFPA's 40-person **Technical and Engineering Staff** serve as the staff liaisons to the NFPA Technical Committees that develop the codes and standards. These staff members are available to answer questions about the codes and standards as well as to provide guidance on other fire, electrical, and life safety issues. Each year, the staff handles tens of thousands of inquiries.

10) Higher Learning

The **Continuing Education Department** conducts specialized training seminars and workshops on NFPA codes and standards, and other safety-related subjects. These popular sessions are offered to the general public but are often also specially customized for a particular audience. Training seminars and workshops occur regularly around the world, and provide the latest information on the application of NFPA codes and standards as well as other state-of-the-art safety-related technology.

How NFPA Codes and Standards are Used

NFPA codes and standards become more widely adopted each year as increasing numbers of government, insurance, and industry officials, and others recognize the scope of the world's tragedies, and use NFPA resources to deal with them. Today, many millions throughout the world are protected by these codes and standards.

NFPA codes and standards are developed or used in numerous ways. For example, NFPA aviation documents are referenced by airports throughout the globe. As a further example, in the United States scores of NFPA codes and standards have been referenced by the federal government's Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the Veterans Administration, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Defense, and other federal agencies.

NFPA develops "full consensus" codes and standards — codes and standards built on a foundation of maximum participation and substantial agreement by a broad variety of interests. This philosophy has led to the production of reasonable codes and standards that provide adequate protection to the public, yet do not stifle design or development. The results are technical codes and standards that truly represent society's acceptance of risk toward safety related disasters.

NFPA prides itself in supporting a flexible system that depends largely on volunteers and therefore produces safety related codes and standards at no cost to taxpayers. But the process doesn't stop with the completion of a code or a standard. The rapid pace of technology creates a need for frequent updating of information, and NFPA's system has a built-in mechanism for such regular updating.

Safety is everybody's business. Everyone deserves to be heard when it comes to safety. That's why after more than 100 years the NFPA codes and standards process has evolved into one of the fairest and most effective technical document development systems the world has ever seen.

Further Information

For further information on the NFPA codes and standards making process, please visit the NFPA homepage at “www.nfpa.org” or consult the current edition of the “NFPA Directory.” The homepage and the Directory contain the Regulations Governing Committee Projects, an updated schedule of the NFPA May and November Meetings, the Guide for the Conduct of Participants in the NFPA Codes and Standards Development Process, and other important codes and standards development related information.

General information on the National Fire Protection Association can be obtained by contacting:

NFPA’s Site on the World Wide Web

Uniform Resource Locator (URL): <http://www.nfpa.org>

NFPA Headquarters

One Batterymarch Park, Quincy, MA USA 02269-9101

Phone: 617-770-3000 (until 5:00 PM EST)

Fax: 617-770-3500

E-Mail – General Inquiries: library@nfpa.org.

NFPA Customer Service/Membership

Phone: 800-344-3555 (until 8:00 PM EST)

Phone: 617-770-3000 (outside U.S. & Canada)

Fax: 800-593-6372 (from U.S. & Canada)

Fax: 617-984-7057 (outside U.S. & Canada)

NFPA International Department

Departamento Internacional - In Spanish / en español

Phone: 617-984-7700

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To submit proposals or comments on NFPA documents, or other technical inquiries, contact:

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Fax: 617-770-3500



An international nonprofit membership organization established in 1896 and dedicated to reducing the burden of fire and other hazards on the quality of life by providing and advocating scientifically-based consensus codes and standards, research, and education.

Publishers of the National Fire Codes®, including the National Electrical Code® and the Life Safety Code®.