

NASFM Survey on Fire Protection Engineers in State Fire Marshal's Offices

Results – February 2003

In Fall 2002, a poll was distributed electronically to NASFM Members to survey their use and interest in Fire Protection Engineers. Following is a copy of the questionnaire along with the accumulated responses.

Thirty-five out of fifty-one states and districts (69%) responded to the survey. Fifteen of the responses (43%) included comments, some in places where they were not requested. These comments are listed for each question separately following the questionnaire.

In summary, the answers to the questions posed were as follows:

1. 39% of the responses indicated an FPE on staff.
2. There was a fairly even distribution of the listed uses of FPEs by SFM offices.
3. The predominant reason for not having an FPE was lack of funding (57%)
4. 85% indicated an increased future need for FPEs
5. 77% indicated NASFM should have access to FPE expertise.
6. 84% indicated an interest in an Annual Conference presentation on the subject.
7. 77% indicated that their state licenses FPEs

The following page is a copy of the survey with the response statistics indicated. Specific written comments are on the last two pages.

NASFM Survey on Fire Protection Engineers in State Fire Marshal's Offices

[Note: For this survey, a Fire Protection Engineer (FPE) is a person with a Bachelor's or Master's degree in Fire Protection Engineering.]

1. Do you have an FPE on your staff?

Yes __14 (39%) No __22 (61%) (If No, please go to Question # 3.)

2. How does your office use the FPE? (Please indicate all that apply.)

__9__ Code enforcement
 __4__ Fire investigation
 __10__ Evaluation of performance-based fire safety submissions
 __10__ In-house training
 __5__ Other - please describe: _____

Please go to Question # 4.

3. Why does your office not have an FPE? (Please indicate all that apply.)

__1__ No need for this expertise in our office.
 __4__ Inadequate access to FPE educational opportunities in our area.
 __17__ Inadequate funding to support a staff FPE.
 __8__ Other - please describe: _____

4. Do you perceive an increased need for FPEs in your office in the next 5 years?

Yes __29 (85%) No __5 (15%)

5. Should NASFM, as an organization, have in-house access to a contracted FPE to assist with activities such as addressing technical issues of interest to NASFM or participation on technical committees of other organizations, e.g., UL, NFPA, SFPE, ASTM, ICC, etc.?

Yes __23 (77%) No __7 (23%)

6. Would you be interested in a presentation at our next Annual Conference about FPEs in SFM offices and ideas on how to get funding/approval to hire them.?

Yes __27 (84%) No __5 (16%)

7. Does your State recognize Fire Protection Engineering as a profession? That is, can an FPE be licensed as a Professional Engineer (PE) in Fire Protection Engineering in your State?

Yes __27 (77%) No __4 (11%) Don't know __4 (11%)

Thank you for your cooperation.

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RESPONSE COMMENTS

1. Do you have an FPE on your staff?

2. How does your office use the FPE? (Please indicate all that apply.)

Other duties as assigned.

Reviews fire suppression sprinkler plans / he does not have a degree but has the knowledge and abilities.

Code applications

Currently have two troopers training / studying to obtain FPE for computer fire modeling.

Plan review

Plans review and regional manager

We have an FPE on staff but use no differently than our other PEs. They all do fire protection work including plans review and construction approval.

3. Why does your office not have an FPE? (Please indicate all that apply.)

Had one / lost position

FPE transferred to another state agency

We have an individual who through various certifications qualifies to perform the duties of an FPE and is currently seeking licensure as an FPE in the state.

Job qualifications require a degree and experience. The degree is not restricted to any one discipline.

No statewide code to enforce, local jurisdictions only except for licensed childcare facilities.

FPE not recognized in the state. A new job title is needed, requiring years of effort.

We lost our FPE because we could not stay competitive in salary and other worker amenities.

4. Do you perceive an increased need for FPEs in your office in the next 5 years?

Only if statewide codes could be adopted and passed.

We will be involved in performance-based design but have not been hit with one yet.

5. Should NASFM, as an organization, have in-house access to a contracted FPE to assist with activities such as addressing technical issues of interest to NASFM or participation on technical committees of other organizations, e.g., UL, NFPA, SFPE, ASTM, ICC, etc.?

As long as they can remain neutral and not support one organization over another, i.e., the natural leaning of NASFM toward NFPA vs. ICC.

They are an excellent resource.

Don't think necessary, can't you borrow one from someone as needed?

Not sure. Why not have your FPE available via contract for use by SFMs who can't afford a full time staff member?

Need more research information to support need?

If we can afford it and other priorities are covered.

It depends on the FPE.

I believe NASFM members should be more visible and take a more active role in being involved with these committees, it should not be a job that is passed on to a consultant or contractor. If NASFM feels it needs technical assistance, I suggest use the Science Advisory Committee for this expertise. I am truly concerned that NASFM is being viewed as not taking leadership on issues, but being led by special interests. This is a perception I hear in many arenas about our organization. Myth or not it is still the perception. We have many talented individuals in the organization, however, not all are being used for their expertise and connections.

6. Would you be interested in a presentation at our next Annual Conference about FPEs in SFM offices and ideas on how to get funding/approval to hire them.?

Not particularly.

7. Does your State recognize Fire Protection Engineering as a profession? That is, can an FPE be licensed as a Professional Engineer (PE) in Fire Protection Engineering in your State?

State does not register PEs by discipline.

State does give the FPE exam but does not separate it from other PEs as a separate license. All of us are licensed as Professional Engineers.