



# NASFM News

National Association of  
State Fire Marshals

January 2014

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## MARK YOUR CALENDAR!



**NASFM Board of Directors Meetings**  
February 13, 2014  
April 30, 2014

**26th Annual National Fire & Emergency Services Dinner**

## One Strong, United Voice for Fire Prevention

### [Register](#) Now for the NASFM 2014 Annual Conference!

Online [registration](#) is now open for the 2014 NASFM Annual Conference and 25th Anniversary Celebration, to be held at the Tradewinds Island Resorts in St. Pete Beach, Florida, July 28-30, 2014. The link to the registration and additional conference details can be found on the NASFM website at



<http://www.firemarshals.org/events/events.html>.

With a theme of "Looking Back to the Future," NASFM is planning an education-packed conference that addresses many of the responsibilities of State Fire Marshals, including public fire safety education, code enforcement, fire investigation, management of the wildland-urban interface, and fire incident data collection.

This year, our exhibition is planned for the afternoon of Monday, July 28, to give our members an opportunity to interact with organizations that have programs, products and services that can help them do their jobs better. An Exhibitor Reception is planned for the evening of July 28, immediately following the exhibit time.

A special 25th Anniversary Celebration has been planned for the afternoon of Tuesday, July 29. The event will feature participation by some of NASFM's Past Presidents and a look back at NASFM's past quarter-century as well as a look ahead to the future of the organization and its mission in a changing world. A luau for all attendees is being planned for the evening of July 29 by host State Fire Marshal Julius Halas and his staff that will ensure a relaxing and fun end to the day's festivities.

May 1, 2014  
Washington, DC

NASFM Annual  
Conference  
July 28-30, 2014  
St. Pete Beach,  
Florida

## Quick Links

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Each day of the conference will feature an educational luncheon presentation by a Platinum Sponsor. Throughout the conference there will be other opportunities to recognize and thank conference sponsors at all levels of contribution.

As always, State Fire Marshals will have the opportunity to share and network among themselves at State Fire Marshal-only breakfasts each day of the conference. In addition, a special [bonus](#) session for State Fire Marshal-only discussion has been planned for the last afternoon of the conference.

NASFM invites sponsors, exhibitors and all attendees to [register](#) as soon as possible by clicking the registration link on the site <http://www.firemarshals.org/events/events.html> to take advantage of the best rates and to ensure your seat at the table for what promises to be a memorable conference!

## NASFM Foundation Issues Report on Addressing Lack of Fire Causes in NFIRS: Start by "Closing the Loop"



Updating fire incident data reports when fire departments obtain new information, such as fire investigation results, could have the largest impact of any activity on reducing the high percentage of serious fires reported as having undetermined causal data,

according to a report released today by the National Association of State Fire Marshals Fire Research and Education Foundation (the NASFM Foundation). The NASFM Foundation refers to this activity as "Closing the Loop" on a fire incident report.

With a 2011 Fire Prevention & Safety grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Assistance to Firefighters [Grants](#) program, the NASFM Foundation's research focused on addressing the problem of "unknowns" in the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) - specifically, undetermined and/or missing data about causes of fires in NFIRS. This problem seems to be especially prevalent for more serious fires, particularly those involving fatalities.

"Without a true picture of the causes of fires, decisions based on NFIRS data are negatively affected," said J. William Degnan, NASFM Foundation President and New Hampshire State Fire Marshal. "All levels of government, from local fire departments to state and federal agencies, as well as private organizations, rely on NFIRS data to help with activities such as allocating resources, identifying hazards and risks, developing targeted fire prevention programs and determining training priorities, to name just a few."

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In addition to the recommendation on updating fire incident reports when new information surfaces, the report identifies four other recommendations to address the problems identified with undetermined and missing causal factors data in NFIRS:

- "Clear the Litigation Cloud": Some incomplete data for fire cause reflects hesitation due to liability concerns, a factor the report calls the "Litigation Cloud." While this is a difficult situation to address, the report highlights the need to clarify the levels of certainty specified by NFPA 921 Guide for Fire and Explosion Investigations for different types of fire incidents, and points to several activities by states and localities to ease fire departments' liability concerns and to increase the level of expertise devoted to cause determinations and fire investigations.
- "Fill the Black Hole": To address the myth expressed by many fire departments during our research that fire incident data collection is unimportant and that the data ends up in a "Black Hole" that goes nowhere, the report recommends training for chiefs, officers and front-line personnel on the concepts and reasons behind the need for reporting, as well as how fire incident data can be used to advance fire prevention and suppression goals.
- "If the System is Broke, Fix It": The current NFIRS System was viewed by many fire department personnel in our research as overly complex and not user-friendly. The NASFM Foundation recommends that it is time to start developing the "next generation" of NFIRS, which should incorporate modern technology, reflect the situations and environments encountered in today's firefighting, and accommodate the diversity of fire departments' capacities. It should include input from those who enter the data at the department level, as well as those who analyze and use the data at all levels.
- "Put in Quality Data, Take Out Quality Data": To address the lack of quality control and quality [assurance](#) that many fire departments reported when it comes to reporting fire incident data, the NASFM Foundation recommended designating a fire department "Data Champion" and adopting standard operating procedures and guidelines for fire incident data collection; emphasizing the importance of dedicated State NFIRS Program Managers to helping fire departments achieve higher data quality; and revitalizing the National Fire Information Council with a focus on developing strategies and training to improve the quality of the nation's NFIRS data.

"Many of our recommendations rely on the allocation of resources, and a lack of resources is a chronic problem in the fire service, from the smallest volunteer department up to the U.S. Fire Administration itself," Degan said. "But we rely on data for so much of our mission to

keep the public and our firefighters safe, so it is to everyone's advantage to work toward improving the system, our appreciation of the need for data collection, and the accuracy with which reports are [completed](#)."

The NASFM Foundation's research included in-depth interviews with fire department personnel, as well as an online survey of nearly 3,500 fire service representatives involved in the collection of fire incident data for their departments. The report, "Conquering the 'Unknowns': Research and Recommendations on the Chronic Problem of Undetermined and Missing Data in the Causal Factors Sections of the National Fire Incident Reporting System" and its appendices and related material, are at the link:

<http://firemarshals.org/resources/fireincidentdatacollectionresearch.html>.

For more information: Karen Deppa, [kdeppa@firemarshals.org](mailto:kdeppa@firemarshals.org).

## **NASFM Board Endorses "Fire Is" Fire Safety and Survival Program for Middle School Students**

*In 2013 the NASFM Board voted to endorse the "Fire Is" program and encourage NASFM members to adopt it in their states. What follows is an introduction letter about "Fire Is" from Lt. Andy Stratton, Coordinator of the New Jersey "Fire Is" program:*

The "Fire Is" fire safety and survival program is like no other in the United States. Implementation is truly simple, the program is free, and most importantly, it targets not only a seldom-fire-safety-educated target audience (middle school-aged children) but their parents and caregivers as well.

Imagine, your 12-year-old comes home from school with an assignment to log on to [www.njfiresafety.com](http://www.njfiresafety.com) and view five 15-minute fire safety and survival educational videos over a predetermined time-line (typically 1 per month for five months) with their parents/caregivers.

At the conclusion of the lessons, the parents sign off that they all viewed it and the child receives a grade in Science, Health, History, etc. (all are examples of implementation into the curriculum here in NJ). It is that simple.

No cost to the fire department or the school, no games or handouts, no valuable classroom time taken from the teachers, no need to train



the teachers how to teach it, and everyone wins. The parents and the children are educated on the REALITY of what FIRE IS.

Unfortunately, for generations, the fire service has failed their customers in showing them these simple lessons. Fire prevention and survival lessons have seldom gone beyond Sparky the Fire Dog, and Stop, Drop, and Roll. Regrettably, this fact has made the U.S. a world leader in residential fire deaths.

Now, imagine a 2-1/2 story wood frame residence reporting a structure fire at 2 am. A responding engine company that arrives at the home of the uneducated family versus the educated one will be night and day. The company responding to the educated resident will work safer, and most important, our educated customers will be safer. All through simple education.

This program is well under way in NJ as it has been presented to over 400 municipalities. Additionally, the program is now being implemented across New England and most recently, New Hampshire adopted it statewide. Since the implementation of the site began, we have received visits to the Fire Is website from across the U.S., Canada, South America, and Germany.

The website is very user friendly and the videos stream 24/7 in both English and Spanish. There are no copyright restrictions or limitations. There is, however, only one hard-and-fast rule: The program is designed to educate 5th grade aged children and older. This program is intended to supplement the existing pre-K and grade school programs, not replace them.

The "Fire Is" initiative was conceived by Dr. Frank Field, with more than 50 years' experience as science editor, meteorologist and reporter for the local NBC, CBS and Fox networks in New York City. He became passionate about fire prevention in 1987 when he read the alarming statistics regarding civilian fire death and injury rates in the United States.

The New Jersey Firefighters' Mutual Benevolent Association (NJ FMBA) is a labor union that has represented career firefighters in the State of New Jersey for more than 110 years and knows firsthand of the importance of fire safety among children. The NJ FMBA originally brought this program to New Jersey's communities through a grant from the NJ Office of Homeland Security but has now entered into a partnership with The Burn Center at Saint Barnabas in Livingston, which is a member of Barnabas Health. This partnership capitalizes on the existing relationship between New Jersey's firefighters and the state's only certified burn treatment facility. The Burn Center at Saint Barnabas and the Saint Barnabas Burn Foundation have a long history

of providing burn and fire prevention education to the residents of New Jersey.

The NJ FMBA, The St. Barnabas Burn Center, and Safe Kids NJ welcome you to join us in this one-of-a-kind education initiative.

For more information about the "Fire Is" program, visit [www.njfiresafety.com](http://www.njfiresafety.com) or contact: Lt. Andy Stratton, NJ FMBA, "Fire Is" Coordinator, [andy.stratts@comcast.net](mailto:andy.stratts@comcast.net), 908-265-7670.

## **NASFM Encourages NFPA Standards Council to Move Forward with New Project on Furniture Flammability**

*The following is an excerpt from a statement sent by NASFM to the NFPA Standards Council in response to the announcement of a call for comment on a proposed new project to develop an open flame test method for residential upholstered furniture.*



The National Association of State Fire Marshals welcomes the NFPA Standards Council's invitation to comment on the proposal that NFPA undertake a project to develop a test method to evaluate fire ignition/resistance of upholstered furniture subject to a flaming ignition source. The National Association of State Fire Marshals was the original petitioner to the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) for a mandatory standard to address upholstered furniture flammability. NASFM members are the senior fire prevention officials in the U.S. states and the District of Columbia. NASFM recognized the need for mandatory upholstered furniture standards over 20 years ago, and has continued to participate in efforts to urge the CPSC to publish furniture flammability standards that would reduce the deaths and injuries that occur due to upholstered furniture fires. Upholstered furniture remains the product under CPSC's jurisdiction that has annually resulted in the greatest number of fire deaths by item first ignited.

Although CPSC embarked on a project to address upholstered furniture fires when it was first established as an agency in 1973 (and the current rulemaking prompted by the NASFM petition began in 1994), to date it has not come to any conclusion or taken any formal regulatory action. The agency's most recent action in Spring 2008 was to issue a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPR) for furniture flammability that addresses only ignition by smoldering sources, such as cigarettes. The NPR appears to reverse prior CPSC recommendations that ignition of furniture by both smoldering and flaming ignition sources be addressed; even though more recently the

CPSC appears to be considering a broader scope for its rulemaking, the 2008 NPR is the only formal proposed rule that has been put forward by CPSC. NASFM has frequently expressed dismay over CPSC's inaction, and has long expressed strong support for a meaningful standard that would address both smoldering and open-flame ignition of the furniture. In 2013, the State of California (which in 2005 led the way in the development of a large open flame standard for residential [mattresses](#) that served as the model for the CPSC's 16 CFR 1633 regulation) changed its residential upholstered furniture flammability regulation from a small open flame standard to a smolder-only standard. Thus, currently there is no other technical or regulatory effort that is addressing ignition of residential upholstered furniture by open flame sources.

NASFM believes that NFPA is in an excellent position to help address upholstered furniture fires. NFPA's focus on developing a test method for open-flame ignition will provide a significant contribution to addressing the problem of upholstered fire safety, as well as significantly enhance protection of the public from the destructive effects of upholstered furniture fires.

According to NFPA, ("Home Fires that Began with Upholstered Furniture," Marty Ahrens, National Fire Protection Association, August 2011), in 1993, the 5-year rolling average number of civilian deaths that began with upholstered furniture fires was 650. In 2009 (the most recent year for available data reported) the average number of deaths reported was 450. Historical NFPA and CPSC fire statistics indicate that, since 1980, the total number of fire deaths resulting from incidents in which furniture was the first item ignited is about 24,000, and exceeds 30,000 deaths since CPSC first started looking at furniture fire safety in 1973. Over a period of about forty years, the annual number of upholstered furniture fire deaths has decreased, from well over 1,000 per year to the current number of about 450 per year. The decline in upholstered furniture related fire deaths probably results from social factors, such as an increased use of smoke alarms and decreased smoking. But it was the intent of Congress when it passed the Consumer Product Safety Act in 1972 that the CPSC reduce addressable deaths and injuries through regulatory action, not through the process of standing by and observing slow social changes.

NASFM does not have the resources, nor does it maintain the technical staff needed, to develop fire test methods. However, since 1997 NASFM has maintained a Science Advisory Committee (SAC); this committee, made up of internationally recognized fire and product safety experts, provides technical guidance and advice to the NASFM Board of Directors. For more than 15 years the SAC has continuously advised the NASFM Board that a mandatory national standard for upholstered furniture should be developed; that both smoldering and

open-flame ignition sources need to be included in any effective furniture fire standard; and that significant improvements in fire resistance can be achieved in upholstered furniture without reliance on flame retardant chemicals that may pose environmental or other [health](#) threats.

In the past, ignition and flame spread have been prevented primarily through the use of chemical treatments to reduce ignition propensity and prevent flame spread. Some of these chemicals have since been identified as health hazards, and there have been a number of actions to reduce or eliminate their use. It is important to note that not all flame retardants are hazardous, but the term has developed a bad reputation, whether applied accurately or not. In the decades that have passed while CPSC procrastinated on developing a meaningful fire standard for upholstered furniture, methods of achieving improved fire safety have changed substantially. Today's technology makes it possible to reduce ignition propensity and prevent flame spread without creating health hazards. In fact, CPSC and the US [mattress](#) industry have done just this with the introduction of the full-scale mattress flammability standard (16 CFR 1633), which became effective in July 2007; significant fire threats to the mattress are addressed in a meaningful way through a rigorous test method that addresses mattress fire resistance from a large open-flame ignition source.

The scenarios of ignition and flame spread to the point of flashover are significantly different for smoldering and open-flame sources. Smoldering ignition takes a long time (often hours) to develop to the point of flashover, and the likelihood of detection of smoldering fires is much higher than for open-flame ignition. Open-flame ignition of upholstered furniture, on the other hand, can lead to flashover in as little as 3 - 4 minutes, results in much more destructive damage, and frequently leaves less evidence of fire cause. Open flame involvement of upholstered furniture itself is a major contributor to residential fires, according to NFPA's own statistics. Given that upholstered furniture represents the largest fuel load in most homes, and that flashover of the furniture is the critical event, preventing full involvement of the furniture in the fire will save significant numbers of lives. NASFM strongly believes that a meaningful upholstered furniture standard, based on a realistic and reliable test method that includes both smoldering and open-flame ignition, is both feasible and is necessary. When referring to "open-flame ignition," NASFM believes it is important for NFPA to address a larger flame source than a typical "small" open flame (i.e., a match or lighter flame). This approach would cover a wider variety of causes of ignition, such as a flaming wastebasket or a blanket draped on the furniture, and would also provide resistance to fires caused by small open flame sources.



Without doubt, there are many complexities that need to be addressed in developing a flammability test for upholstered furniture, but NASFM believes those complexities have more to do with issues of conformance and enforcement than with the technical issues of the standard itself. NASFM also believes that the key to compliance with a performance standard may be through the use of fire barriers in the furniture construction. Furniture makers know how to apply barriers to shield the filling material from ignition, thus reducing the time to flashover or eliminating flashover altogether. In fact, the furniture industry has been using fire barriers in the design of contract and institutional furniture for more than 25 years. Barriers have the advantage of enabling resistance of the furniture to large open flame sources, and the science and availability of barriers have been improved over the past decade through the implementation of the federal open flame mattress flammability standard, 16 CFR 1633. NASFM believes that basic principles of barrier application, through "best practices" approaches, can be met by furniture manufacturers just as mattress makers have done, and that this effort will significantly reduce fire involvement of upholstered furniture, and the societal impact of furniture-related fires.

NASFM strongly urges NFPA to accept the proposal to develop an open flame fire test for residential upholstered furniture, and to use its recognized technical resources to develop realistic test protocols to address the common ignition sources that often result in dangerous and destructive upholstered furniture fires. NFPA may well be the only organization willing to and capable of taking on this crucial task. There is much previous work that NFPA can draw on, and NASFM particularly urges NFPA to include and review the work of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) and of Underwriters Laboratories (UL). In addition, although CPSC has not taken regulatory action to date, NASFM feels that it is important that NFPA include CPSC in the activity, to the extent possible, and work to secure the agency's willingness to adopt or defer to NFPA's work product as a national mandatory regulation.

### **Seattle Nightclub Fire Points to Importance of Trained Crowd Managers**

*The following is a letter sent by NASFM President J. William Degnan to State Fire Marshals in January 2014:*

Given the recent nightclub fire in Seattle, I thought it would be a good opportunity to revisit the issue of safety in public assemblies and how we can achieve good results in our communities. It appears that there were a number of positive issues that culminated in making an arson fire set in an occupied nightclub on New Year's Eve a non-event.

The nightclub was fairly crowded, but probably within their occupant load; police reported that an arsonist poured gasoline on the exit

stairs and set it on fire. News accounts state that staff and a patron used portable fire extinguishers on the fire with some success, and because the club was sprinkled, that system also activated, keeping the fire in check. The entire crowd was able to exit the club unharmed, and the fire damage was minimized by the combined use of fire extinguishers with the sprinkler system. We should remember Wayne Powell's mantra: "Anything that gets wet will eventually dry out; something that burns will never unburn". Adequate exits, trained staff, portable extinguishers and sprinklers all played important roles in this incident.



If someone set a fire in one of the nightclubs in your state, would the outcome be the same? I suspect the answer is "maybe", so I'd like to remind everyone of the importance of trained crowd managers. As most of you know, the training endorsed by NASFM includes a significant amount of basic fire prevention instruction, including egress maintenance, assuring fire protection systems are functional, use of portable extinguishers, and following the facility's emergency action plan, among others. Having trained crowd managers in public assemblies expands our ability to raise the level of safety by placing people with a basic level of fire prevention and overall safety in each facility.

One question arises with some frequency: "Where are trained crowd managers required?" Of course, the answer to the question is in the code adopted by your state, but consider the following:

- In movie theaters, trained crowd managers should inspect their area of responsibility before each shift, making sure that access is adequately controlled without jeopardizing egress; this will enhance security and safety.
- In restaurants, trained crowd managers should check the kitchen hood system to be sure it will function should a fire occur in the cooking area.
- In stadiums and arenas, crowd managers knowledgeable about the rules relating to contraband will help prevent a crowd from getting out of control.
- In hotel ballrooms, keeping the exits clear of catering carts and other equipment will allow the timely egress from the ballroom during an emergency.
- For outdoor events, the trained crowd manager will know to activate the emergency plan early in case of approaching severe weather, and will know where to direct the crowd.

These are only a few examples where trained crowd managers will make a significant difference. We can't have inspectors in every assembly occupancy or event, and trained crowd managers can partially fill that gap. I encourage you to utilize all of your

regulations, including the requirements for trained crowd managers, to make your state as safe as possible. Note that access to the crowd manager training program endorsed by our association is available through the website <http://www.crowdmanagers.com/>.

Feel free to disseminate this letter to the fire service in your state so we can continue to raise awareness about crowd safety.