



SFPE Committee Operations Manual

1. Introduction and Statement of Purpose.

The Society of Fire Protection Engineers (SFPE), established in 1950 and incorporated as an independent organization in 1971, is the professional society representing those practicing the field of fire protection engineering. The SFPE strives to advance the science and practice of fire protection engineering and its allied fields, to maintain a high ethical standard among its members, and to foster fire protection engineering education.

The basic mission of the SFPE is “to define, develop, and advance the use of engineering best practices; expand the scientific and technical knowledge base; and educate the global fire safety community, to reduce fire risk.” The SFPE Standing Rules establishes a Committee structure consisting of five Standing Committees, which, through an open, inclusive, broad-based, and fair process, develop and deliver timely and targeted initiatives, carry on the work of the Society, and further the goals of the strategic plan.

The primary goal of all participants on SFPE Committees as well as the SFPE staff who serve as liaisons to these Committees should be the achievement of this purpose. This Manual is intended to assist Committee participants and staff in that endeavor. It is divided into this Introduction and Statement of Purpose (Part I), a Statement of General Principles (Part II) that should be the basis for all conduct, followed by Committee Organizational Structure (Part III), to establish the procedure for maintaining and operating Standing-Committees, Sub-Committee and the Nominating Committee. Sections IV and V offer more specific guidelines for Committee members and SFPE staff liaisons.

2. Statement of General Principles.

The basic structure and operating procedures of the SFPE Committees has been set forth by the SFPE Board of Directors in the SFPE Bylaws, the SFPE Standing Rules, and other policies and procedures established from time to time by the Board. In fulfilling the general roles and obligations set forth under these regulations, policies, and procedures, all participants in SFPE Committees should adhere to the following general principles:

- (a) Promote and support the overall mission of the SFPE;
- (b) Maintain a process that is open, honest, fair and inclusive to all participants;
- (c) Promote the development of technical bodies of knowledge that are scientifically and technically sound, that promote creativity and innovation in the development of new methods and technologies, and that set reasonable standards intended to minimize the possibility and effects of fire and related hazards, and upholds the highest level of integrity;
- (d) Promote the development of consensus through broad participation and full airing and discussion of all points of view; and
- (e) Adhere, both in letter and in spirit, to all duly established rules, regulations, and policies governing SFPE Committees.

3. Committee Organization

The SFPE Standing Rules (Section F.) establish five Standing Committees, made up of SFPE members, to assist the staff in the delivery of the SFPE programs and the furtherance of the SFPE's mission. The SFPE Standing Rules (Section F.1.) provide broad guidelines for the focus area of each Standing Committee, and empower the Standing Committee Chairs, working with staff liaisons and through the Office of the CEO, to make recommendations to the Board of Directors as to necessary Sub-Committees, Task Groups, Working Groups and focus areas of each Standing Committee.

3.1. Standing Committees.

3.1.1 Membership. Standing Committee members shall be members of the Society, except for special circumstances where approved by the Board of Directors. There shall be no limit to the number of members participating on Standing Committees. Criteria considered for initial committee appointment includes, but is not limited to, competency and experience in the area of committee responsibility and demonstrable commitment and ability to actively participate in the activities of the committee. As described in the SFPE Diversity Policy, geographic, gender, ethnic, socio-economic, experience, education, language, age, and market sector diversity is sought in membership and activities of the SFPE, and will be considered in appointment decisions.

All committee appointments, including the chair(s) and committee members, shall be for three-year terms beginning January 1 and each member shall be eligible to apply for reappointment for two additional three-year terms to the same Standing Committee for a total of 9 years of eligibility on any one Standing Committee. Standing Committee appointments for more than 9 total years of service on any single Standing Committee may be allowed by special petition to and approval by the Board of Directors.

3.1.2. Meetings. Standing Committee, Sub-Committee, Task Force and Working Group meetings shall be conducted in a format that permits participants to interact directly, including face-to-face meetings, tele- or web conferences, video conferencing, and any combination of these methods. Meeting frequency shall be based on its current activities, operating needs, and budget.

3.1.3. Work Product Development, Voting, and Appeals Process. All Standing Committee and Sub-Committee Chairs and members shall work collaboratively and inclusively during the execution of their responsibilities and the development of any work product that is to be recommended for use among the SFPE membership or outside of the SFPE. The following shall serve as a guideline for obtaining the position of the Standing Committee and Sub-Committee membership, and where applicable, the public, during work product development.

3.1.3.1. Soliciting Public Comments. Documents produced by SFPE that have impact on fire protection engineering on a broad scale follow a similar review process to the SFPE standards. Once they are drafted by the governing Sub-Committee, they shall be circulated for public comment for a period of not less than 30 days.

3.1.3.2. Public Comment Adjudication. Once the public comment period has concluded, comments are reviewed and adjudicated by the members of the governing Sub-Committee. Modifications to the document are made, where necessary, to reflect the final disposition of the public comment adjudication. Once all comments have been adjudicated, the updated draft document is circulated for awareness of modifications. Comment responses are also circulated so that actions are transparent.

3.1.3.3. Public Comment Appeal Process. Persons who have been or may be affected by any Committee/Task Group action or inaction shall have the right to appeal such action or inaction. The appellant shall file a written complaint with the staff liaison for the committee within 15 calendar days after the date of notification of any action, or at any time with respect to inaction. The complaint shall state the nature of the objection, the procedures or the sections of the document/recommendations that are at issue, the action or inaction at issue, and the specific remedial action(s) that would satisfy the appellant's concerns. Previous efforts to resolve the objections and the outcome of each shall be noted.

Sub-Committee chairs shall respond to complaints received during the appeals process within 30 days of the receipt of the appeal. The Sub-Committee Chair shall make every effort to resolve complaints informally. Sub-Committee Chairs may solicit the support of the Standing Committee Chair, if they believe that will resolve any impasse.

3.1.3.4. Appeals Panel. If resolution of a complaint cannot be reached, it will be sent to an Appeals Panel. The Appeals Panel is comprised of the Chairs of the SFPE Standing Committees, as they represent body well-versed in the SFPE mission and goals, along with a breadth of fire protection engineering industry background and understanding that can be applied to the subject matter of the document in question. Appeals panel members should not have been part of the committee that handled the comments and their resolution. Panel members should have a solid awareness of SFPE workings, current activities, and the fire protection industry as a whole. In addition, panel members should not be selected if there is a conflict of interest with the complaint being heard, such as personal connection to the complainant or direct involvement with the case at hand.

The appeals panel shall render its decision in writing within 30 calendar days, stating findings of fact and conclusions, with reasons thereof, based on a preponderance of the evidence. The staff liaison shall notify the appellant and the Committee/Task Group in a written copy of the decision of the appeals panel, which shall be binding and final on all concerned.

3.1.4. Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

3.1.4.1. Scope of Work. The Standing Committee on Continuing Professional Development is charged with developing and maintaining a strategic continuing education plan for the Society; developing core educational content, providing guidance on topics and content for workshops, symposia and conferences, which meet the body of knowledge transfer and continuing education needs of members worldwide; providing guidance on the delivery formats and methods to facilitate global delivery of core educational content; implementing the instructor review and

approval process as defined in the standing rules; and providing guidance on use of relevant education from other allied organizations.

3.1.4.2. Sub-Committees. The Standing Committee on Continuing Professional Development includes the following Sub-Committees:

- (a) Course Content and Delivery
- (b) Conferences, Workshops and Symposia
- (c) Emerging Professionals of SFPE
- (d) P.E. Exam Preparation

3.1.5. Membership and Chapter Relations (CMC)

3.1.5.1. Scope of Work. The Standing Committee on Members and Chapters is responsible for the recruitment and retention of members as well as recognizing member achievements. Standing Committee members receive recommendations of fire protection engineers or related professionals to consider recognition for their stature or significant, noteworthy accomplishments. The committee fosters communication among chapters, HQ and the Board of Directors. The Committee is also responsible for helping in the formation of new chapters, creating stronger ties between the chapter and SFPE and identifying opportunities for the chapters to help in disseminating SFPE news and information that is relevant to their constituencies.

3.1.5.2. Sub-Committees. The Standing Committee on Members and Chapters includes the following Sub-Committees:

- (a) Awards,
- (b) Chapter Relations,
- (c) Membership Growth and Engagement, and
- (d) Qualifications.

3.1.6. Community Outreach and Advocacy (COA)

3.1.6.1. Scope of Work. The Committee on Community Outreach and Advocacy is responsible for advancing the recognition of the profession; increasing the public's awareness of the profession and the services provided; and guiding the Society and its chapters in reaching out to the public, to allied professionals, to industry members, and to the code enforcement community for the purpose of increasing the stature of fire protection engineering and fire safety engineering. This Committee also recommends and monitors positions taken by the Society on emerging technical, legislative, and regulatory issues as well as provide support for marketing and public relation's initiatives implemented by, and on behalf of, the Society.

3.1.6.2. Task Groups. The Standing Committee on Community Outreach and Advocacy includes the following Task Groups:

- (a) Interdisciplinary Advocacy,
- (b) Public Policy, and
- (c) Residential Fire and Life Safety.

3.1.6.3. Sub-Committees. The Standing Committee on Community Outreach and Advocacy includes the following Sub-Committees:

- (a) Fire Service, and
- (b) Student Outreach.

3.1.7. Professional Qualifications (CPQ)

3.1.7.1. Scope of Work. The Standing Committee on Professional Qualifications is charged with developing, disseminating and maintaining an occupational competency standard for the fire protection engineering profession, to include minimum criteria for professional licensing and credentialing; sustaining an engineering licensure examination within the standards (e.g. item quality and quantity, testing format, test specification refresh frequency, clean audit statement, etc.) established by the United States (U.S.) National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying (NCEES); establishing and promoting the profession's Canons of Ethics and providing impartial evaluations on questions of ethics within the professional; facilitating the development of new fire protection engineering programs and courses; promoting new and existing courses in fire protection engineering; and assisting in new and continuing accreditation of fire protection engineering and technology programs.

3.1.7.2. Sub-Committees. The Standing Committee on Professional Qualifications includes the following Sub-Committees:

- (a) Higher Education,
- (b) P.E. Exam Development
- (c) Professional Ethics and Standards of Conduct
- (d) Professional Competency and Credentialing

3.1.8. Research, Tools and Methods (RTM)

3.1.8.1. Scope of Work. The Standing Committee on Research, Tools and Methods identifies, develops, and oversees SFPE's technical products and research work, review new innovations, and helps to establish the research agenda for the fire safety engineering profession.

3.1.8.2. Sub-Committees. The Standing Committee on Research, Tools and Methods includes the following Sub-Committees:

- (a) Codes and Standards Liaison,
- (b) Handbook Development,
- (c) Research and Innovation,
- (d) Innovation and Emerging Technology,
- (f) Standards Committee on Calculating Fire Exposures to Structures,
- (g) Standards Committee on Design Fire Scenarios
- (h) Guidelines Committee on Human Behavior in Fire
- (i) Standards Oversight

3.1.8.3. The Standing Committee on Research, Tools and Methods also includes the Standards and Guidelines Development Working Group and Risk Task Group.

3.2. Nominating Committee. Per the SFPE Constitution and Bylaws, there shall also be a SFPE Nominating Committee, which consists of six members. Three members shall be elected by the Society in accordance with election procedures and three shall be appointed by the Board of Directors within sixty days after the annual business meeting. The chairman of the Nominating Committee shall be appointed by the Board of Directors from among members of the Nominating Committee. The Nominating Committee shall verify that the applicants for the position of Officer or Director of the Society are members in good standing and are eligible to serve; publish a list of eligible applicants and the office for which they applied; and nominate at least one eligible candidate for each vacant position for election as Officer or Director according to procedures established by the Board of Directors.

4. Conduct Guidelines for Committee Members.

Although all participants in SFPE Standing Committees serve the same overall SFPE mission and are expected to promote the purposes and goals stated in the Statement of Purpose (Part I, above) and the Statement of General Principles (Part II, above), different roles within the Standing Committees may carry differing responsibilities and obligations. Roles within the SFPE Standing Committees include: Standing Committee Chair(s), Sub-Committee Chair(s) and Standing/Sub-Committee Members. Note that Members apply and are initially appointed to a Standing Committee. Standing Committee and Sub-Committee Chairs determine Member competency and expertise and overall needs when making Sub-Committee appointments.

The following guidelines for conduct are intended to provide an extension to the Statement of General Principles to assist participants in the SFPE Standing Committees in carrying out their respective roles and responsibilities. Because no single set of rules and guidelines can be all inclusive of every possible situation, members should attempt, even when the guidelines do not specifically address a situation, to act in a manner which is consistent with the Statement of Purpose, Statement of General Principles, and the spirit of these Guidelines.

4.1. Guidelines Applicable to All Participants.

(a) Participants should read and become familiar with the SFPE Bylaws, SFPE Standing Rules, the SFPE Strategic Plan, Goal, and Key Performance Indicators, and the charter of the Standing Committee and Sub-Committee in which they are participating.

(b) Participants should act honestly and in good faith with a view to the best interest of the SFPE. Although it is recognized that legitimate differences of opinion can exist on individual issues, participants should support and promote the defined broad objectives of the Society.

(c) Participants should stay current with SFPE strategic goals and objectives that influence the activities in which they are directly or indirectly involved.

(d) Participants should fully prepare for and consistently attend all appropriate meetings; read and become familiar with all issues related to the upcoming tasks of the Standing Committee or Sub-Committee; and promptly and thoroughly taking all actions necessary to complete the processing of documents within their Committees.

(e) Participants should encourage full participation by all interested persons, and they should encourage and facilitate the full and open dissemination of all information necessary to enable full and fair consideration of all points of view.

(f) No participant should ever attempt to withhold or prohibit information or points of view from being disseminated, particularly on the grounds that the participant is in disagreement with the information or points of view. Disagreements should be addressed and resolved through full presentation and discussion of all information and points of view, not through withholding information or preventing points of view from being expressed.

(g) In all discussion, debate, and deliberation, participants should confine their comments to the merits of the scientific, technical, and procedural issues under review. Although participants may advocate their views or positions, they should be candid and forthcoming about any weaknesses in their position, and they should refrain from debate and discussion which is disrespectful or unprofessional in tone or which is unduly personalized or damaging to the overall process of achieving consensus.

(h) Participants should take appropriate steps to ensure that any Public Statements, either written or oral, which are not official statements of the SFPE, are properly portrayed as the opinion or position of that individual.

(i) In circumstances where duly established policies and procedures related to the SFPE business require deliberations to take place, participants shall respect and observe the confidentiality of those discussions.

(j) Participants should conduct themselves at all times in a professional and respectful manner, and shall respect all rulings of the Chair. They should express their views through the making of appropriate motions and through participation in the formal debate on motions.

(k) Participants frequently receive funding from their employers, organizations, or other sources for their participation in the SFPE Committee work, and they have an affirmative and continuing obligation to declare those sources of funding to the SFPE. Apart from those declared sources of funding, participants should not solicit or accept gifts, hospitality, or transfers of economic benefit, other than incidental gifts or other benefits of nominal value, from persons, groups, or organizations having dealings with their Committee or under any circumstances in which the benefit would be or would appear to be bestowed or accepted for the purposes of influencing the members' activities within the Standing Committees or Sub-Committees.

4.2. Guidelines Applicable to Standing Committee Chairs.

4.2.1. Interaction with the Board of Directors. In addition to the guidelines that apply to all Committee participants, Standing Committee Chairs have the following responsibilities to the Board of Directors:

(a) Regularly report operations of the Standing Committee to the Board of Directors

(b) Identify participating Standing Committee and Sub-Committee members when presenting Standing Committee reports to the Board of Directors for review and action.

(c) Present and receive scope, timeline, and resource approval of all Standing Committee activities during regularly schedule reports to the Board of Directors. Standing and Sub-Committee activity proposals shall be adequately developed in terms of scope, schedule, and budget to enable the Board of Directors to accurately evaluate and vote upon the Standing Committee proposals.

(d) Prepare, with the support of the SFPE staff liaison, and submit for approval any proposed expenses, including meeting expenses, travel, and other related costs required for Standing Committee and Sub-Committee operations.

(e) Determine and submit for approval the necessary sub-committees, task forces, and working groups needed to execute the scope of the Standing Committee.

4.2.2. Interaction with Sub-Committee Chairs and Membership. In addition to the guidelines that apply to all Committee participants, Standing Committee Chairs have the following responsibilities to the Sub-Committee Chairs and Membership:

(a) Act in an impartial manner in the performance of their duties,

(b) Appoint Sub-Committee Chairs,

(c) Collaborate with Sub-Committee Chairs to appoint Sub-Committee Members from among Standing Committee membership.

(d) Disclose to all members of their Standing Committee all known or potential conflicts of interest or other circumstances that could influence their impartiality on a particular matter and must not preside during the Standing Committee's consideration of that matter. A conflict of interest is defined as any situation in which the Standing Committee or a Sub-Committee's decision could substantially and directly affect the Standing Committee Chair's financial or business interest.

(e) Avoid potential conflicts of interest in the appointment of all Sub-Committee Chairs. If, in the opinion of the Standing Committee Chair, an individual has a known or potential conflict of interest, or other circumstances that could influence the individual's impartiality, that individual should not be appointed to Chair the Sub-Committee.

(f) Exercise care and diligence in the appointment of Sub-Committee membership. Although Sub-Committees need not be fully balanced, Standing Committee Chairs should attempt to include, to the extent practicable, any interested committee member or others who could usefully contribute to the work of the Sub-Committee. Standing Committee Chairs should avoid constituting a Sub-Committee in such a way as to unfairly exclude participation of any interest desiring and qualified to participate.

(g) Ensure that the body work of prepared and presented by the Sub-Committees is thoroughly reviewed and considered by the full Sub-Committee membership.

(h) Refrain from asserting a position in technical discussions.

(i) Be consistent in the conduct of meetings.

(j) Arbitrate any Sub-Committee disagreements, impasses, split votes, or contentious discussions that cannot be resolved by the Sub-Committee Chair.

(k) Endeavor to stimulate participation from all Standing Committee members.

(l) Develop consensus among all stakeholders and advocate policy nationally, regionally, and internationally.

(m) Determine Standing Committee and Sub-Committee Membership status upon the change of employer or employment status of a current Standing Committee Member.

4.2. Guidelines Applicable to Sub-Committee Chairs. In addition to the guidelines that apply to all Committee participants, Sub-Committee Chairs shall:

(a) Act in an impartial manner in the performance of their duties

(b) Disclose to all members of their Sub-Committee all known or potential conflicts of interest or other circumstances that could influence their impartiality on a particular matter and must not preside during the Sub-Committee's consideration of that matter. A conflict of interest is defined as any situation in which the Sub-Committee's decision could substantially and directly affect the Chair's financial or business interest.

(c) Exercise care and diligence in the recommendation and appointment of Sub-Committee membership. Although Sub-Committees need not be fully balanced, Sub-Committee Chairs should attempt to include, to the extent practicable, any interested committee member or others who could usefully contribute to the work of the Sub-Committee. Sub-Committee Chairs should avoid constituting a Sub-Committee in such a way as to unfairly exclude participation of any interest desiring and qualified to participate.

(d) Identify participating Sub-Committee members when presenting Sub-Committee reports to the full Standing Committee or Board of Directors for review and action. Sub-Committee Chairs should ensure that the work of Sub-Committees is thoroughly reviewed and considered by the full Sub-Committee.

(e) Chairs should refrain from asserting a position in technical discussions.

(f) Refer for arbitration to the Standing Committee Chair any Sub-Committee disagreements, impasses, split votes, or contentious discussions that cannot be resolved among the Sub-Committee Membership

(g) Chairs should be consistent in the conduct of meetings.

(h) Chairs should endeavor to stimulate participation from all Committee members.

(i) Chairs should develop consensus among all stakeholders and advocates policy nationally, regionally, and internationally.

(j) Chairs should, upon request, shall be responsible for preparing and submitting to the Standing Committee Chair proposed budgets for Sub-Committee operations including meeting expenses, travel, and other related costs.

(k) Identify criteria for Sub-Committee Membership, where specific prerequisites, demographics, and qualifications exist for the Sub-Committee's Scope of Work.

(l) Determine and recommend to the Standing Committee Chair any Sub-Committee minimum or maximum quantities of membership to ensure efficient operation of the Sub-Committee.

(m) Guide the Sub-Committee in their work as outlined by the Sub-Committee Scope of Work and Charge from the Board of Directors through the office of the CEO.

(n) Call Meetings at a time and place deemed suitable to execute the activities of the Sub-Committee. A minimum of a simple majority of the Sub-Committee Membership shall be present to proceed with a Meeting.

5. Guidelines for the Conduct of SFPE Staff Liaisons

Staff liaisons serve as non-voting, informed resource and facilitator to the Chairs and Members of the Committees. The staff liaisons assist the Chairs in facilitating Committee discussions and activities that address the Committee's charge and works with the Chairs to ensure that all committee work is consistent with the Society's goals and objectives. Staff Liaison roles are vital to the fair, open, and efficient operation of the Committees, and should promote the purposes and goals stated in the "Statement of Purpose" (see Section 1) and "Statement of General Principles" (see Section 2). In addition, Staff Liaisons should observe the following guidelines:

(a) Staff Liaisons should promptly and diligently perform all of the advisory, organizational, clerical, and other duties assigned to them by the Committee Chairs and by all other duly established policies and procedures related to the operations of the Standing and Sub-Committees.

(b) Staff Liaisons should encourage and facilitate full and effective participation and should encourage and facilitate the full, fair, and accurate presentation of all relevant information and viewpoints.

(c) Staff Liaisons should strive to ensure that all the work of the Standing Committees to which they are assigned is carried out in accordance with the SFPE Bylaws, SFPE Standing Rules, and any other duly established policies and procedures related to the SFPE Standing Committees.

(d) Staff Liaisons should conduct themselves in a manner that reflects their nonpartisan, facilitative, and advisory role. They should maintain a demeanor that is fair and dispassionate. Staff Liaisons should take care that they neither act nor could be perceived to be acting on behalf of or in order to further the interests of any group or individual.

(e) Staff Liaisons should not act as the representative of the Standing Committees for the purposes of arguing the Standing Committees position at any hearing, petition, or presentation to the Board of Directors. However, the Staff Liaison may provide information as requested by the Board.

(f) Staff Liaisons should inform the Standing Committees of the potential effect of its activities on the other Standing Committees of the Society.

(g) Staff Liaisons should maintain current Committee rosters and notify the Chair(s) of approved changes in Standing Committee membership.

(h) Staff Liaisons should assist Chair(s) with scheduling meeting dates and places