

**Department of Homeland Security/Federal Emergency Management Agency
U.S. Fire Administration
National Fire Academy Board of Visitors
Meeting Minutes
October 2-4, 2008
Building H, Room 300**

Attendees:

The following National Fire Academy Board of Visitors (NFA BOV) members were present for the meeting:

Dr. Robert S. Fleming (Chairperson)
Professor, Rowan University
1406 Heather Lane
West Chester, Pennsylvania 19380

Chief Donald R. Oliver
Wilson Fire/Rescue Services
307 West Hines Street
Wilson, North Carolina 27893

Ms. Helen Johnson (Vice Chairperson)
Executive Director (Retired)
State Firemen's and Fire Marshals'
Association of Texas
5810 Charles Schreiner Trail
Austin, Texas 78749

Chief Kelvin Cochran
Atlanta Fire Rescue Department
City Hall East, Suite 2001
675 Ponce de Leon Avenue, N.E.
Atlanta, GA 30308-1807

Mr. Chris Neal
Executive Director
International Fire Service Training Assoc.
930 North Willis
Stillwater, Oklahoma 74078

Dr. Sandy Bogucki
Associate Professor
Section of Emergency Medicine
Yale University School of Medicine
464 Congress Avenue
New Haven, Connecticut 06519-1315

Mr. Robert Cumberland
Director
Cumberland Valley Volunteer
Firemen's Assoc.
222 Shipley Avenue
Westminster, MD 21157

The following member was not present for the meeting:

Captain Jack Reall
President, Columbus Firefighters Union,
IAFF 67
379 West Broad Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215

FEMA/USFA/NFA staff in attendance:

Chief Greg Cade, U.S. Fire Administrator, USFA
Dr. Denis Onieal, Superintendent, NFA
Ms. Teressa Kaas, Secretary, NFA
Mr. Ron Face, Director, Management, Operations and Support Services
Ms. Alex Furr, Director, National Fire Programs
Dr. Kirby Kiefer, Deputy Superintendent, NFA
Mr. Robert Neale, Deputy Superintendent, NFA
Mr. Edward Kaplan, Section Chief, Education, Training and Partnerships, NFA
Mr. Ken Farmer, Section Chief, Leadership and Fire Risk Reduction, NFA
Mr. Chuck Burkell, Training Specialist, Leadership and Fire Risk Reduction, NFA
Ms. Terry Gladhill, Program Analyst, Education, Training and Partnerships, NFA
Mr. Warren Campbell, Field Training Specialist, Education, Training and Partnerships, NFA

Thursday, October 2

CONVENE BOV MEETING/WELCOME

Dr. Robert Fleming, Chair, Board of Visitors

Dr. Denis Onieal, Superintendent, National Fire Academy

Dr. Robert Fleming welcomed the Board members and reviewed the meeting agenda.

Dr. Fleming gave a brief charter overview of what the Board's purpose is and what is expected as the outcome of the meeting. He then turned it over to Dr. Denis Onieal for the Superintendent's Overview.

Dr. Onieal stated that Chief Greg Cade is at the CFSI Board of Directors meeting. We will adjust the meeting to involve him and his briefings later. Chief Cade will be the Designated Federal Official.

Dr. Onieal discussed Regional versus National Accreditation. He stated that Thomas Edison and Empire State Universities are both regionally accredited schools and are accepted by NFA. He discussed some issues amongst other schools that have requested to be regionally accredited but do not meet the requirements for regional accreditation. Dr. Onieal also stated that a number of fire departments require degrees from regionally accredited schools because of an increasing problem with "diploma mills." He is asking the Board members to appoint a Subcommittee to examine these issues with the accreditation requirements for admission into EFOP and make a recommendation to the FEMA Administrator through the Fire Administrator.

Dr. Onieal stated that the President signed a bill (2606) that will be affecting the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS). Due to the effects of the signing of the bill, he will be cancelling the NFIRS class in March. He does not want to spend any more time or money in purchasing technology or developing a course that may have to be changed shortly thereafter. A letter will be sent out to all the students registered in the class letting them know that it has been cancelled. Dr. Fleming recommended that in the letter it should state that these students will have first seats in the new class once it is offered.

Dr. Onieal stated that as a result of the Reauthorization of the USFA, Emergency Medical Services (EMS) has been added to our mission. We will be adding EMS activities to courses developed and taught. When and where appropriate, we will be including EMS in the titles of NFA courses using examples from the EMS community along with the fire community in the course materials and exercises, and we will convene a steering committee to assist in these new changes sometime within the December/January timeframe.

Dr. Onieal gave the Board members the student enrollment data as of September 15, 2008. There have been 110,000 people trained as of this date. Last year's data showed that we had trained that many by the month of December – so we trained as many people in 9 months this year as we did all of last year. Dr. Onieal also stated that he anticipates signing agreements with the University Chancellors from Alabama, Alaska, and Ohio to implement the Fire and Emergency Services Higher Education (FESHE) Model into their States.

FOLLOWUP FROM JULY CONFERENCE CALL

Chief Don Oliver moved for minutes to be accepted from the July conference call. There was a second by Ms. Helen Johnson. All were in favor. Meeting minutes for July were approved.

ANNUAL ETHICS BRIEFING

Ms. Vicki O'Keefe, Office of Chief Counsel

Ms. Vicki O'Keefe discussed ethics issues. If you are serving on more than one FACA committee for more than 130 days, that requires you to file a Confidential Financial Disclosure Report (CFDR). She discussed being a consultant to some other entity as well as being an expert witness in a criminal case; you must call her to work through the specific situation. Ms. O'Keefe discussed the CFDR and in what situations this report must be completed. She also discussed conflicts of interest among committees. She discussed limitations on accepting gifts from outside sources, relationships with co-workers outside of work, using your FEMA title outside of the work environment, using non-public information, fundraising, and soliciting for the election and engaging in political activity in the workplace, to name a few. Ms. O'Keefe gave phone numbers to the members for contact, and the Web site to review any ethics information (www.usoge.gov).

STATUS OF USFA

Chief Greg Cade, U.S. Fire Administrator

Chief Cade apologized to the group for not being able to speak to them first thing in the morning as he was detained in another meeting. He thanked the members for all their hard work and everything that they do for USFA. He stated that the Reauthorization passed in the House and in the Senate. There are some differences in the two versions, but nothing critical. The Reauthorization authorizes \$293 million through Fiscal Year 2012. The USFA has been directed, as part of the Reauthorization bill, to conduct an evaluation for teaching marine firefighting, including what they need and what we can do for them. There are over 300 ports in the U.S. Another part of the Reauthorization bill asks us to take a look at firefighter health and safety. It also asks us to establish fire positions in the National Operations Center. We currently have one position but we will add another position.

The Budget, which was passed and signed by the President, was part of a Continuing Resolution bill passed through Congress, although we are not part of the Continuing Resolution. The budget picked up another \$1.2 million for FY 2009. This will be used for NFIRS updating to make it more user friendly and promote the use of this reporting system for further use in fire departments.

Chief Cade reminded the Board that this weekend is the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial. The firefighter who recently passed in the line of duty in Texas was the ninety-second line-of-duty death this year. Next week is National Fire Prevention Week. This year the theme is "Preventing Household Fires." In February we started doing a fire prevention theme each month for safety and prevention.

The election is in 33 days. Hopefully all the work that has been done in transition planning will work for the new administration coming in. Usually the entire administration is asked to resign before their replacements are hired. This year they are asking some positions to stay until a replacement is appointed. Chief Cade stated that he is putting together briefing paperwork for the transition.

We are still working on recruiting to fill Deputy Administrator Charlie Dickinson's position. There were a lot of really good candidates. The FEMA Administrator, David Paulison, interviewed the top four candidates last week. His next step is to make the decision as to who will be the best for the position of Deputy Administrator; it then goes to the Homeland Security Executive Committee, then to the Office of Critical Management. Chief Cade is anticipating the position to be filled, at the earliest, by January 1, 2009.

The Strategic Planning Process should be completed shortly. When the new administration comes in they should be able to find the goals and objectives of the Fire Administration and the National Emergency Training Center (NETC).

Facility/Budget

Mr. Ron Face, Director, Management, Operations and Support Services

Mr. Ron Face used a PowerPoint[®] presentation to present the facility and budget updates. The 2009 Appropriations Bill has been passed and signed. The Budget for FY 2009 is \$44,979,000 which is \$1,679,000 over the FY 2008 budget. The House allocated \$500,000 for deferred maintenance. Mr. Face stated that they are looking at using this money for the 5-year Facility Maintenance Plan. Mr. Face reviewed his listing of FY 2008 NETC repairs and capital improvements, which has a budget of \$2,976,000. The list of items included replacing sewage lift pumps, HVAC replacement, replacing exterior lighting on all buildings with energy-efficient lighting, constructing a weatherproof storage building for furniture storage, and repairing diesel fuel underground storage tanks. Among those items, Mr. Face discussed the use of the trailers that were given to us after Hurricane Katrina. It is a possibility that these may be used to house senior ranking students instead of using the dorm rooms for senior staff during a national emergency. Another improvement being made in FY 2008 is the replacement of windows and drapes in almost every building. The draperies in some buildings are dry-rotted and have become a fire hazard. With the window replacement, Mr. Face is expecting to see a 5 to 10 percent savings in energy costs. These windows will be fully insulated and UV protected.

Mr. Face also discussed future plans for deferred maintenance which include backup generators. Mr. Face stated that, hopefully this time next year, there will be contracts in place to use year end money to install generators in buildings where they don't already exist. Also in future plans are additional buildings to be used for housing facilities, classroom space, and possible staff offices, along with renovations to the food service facility. Mr. Face stated that the plan is to include 300 additional dorm rooms, possibly located where the parking lot at Building "A" is located, then add an additional three-story building to use as classroom and staff offices for 15 people, and then use the basement for a classified facility. The renovations to the food service facility would increase dining space and decrease food preparation area. The specifications have been completed previously for these additions and renovations, but they have outdated cost sheets.

Dr. Onieal asked Mr. Face if he could provide GSA estimates to Dr. Fleming on property value and maintenance values for the Board's Annual Report.

National Fire Programs Update

Ms. Alex Furr, Director, National Fire Programs

Ms. Alex Furr discussed the realignment of the Fire Administration and what is affected within the National Fire Programs. The major program areas among the National Fire Programs are information services, response support, data collection and analysis, applied research and technology, and public education. Three branches among the National Fire Programs Division include Prevention and Information, National Fire Data Center, and Emergency Response Support. The Prevention and Information Section promotes fire prevention objectives via messaging, resources, and partnerships, along with managing USFA information dissemination services including the Web site, Publications Center, Learning Resource Center, media production, and conference displays. The National Fire Data Center coordinates the collection, analysis, and dissemination of information about incidents involving fire department response and related information along with managing research, development, and applications of technology and best practices for fire detection, prevention, suppression, and department operations. The Emergency Response Support Section manages special programs that enhance USFA and partner roles such as ESF-4, fire desk, wildland coordination, National Response Framework (NRF) exercise and coordination, critical infrastructure protection, and all-hazard incident management teams. There is just under \$1.2 million in the FY 2009 budget for upgrades to NFIRS. The current version of NFIRS 5.0 was developed almost 10 years ago, so it is long overdue for an upgrade. It is not to change the program but more to develop applications to make it easier to retrieve and use the information. Ms. Furr stated that she is working with the States to be more open in reporting to us and making it more useful for them to use. The biggest struggle is getting the information back out after it has been received. Prior to development of Version 5.0, NFIRS was limited to fires only. The current version incorporates the full range of fire department response. We want to find an easier way to have better access to the information and store it as well. Ms. Furr's group is working with 26,000 fire departments to date, and every State has been reporting to some degree. Even though States may store their data on the national server it is not automatically released by the State to the public domain. For the future, the default setting is being changed so that data is automatically released unless the State requests otherwise. June is the requested submittal date for prior calendar year data from the States. Ms. Furr stated that her group is currently working with 2007 data to make it as clean as possible and available.

Education, Training, and Partnerships Section Update
FESHE/TRADE/Higher Education Summit
Mr. Ed Kaplan, Section Chief, Education, Training, and Partnerships
Mr. Warren Campbell, Field Training Specialist, Education, Training, and Partnerships

Mr. Warren Campbell updated the Board on the current actions involved in the FESHE and Training Resources and Data Exchange (TRADE) programs.

Fire and Emergency Services Higher Education

- The IAFC Professional Development Committee will be submitting a draft resolution to the full IAFC Board to adopt FESHE as the national professional development model for the fire service.
- Residential Code Fire Sprinkler Coalition is interested in engaging FESHE for fire protection engineering curriculum.
- Center for Public Safety Excellence cross-walked CFOD/CMOD competencies with the national professional development matrix.
- IFSAC Degree Assembly Board moved to accept the FESHE model curriculum as meeting the curriculum portion of the accreditation requirements. Schools that follow the FEHSE model curriculum will automatically meet the curriculum requirement for IFSAC accreditation. There will be a formal vote in the Spring of 2009, no difficulties are anticipated.
- The Associate's Committee is updating the model curriculum (possibly in December). Going over curriculum and reviewing to make current changes.
- FESHE model is being revised. Fire Chief Officer is being changed to Fire Chief at the top of the pyramid. Adding Executive Fire Officer (EFO) programs as well. May need to add CMOD to professional designations.

Training Resources and Data Exchange

- Conference is being held November 4-6, 2008. Many members cannot attend due to budget costs and out-of-State travel cuts. Looking at approximately 140 in attendance.
- TRADEnet Newsletter published each month and sent to all members or anyone on the mailing list.
- 2009 schedule for off-campus courses has been published.

Learning Management System Update**Ms. Terry Gladhill, Program Analyst, Education, Training, and Partnerships**

Ms. Terry Gladhill handed out a packet of information to the Board members. Included was an NFA Online bookmark, a one-page promotional piece of a description of NFA Online, and a working document used to track progress status of projects. She then reviewed the Online status of projects. The green are in operation, the yellow are in process, and the red have been stopped. There are 42,000 users of the Learning Management System (LMS). The 30,000 completion threshold was passed as of September 15, 2008. The LMS has approximately 2,500 to 3,000 new users per month. Currently working with the NWCG on four to five new courses. They are in the process of procuring a new Learning Content Management System (LCMS). We kicked off Online 360 Rater Process as of October 1, 2008. We are looking to kick off the Adobe Connect training next week. We would then be the second Federal facility to use the tool that would display video and audio for online meetings. We are running into some trouble with the bandwidth, so the training may need to be postponed.

Ms. Gladhill stated that the LMS group wants to work with the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation and see what the LMS can do for them, as well as working closely with Mr. Kaplan in regard to his FESHE courses.

After Ms. Gladhill's presentation, Dr. Onieal stated that beginning next graduation (October 10, 2008) the Continuing Education Units (CEU's) will be placed on the certificates. Also, the American Council of Education (ACE) will be coming in December to review the new and revised courses. Dr. Onieal stated that working with ACE has been a really large hardship. He discussed a possible "Plan B" with the Board which would entail each State getting college credits from a certain college within that State for NFA courses but to make that plan work all States would have to be on board with that new process. The large benefit of ACE is that it is a universal process.

October 3, 2008**Resume Meeting****Dr. Robert Fleming, Chair, Board of Visitors**

The Board attended the graduation ceremony for nine NFA courses. Dr. Fleming and Chief Oliver spoke to the graduating classes about their time spent on the Board.

For the record, Dr. Kirby Kiefer will be the Designated Federal Official in Dr. Onieal's absence from the meeting today.

Dr. Fleming resumed the meeting at 9:30 a.m. He suggested an hour for new business on the tentative schedule but he wants to make sure that before the Board leaves today, they have their Subcommittee for Accreditation established and a plan in place. He then reviewed the agenda items that need to be in place for the Annual Report. He would like to devote this afternoon as a work session and have a draft put in place and then reconvene the meeting in the morning and finalize the report.

Academy Programs

Dr. Kirby Kiefer, Deputy Superintendent, National Fire Academy

Mr. Robert Neale, Deputy Superintendent, National Fire Academy

Mr. Rob Neale stated that he has seen some major positive outcomes after the Realignment. Mr. Ken Farmer and Mr. Bill Lewis came up with the idea of EZ Training. It was evolved with the new idea of getting more courses online. The concept is to create an algorithm on the Web in which we would push out a simple connection to our training, State training, and local training to local fire department Web sites. Once you clicked on the EZ button, it would take you to a menu that would have access to refresher training, Coffee Breaks, blogging, etc. This is not meant to compete with NFA Online. These will only be short chunks of training. You would enroll by using your fire department's identification number. When training is complete, the data would dump into an Excel[®] file and be sent to the Department Chief, State Directors, and NFA for data purposes. The funding is partially from a Department of Transportation grant and part from the course development budget for FY 2009. We already have States wanting to take part.

Among other items discussed:

- Twelve new courses in development, and revising 37 more in 2008; 9 new courses in 2009, and revisions to 10 more.
- Fire Service-based EMS: Looking at all current courses and identifying areas where they can link fire-based EMS. Issuing contract(s) or to look at entire curriculum and make recommendations. January 2009 bring in EMS curriculum folks and have a focus group to make course recommendations.
- Working on developing a course replacement and retirement plan. There are a number of courses that need to be handed off or retired due to out-of-date materials. Work on course development process and make a general process for all to use in development.
- Creating a 72-hour packet: Extra money was available last year for course development, but no one was expecting it, so there weren't any ideas to use for development. Asking Training Specialists to have a Statement of Work, course title, idea, estimate, and requisition literally waiting for money for development, so in case there is extra money it isn't lost.
- Exploring ideas to replace existing three-ring binder for Student Manual (SM). Looking at SMs to stay in the classroom, and the students can leave with a CD to take home. Save money for paper and issues with student baggage.
- Working on contract instructor evaluation program. Draft copies have been distributed this week. Very good feedback. The goal is to have Training Specialists, Section Chiefs, etc., in classroom evaluating the instructors. Long way from that but working towards that.

- *Command and General Staff Functions for Local Incident Management Teams (CGSFLIMT)*: Two Train-the-Trainer classes were conducted, with 59 participants. These classes will be given to State Training Academies for local delivery.
- **New Staff**: Mary Marchone replaced Frank Richardson, J.B. Anderson replaced Rob Neale, and Michael Stern replaced John Brasko as Training Specialists in the Risk Management, Fire Protection Technical, and EMS areas respectively.
- **Simulation Lab in Building "S"**: We're seeking to come up with ways to look at new technologies that are less expensive and more powerful. This will enable us to create enterprise applications and distribute valuable simulation exercises off campus. Vendors have been in to show products. There is a June 2009 deadline to implement the new product. Concept is being thrown around for SimNet.
- **Internship Program**: The purpose of this program is to bring in young men and women who may be involved in fire safety at college or university. This will give them the opportunity to come in and earn credits and help out where needed. Mr. Neale will be heading this program. Goal is to have two non-paid internships at any one time. Formal applications are in the process, according to Ms. Kelly Snyder who will be working on implementing the administrative part of this project. Instructional Systems Specialists would like to use this type of internship program as well.

Dr. Kiefer discussed other items including:

- **Homeland Security Presidential Directive 12**: We are required to conduct background checks on all contract employees. This process began in August 2006. Approximately 468 NFA contract instructors completed the process and are eligible to bid on future contracts. 370 instructors failed to comply and have been removed from our rosters.
- **Issuing 0.1 to 0.3 CEUs for completing Coffee Break trainings**. Effective next cycle of certificates, the certificate will list how many CEUs the student has. The other way to determine how many CEUs a student has is by transcript.
- **ACE Review**: Going to have ACE review 30 classes starting first week of December. Mr. Loney Nunemaker made this happen.
- **Automated Contract Instructor Bid Process**: Began an online bid submission process in January. This has cut processing time from 6 weeks to 2 weeks. Also has freed up staff time. Ms. Terry Gladhill, Ms. Tonya Long, Ms. Cindy Wivell, and Ms. Maury Grundy led this effort at almost no cost to the Government.
- **State Training Grants**: All 50 States have applied and been awarded \$28,000 for FY 2009 State Training Grants to deliver NFA classes.
- **Sixteen courses have been submitted for review under the Endorsement Program**. This year's courses were reviewed using the Learning Management System, which eliminated the need for travel and postage.

- Interviewing the candidates for the new Section Chief to work side by side with Mr. Ed Kaplan. Hoping to have someone in place by Christmas. There were 86 applicants.

Mr. Farmer stated that they are starting a blog on the USFA Web site to discuss pricing, gas, and other things affecting the economy and how these will affect service delivery. Mr. Chuck Burkell stated that this project has been in the works for a few months and Ms. Maury Grundy is waiting for the approval from DHS. This blogging system will be monitored and supervised as well.

Mr. Burkell discussed the Executive Fire Officer (EFO) Program. For FY 2009 had nearly 400 applications with 210 accepted into the program. Will be revising *Executive Development* (ED) and *Executive Leadership* (EL) courses with FY 2008 money. Development companies coming in to do presentations, and then a contractor will be selected for the revamping of these two courses. Had a meeting with NFA Online team to post the 360 evaluations electronically. Hopefully by January will be alpha and beta testing for these instruments. Starting the planning for the 21st year of the symposium in April 2009.

Regional versus National Accreditation Chuck Burkell, Training Specialist, Leadership and Fire Risk Reduction, NFA

Dr. Fleming asked, so as to not influence the Accreditation Subcommittee that will be designated, that there be some preliminary discussion, none of which will be recorded.

Mr. Burkell used a PowerPoint[®] presentation to discuss with the Board members the issues regarding Regional versus National Accreditation. He gave the history of the accreditation process through the EFO Program. The EFO Program began in 1985 as a three-year program. In 1991, USFA/NFA implemented an academic degree requirement in addition to the existing rank/position requirements. Two years later the criteria of "regionally accredited institutions" was added to the requirement when it was observed that degree credentials from institutions of questionable academic rigor were being submitted. In 1999, the decision to increase the academic requirements from an associate degree to a four-year baccalaureate credential was implemented. This meant that the regional accreditation stipulation was sustained.

Currently DHS/FEMA/USFA/NFA are being challenged regarding the criterion of regional accreditation. This policy has excluded some applicants for EFO consideration. The basis of the protest is a claim that nationally accredited institutions recognized by the U.S. Department of Education maintain, if not exceed, the same level of rigor and standards as regionally accredited institutions.

Mr. Burkell reviewed the last few slides and stated to the group that these findings and observations were purely his alone and not those of USFA/NFA. His observations and findings included:

- A decision for USFA/NFA to alter its policy will affect not only the EFO Program but also the higher education programs, institutional relationships, and even faculty selection standards.

- It is difficult to determine actual differences between regional and national accreditation requirements and criteria.
- Currently there are institutions providing distance education that are either regionally accredited or both regionally and nationally accredited (example is the University of Phoenix).
- USFA/NFA is not equipped with a traditional registrar's office and function which determines the legitimacy of any degree credential, regardless of the granting institution or its accrediting body.
- Within the Federal government there are many agencies (including the military) which sponsor degrees and professional development programs within a variety of relationships to both accrediting bodies and higher education institutions.

Election of Board Officers

Dr. Robert Fleming, Chair, Board of Visitors

Ms. Helen Johnson moved that Dr. Fleming remain as Chair of the Board until he is replaced. There was a second by Mr. Chris Neal. All were in favor.

Dr. Sandy Bogucki moved that Ms. Johnson remain as Vice Chair of the Board. There was a second by Mr. Bob Cumberland. All were in favor.

Dr. Fleming asked that it be noted in the minutes that there was an incident at graduation where a student needed medical attention. The Board would like to note that there needs to be a protocol for emergency attention on campus. Follow-up with Mr. Ron Face on this incident.

Dr. Fleming discussed the formation of the Accreditation Subcommittee. Dr. Fleming asked that the committee have a report in the final stages by the next Board meeting. Dr. Fleming asked if any of the Board members would volunteer to be a part of the committee. Mr. Neal volunteered to be Subcommittee Chair and Mr. Cumberland would like to be involved as well. Dr. Fleming also will be involved based on his university experience with accreditation issues.

October 4, 2008

Resume Meeting

Dr. Robert Fleming, Chair, Board of Visitors

For the record, Dr. Denis Onieal will be the Designated Federal Official for today's meeting.

Dr. Fleming resumed the meeting at 9:00 a.m. The Board continued their working session on the preparation for an Annual Report for FY 2008.

Motion was made to adjourn meeting, all in favor.