

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS  
DIVISION OF FIRE SAFETY  
NEW JERSEY FIRE SAFETY COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING**

**Meeting of January 19, 2022**

The New Jersey Fire Safety Commission meeting was held on Wednesday, January 19, 2022 virtually on Zoom.

**Commission Members Present:**

Mr. Kevin Krushinski, Chairman  
Sen. Sam Thompson  
Asm. Kevin Rooney  
Mr. Lawrence D. Wood  
Mr. Armando Roman  
Mr. Steve O’Gorman  
Mr. Paul McGrath  
Mr. Karl Spinner  
Mr. Fred Collender  
Mr. Arthur Hayducka  
Mr. Raymond Heck  
Mr. Daniel DeTrollo  
Mr. George Aleu  
Mr. Nelson Wiest  
Mr. John Wisniewski  
Mr. Kevin Bellew  
Mr. Gerard Naylis  
Mr. Richard Blohm  
Mr. Arthur Londensky  
Mr. Charles Siedenburger

**DCA Staff Members Present:**

Richard Mikutsky, NJ State Fire Marshal  
Louis Kilmer, NJDFS  
Charles Lavin, NJDFS  
Tim Weiss, NJDFS  
Steven Dyl, NJDFS  
Vincent Campagna, NJDFS  
Greg Kirkham, NJDFS  
Justin Henry, Codes & Standards

**Guests:**

John Garton, NJDOL/PEOSH  
Peggy Brookes, Princeton  
Bill Kramer, Cinnaminson FD  
Vincent Corsaro, Jefferson Twp.

Ronald McGowan, Wildwood Crest FD  
David Kurasz, NJFSAB  
Alan Querec  
Chad DiGiorgio, Hanover FD #3

## **A. Call to Order**

Chairman Kevin Krushinski called the meeting to order at 10:02 AM. He led the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence for those recently lost in the line of duty.

## **B. Approval of Minutes**

With no discussion requested or additional corrections, the minutes of the regular meeting of November 17, 2021 were approved as submitted.

## **C. Correspondence**

Chairman Krushinski noted that any and all correspondence for today's meeting was sent electronically prior to the meeting.

## **D. Public Comment I**

Chairman Krushinski opened up the meeting to any members of the public present wishing to address the Commission. With no members of the public wishing to address the Commission at this time, the meeting was moved to Division of Fire Safety Activities.

## **E. Division of Fire Safety Activities**

Director Richard Mikutsky reported that the NJDFS has been working a hybrid schedule throughout the month of January – meaning partially in-office, partial work-from-home or in the field. This has had no impact on the Division of Fire Safety's ability to perform its duties as always. As of now, the NJDFS (and the Department of Community Affairs as a whole) is scheduled to fully return to the office on January 31<sup>st</sup>.

Director Mikutsky reported that on December 1<sup>st</sup> the Live Christmas Tree Burn Demonstration was held at Monmouth County Fire Academy. This event was sponsored by the New Jersey Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board and Sprinkler Fitters Local 696. The event received great press coverage ahead of the holiday season and Director Mikutsky thanked Dave Kurasz, Kevin Bellew, Kevin Krushinski, and John Wisniewski for their efforts in putting everything together.

On December 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup>, the NJ Division of Fire Safety hosted instructors and attendees from around the country for the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual New Jersey Youth Firesetter Intervention Conference. The event included nine courses and had roughly 125 participants over the course of two days. Director Mikutsky thanked Charles Lavin for his efforts on putting this conference together.

The NJ Division of Fire Safety continues to meet with Rutgers Mental Health, as the Fire & EMS Crisis Hotline is now opened. They continue to tweak its operation and expand

its coverage and the amount of call-takers. The website is now live at: [www.njfireems.com](http://www.njfireems.com) and the phone number is 888-653-3367. They are working on all possible avenues to provide additional funding, particularly on the EMS side.

Director Mikutsky reported that the NJDFS was heavily involved in the preparation and planning for the events surrounding the Army-Navy game. The game itself was held on December 11<sup>th</sup> (with Navy winning) at MetLife Stadium, but also included events at Meadowlands Racetrack, Liberty State Park, American Dream, etc. Thanks to the hard work of the Division staff and all its partners on these events, everything went very smoothly.

New Jersey Weekend will be returning in 2022. However, due to COVID-related travel restrictions, all training classes will be held here in New Jersey rather than at the National Fire Academy in Maryland. This will be held on March 5 & 6 at Morris County Fire Academy, April 2 & 3 at Middlesex County Fire Academy, and May 14 & 15 at the Burlington County Emergency Services Training Center. Registration for these will be available at [www.keanfiresafety.com](http://www.keanfiresafety.com)

On the legislative front, Director Mikutsky reported that on January 10<sup>th</sup> Governor Murphy signed a bill into law establishing a new, independent organization that will oversee the New Jersey Fire Museum and Fallen Firefighters Memorial. It also provides for \$200,000 appropriations for the facility in Allentown, which is continuing to be developed and improved upon.

Director Mikutsky continued by giving reports on individual units within the NJDFS as a wrap-up from 2021, starting with the Office of Training and Certifications. Over 20 CEU programs were conducted through the Kean University Fire Safety Program office with over 600 students in attendance. Twelve final rosters were received from eligible training organizations with 340 students completing the local courses and exams. The Office of Training and Certification continues to work with the Tier-1 Eligible Training Organizations to review training topics, proposed draft Rules regarding the training and deployment of Junior Firefighters' Auxiliary members, and the proposed NFPA Standards Consolidation Project.

The Arson Investigations Unit ended 2021 with 324 investigations, which is a 27% increase compared to 2020 and a 70% increase over the past five years. Interviews are currently being conducted to add a much-needed additional investigator to the unit. They have also been involved in an investigation recently of a fire apparatus accident in Flemington.

The Community Risk Reduction Unit continues to focus on outreach with the Operation-7 Save-a-Life smoke alarm program, the New Jersey Fire Safety Calendars/Poster Contest for 2022, and the New Jersey FIRE Bowl Program. The Unit is working with school districts to potentially bring back this spring program that has been dormant since 2019 due to COVID. The CRR Unit is also planning two Youth Firesetter Intervention trainings for February. This includes a Youth Firesetter Intervention Specialist course on

February 15 & 16 in Mercer County; as well as a Youth Firesetter Program Manager course on February 17 & 18 in Cumberland County. Registration for both will be available on [www.keanfiresafety.com](http://www.keanfiresafety.com) on January 21<sup>st</sup>. The CRR Unit distributed 5,500+ smoke alarms, 300+ CO alarms, and 7,500 fire prevention calendars throughout 2021.

Director Mikutsky reported on the year-end numbers (2021) from the Office of Fire Department Preparedness. They had 453 fire incident notifications, 86 incident responses, 31 exercises, 33 special events, 86 training courses attended, 175 fire service assistances, and 32 investigations of fire department complaints/compliance. In terms of meetings attended, these were the year-end numbers (2021) for the Office of Fire Department Preparedness: 178 fire coordinators meetings, 84 county fire chiefs, 216 fire departments, 49 Office of Homeland Security, 26 NJ Fire Threat Task Force, 5 FBI/Joint Terrorism Task Force, 9 State Emergency Response Commission, 47 Urban Area Securities Initiatives (UASI), 112 Regional Intelligence Operations Center, 16 NJ Domestic Security Preparedness Task Force, and 59 NJ All Hazards Incident Management Team.

So far in 2022, Director Mikutsky reported that there have been four total fatal fire reports and three residential fatal fires. The 2021 fire data is still coming in but preliminary findings include 107 total fatal fire victims. Of those 107, 20 are from vehicle fires and 80 are from one- and two-family residential dwellings. That is 74% of fatalities in residential dwellings. The NFIRS Unit is continuing to process the incoming data from 2021, but current numbers reflect the following: 423 civilian burns, 26 school fires, 107 civilian fatalities (20-year high), 70 residential fatal fires, and 38 school fire reports.

Director Mikutsky reported that there will be four Fire Incident Report Writing (NFIRS) classes held in the spring. They are: March 21 (Morris County Fire Academy), March 22 (Union County Fire Academy), April 25 (virtual via Zoom), and April 26 (Monmouth County Fire Academy). Director Mikutsky also reported that the NFIRS Unit is in the process of doing a complete analysis of the fatal fires throughout 2021, also relative to where smoke alarms have been distributed by the NJDFS.

Director Mikutsky address the issue that continues to get raised at Fire Safety Commission meetings regarding the reading of test questions on the HazMat exams to students. Current policy is that questions are not read to students regardless of their arrangement with an individual education plan, which is developed by a child study team at a given student's school. The plan does not transfer to any other institution and only applies to general academic courses. This is based on the Supreme Court's ruling on this matter and the ADA's guidelines. Commissioner Blohm asked for clarification that no academies were reading test questions. Director Mikutsky clarified by stating that no academies have child study teams. Commissioner Blohm asked if this was just about HazMat questions or final exams in their entirety. Director Mikutsky said his focus on this issue has been concerning HazMat.

Director Mikutsky also address the issue of legalized marijuana and how the fire service should address it statewide. There are many issues surrounding this and nationwide it is address is a number of ways – ranging from testing for impairment, zero-tolerance policies, etc. Commissioner Blohm recommended reaching out to other states. While there is not much clarity on the issue across the board, Director Mikutsky is corresponding with the Denver Fire Department to get more information on how this is dealt with in Colorado. Commissioner Kevin Bellew followed up with a question about cannabis growth centers and how they would be dealt with as far as fire protection. Chief Kilmer answered that most of these facilities are brand new and fall under the Uniform Construction Code. The NJDFS is also looking into maintenance inspections and what would need to be put into the Fire Code for that.

Bureau Chief Louis Kilmer began his report by talking about the challenges faced by the NJDFS – particularly the Code Enforcement Unit – over the past month. Many people have been out with COVID, but as a whole they are persevering and getting the job done as always. Chief Kilmer gave specifics on all the inspections completed throughout 2021 and again commended staff on getting everything done under difficult circumstances.

Chief Kilmer reported that the NJDFS is continuing to work on getting the Peer Review Board up and running. Also, they continue to monitor the Local Enforcing Agencies statewide in terms of who has assumed additional areas, who has consolidated, etc. The review of the new Fire Code is essentially completed, with impact statements and language being added this week as it is sent to DCA administration and on to OAL for publication. Subchapter 2 and Subchapter 4 updates will be included and the NJDFS continues to work on the appeal regarding surgical centers.

The replacement system for RIMS is continuing to move forward. The new system is being reviewed by several interested parties to get input from the folks who will need to use it. The existing RIMS system is stable.

Chief Kilmer spoke about the rule relaxations and changes that were in place throughout the Public Health Emergency all expired on January 15<sup>th</sup>. The new declaration in place does not have any impact on the fire service or inspections, so things are essentially back to normal on that front now. However, the NJDFS is still looking at tents to see if anything needs to be done going forward.

Chief Kilmer reported that the NJDFS is beginning to run low on inspectors, as there are now many openings for positions and they are interviewing for hourly staff members. Chief Kilmer encouraged anyone who knew someone interested to send them their way. However, backfills and promotions are thankfully continuing to get done – and that is a credit to the leadership of Director Mikutsky and the support of the DCA Administration.

The NJDFS continues to conduct both smoke alarms and CO alarm certifications in person. Chief Kilmer feels this is very important to continue throughout the COVID pandemic to confirm compliance. Also, the School Fire Sprinkler Survey is still on the front burner and in the hands of the IT department as it will be done electronically.

Chief Kilmer reported that this is the busy time of year for Annual Reports, which are due at the end of the month. Some extensions will be granted for specific circumstances and evaluated case by case. The primary goal is to get them all submitted.

Chief Kilmer discussed the recent tragedies in Philadelphia and New York City, which includes taking a close look at all the factors to make sure there isn't something glaring we are missing in New Jersey in order to prevent something similar happening here.

With no additional questions raised regarding Division of Fire Safety Activities at this time, the meeting was moved to Advisory Council reports.

## **F. Advisory Council Reports:**

### **1. Codes Advisory Council**

Commissioner Arthur Londensky reported that there was nothing on the agenda for January, so the previous meeting was cancelled. Therefore there is no report to be given at this time.

### **2. Training and Education Advisory Council**

Commissioner Lawrence Wood reported that the Training and Education Advisory Council met last week via Zoom. Due to the short turnaround, minutes have not yet been done but will be sent out to the Commission members once they are available.

Commissioner Wood reported that the Subcommittee on Junior Firefighters submitted the following report to the Training and Education Advisory Council:

“The junior firefighter Committee has developed the following recommendations to be presented to the NJ Fire Safety Commission:

- A manual detailing guideline for junior firefighters should be issued concurrently with the effective date of the Jr Firefighter regulations
- The TTT class given to instructors of Firefighter I and II must include a module on teaching to adolescents
- The current Jr. Fighter committee would agree to serve as the Kean SME group to develop the manual
- The manual should include at the least the following topics:
  1. Standard permitted operations by junior firefighters at an incident scene
  2. Standard PPE identification of Junior firefighters
  3. Sample MOUs for counties or mutual aid groups detailing any local regulations stricter than to Manual standards. This should include the prohibition of juniors responding to mutual aid calls or deployments under the NJ Fire Service Resource Emergency Deployment Act as outlined in 5:73-19.12 (b) 23 of the proposed Jr Firefighter regulations

4. Qualifications/training for academy instructors or local training officers involved in the training or supervision of junior firefighters over and above the requirements for IMS and instructor certification proposed in the Jr. FF regulations.

The committee understands that this process has been in development for quite some time, but also feels we are getting one chance to do this right so if it delays the implementation slightly, it is better to get the program right.”

Commissioner Blohm asked if the NJDFS was still in the process of getting reaccredited with ProBoard and, if so, IEPs had been discussed since they allow them. Director Mikutsky responded that the ProBoard process is in motion but had suffered some minor delays due to COVID-related travel restrictions. As far as the IEPs, Director Mikutsky said he would look into it and was not sure it had been discussed with ProBoard.

The next meeting of the Training and Education Advisory Council will be on February 15, 2022 at the Burlington County Emergency Services Training Center.

### **3. Statistics and Information Advisory Council**

Commissioner Gerard Naylis reported that, in 2021, we saw 107 fire deaths throughout New Jersey which is an alarming number. Commissioner Naylis has been going back and forth with NJDFS’s Vince Campagna to look at certain data points and identify trends that we could potentially move in the opposite direction. The focus at this point is smoke alarms and identifying how to better equip people with the lifesaving tools they need in the event of fire.

Commissioner Naylis reiterated the need for complete and accurate data, as this allows for the fire service to make informed decisions on how to remedy issues going forward. Commissioner Naylis also urged and reminded everyone to take advantage of and promote the Captain Buscio Program.

### **4. Master Planning and Research Advisory Council**

Commissioner Raymond Heck reported that the Master Planning and Research Advisory Council had not been able to meet recently due to the ongoing complications presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, Council members were able to communicate and came to the decision that meeting with the Training and Certifications Advisory Council is necessary for their work moving forward. This will be arranged in the near future.

### **5. Public Education Advisory Council**

Commissioner Daniel DeTrollo reported that the Public Education Advisory Council had not had a chance to meet since the prior Fire Safety Commission meeting in November. Commissioner DeTrollo and Commissioner Paul McGrath will be meeting soon to discuss moving forward with the Public Education Advisory Council.

**6. Firefighter Safety and Health Advisory Council**

Commissioner Richard Blohm reported that the Firefighter Safety and Health Advisory Council needed to cancel its in-person meeting at Middlesex County Fire Academy and is working on a virtual forum to conduct its next meeting.

**7. Youth Firesetter Prevention Advisory Council**

In the absence of Commissioner Kathleen O’Leary, Charles Lavin reported that the Youth Firesetter Prevention Advisory Council met on January 12<sup>th</sup> at the Monmouth County Fire Academy in Freehold. The minutes of that meeting are contained in today’s electronic correspondence packets.

Mr. Lavin noted that there are two upcoming classes for which registration is now open: Youth Firesetter Intervention Specialist on February 15 & 16 in Mercer County, and Youth Firesetter Program Manager on February 17 & 18 in Cumberland County. Registration and payment is available on [www.keanfiresafety.com](http://www.keanfiresafety.com)

The next meeting of the Youth Firesetter Prevention Advisory Council is scheduled for March 9, 2022, at Monmouth County Fire Academy.

**G. Committee Reports**

**1. Residential Sprinkler Committee**

Commissioner Gerard Naylis stated that there is nothing new to report other than they are looking forward to working with Commissioner Heck and the legislators on getting a new Residential Sprinkler Bill ready for the next legislative session.

**2. Ad-Hoc Committee on Legislation**

Commissioner Kevin Bellew stated that they will be working with Assemblyman Rooney to schedule a meeting at his office in the near future. David Kurasz will be working with his staff on setting a date and will inform all interested parties when the meeting is set.

**3. NJ Utility Safety Team**

Commissioner Steve O’Gorman reported that a brief meeting was held last week in conjunction with the NJDFS and PSE&G to get the new committee started. Commissioner O’Gorman also reported that the NJ Utility Safety Team had been working to send information/articles to fire service and EMS related publications to get the word out on what they do, how to get in touch in case of emergency, as well as training classes that are coming up.

## **H. Old Business**

Chairman Krushinski asked if anyone had any Old Business to bring before the Commission. With no Old Business to discuss at this time, the meeting was moved to New Business.

## **I. New Business**

Chairman Krushinski asked if anyone had any New Business to bring before the Commission. Commissioner Wisniewski noted that he had asked for a discussion on the Philadelphia/New York City fires to be added to the agenda. Although much of this was covered during the NJDFS Activities Report, Commissioner Wisniewski called attention to the fact that issues relative to smoke alarms and ‘not closing the door behind you’ had catastrophic effects. Chairman Krushinski also called attention to the unsafe use of alternate heating sources that had a hand in these tragic fires.

Chairman Krushinski appointed Commissioner Nelson Wiest as Vice-Chairman of the Firefighter Safety & Health Advisory Council. Also, Director Mikutsky congratulated Commissioner George Aleu on his promotion to Lieutenant. The rest of the NJ Fire Safety Commission offered their congratulations as well.

Commissioner Wood spoke about the New Jersey State Fire Chief’s Association, which is starting a chief-to-chief peer program. There will be a meeting on this on Zoom – January 26<sup>th</sup> at 7pm. For more information, visit the organization’s website.

There being no further New Business to conduct at this time, the meeting was moved to Public Comment II.

## **J. Public Comment II**

Chairman Krushinski asked if anyone from the public wished to comment at this time. Justin Henry from Codes & Standards provided some information – directed at Commissioner Kevin Bellew’s previous question – regarding marijuana growing facilities in New Jersey. He provided information regarding the building classifications and sprinkler systems, etc. Mr. Henry also asked that Commission Bellew follow up with him regarding issues that contractors are seeing in the field. Mr. Henry and Commissioner Bellew agreed to speak following the meeting on this.

## **K. Adjournment**

With no further discussion requested, Chairman Kevin Krushinski called for a motion to adjourn. Vice-Chairman Arthur Londensky made the motion, which was seconded by Commissioner George Aleu and passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 11:19 AM.

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