

In My Opinion...

Dean Says:

Revision: A Vital, Yet Never-ending Process



The "process" will soon begin again. The National Fire Protection Association will ask users of NFPA 72-1996, *National Fire Alarm Code*®, to submit suggested revisions to the Code. This "Request for Proposals" starts a somewhat arduous "process" that ultimately will result in the publication of NFPA 72-1999.

As with any "process" there will always be those who harbor discontent. Yet analyzing the consensus standards-making "process" that NFPA has developed over the years, one cannot help but respond favorably to the inherent fairness built into the "process."

NFPA documents the "process" in a comprehensive document entitled, "Regulations Governing Committee Projects." NFPA includes this document in annual *NFPA Directory & Committee List*, and also offers commentary on the regulations as a part of the NFPA publication *A Guide for Committee Officers of Technical Committees and Technical Correlating Committees of the National Fire Protection Association*.

The NFPA Standards Council de-

velops the "Regulations Governing Committee Projects." Once developed, the Standards Council presents the "Regulations" to the NFPA Board of Directors for adoption. Thus, the "Regulations" comprise a living document that the Standards Council may continuously review and revise as necessary.

Helping the Committees follow the "Regulations" is a major function of the NFPA Staff Liaison assigned to each NFPA Technical Committee and Technical Correlating Committee. This mandates that each staff member be extremely familiar with the content of the "Regulations." He or she must also maintain a close liaison with NFPA's Standards Administration Department to keep up-to-date on interpretations of the "Regulations."

So if you heed NFPA's call for public proposals to modify NFPA 72-1996, you will be joining a significantly large group of individuals who have interest in refining the provisions of the *National Fire Alarm Code*®, and who have an significantly vested interest in making certain that any changes take place, only after they have passed through a "process" designed to assure fairness.

Once you submit your public proposal by the deadline—in this case, November 14, 1997—staff will sort your proposal by section number in the *Code*. Workers will key your proposal into a computer database that will manage the "process" by which your proposal will be presented to the appropriate Techni-

cal Committee for action.

When the seven Technical Committees of the National Fire Alarm Code meet in Las Vegas, NV, at the end of January, they will consider each proposal and take the action they deem appropriate. Their actions will be confirmed by a letter ballot of all committee members.

Then the Technical Correlating Committee will review the actions taken by each Technical Committee and vote to accept the reports of the Technical Committees. This action will also be confirmed by a letter ballot of the members of the Technical Correlating Committee.

NFPA staff will then prepare the Report on Proposal for publication. This document will be sent to everyone who submitted a proposal, and many other interested persons.

During a 60-day Comment period, individuals may submit public comments on any of the actions taken by the Technical Committee on a particular proposal. The Technical Committees will consider the public comments, act on them, and confirm the action by letter ballot.

The Technical Correlating Committee will once again review the actions taken by the Technical Committees, vote to accept the reports of the Technical Committees, and confirm this action by letter ballot.

NFPA staff will then prepare the Report on Comments for publication and wide distribution. At the NFPA Annual Meeting in May of 1999, the members will have an opportunity to vote on the proposed revision to NFPA 72-1999, *National Fire Alarm Code*®. Less than two months later, the Standards Council will consider the entire record of the revision, including any complaints filed against the actions taken to revise the *Code*, and vote to release the revised document to publication. NFPA will publish the revised *Code* bearing the release date given it by the Standards Council.

And then, with just a little more than a year for everyone to catch their breath, the "process" begins again. □

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