

FIRE EQUIPMENT MANUFACTURERS' ASSOCIATION

*Saving Lives,
Protecting Property*

August, 2011

CHAIN OF SURVIVAL



The FEMA Government Relations Committee: A Voice for the Industry

With updates to state fire codes happening regularly and a constant stream of proposed legislation and regulations affecting fire safety policies, stakeholders in the fire protection industry are greatly impacted by the legislative and regulatory process. Their level of engagement in these processes often determines whether or not their interests are promoted and protected.

The Fire Equipment Manufacturers' Association (FEMA) formed the Government Relations Committee (GRC) in 2003 to monitor and engage in legislative and regulatory issues relating to portable fire extinguishers and fire extinguishing systems. The committee—comprised of representatives from Amerex Corporation, Brooks Equipment Co., Buckeye Fire Equipment, and Tyco Fire Suppression & Building Products—aims to educate officials and legislators about the importance of comprehensive fire safety policies. By monitoring state fire code adoptions and legislative and regulatory proposals, the GRC is able to engage in the conversation, providing both the industry's point of view and technical expertise in the debate. Through the GRC's efforts over the last seven years, the committee has successfully shaped public policy in numerous states to improve fire safety outcomes.

Successful Advocacy for Pro-Extinguisher Amendments to IFC

This past November, the GRC successfully worked with the National Association of State Fire Marshalls (NASFM) to push for the removal of a provision in the International Fire Code (IFC) that significantly reduces the number of fire extinguishers required in occupancies equipped with quick response fire extinguishers.

The GRC has been working since 2003 to limit the impact of the line 1 exception of section 906.1, which negates fire extinguisher requirements in A, B, and E occupancies if equipped with quick response sprinklers. The GRC has mounted an aggressive state-by-state campaign to educate code officials about the importance of installing both extinguishers and sprinklers in these occupancies. As a result of the GRC's work with state fire marshals, fire chiefs and distributors during the IFC code adoption process, 14 states now amend the IFC by deleting or modifying the 906.1 exception, resulting in more comprehensive fire extinguishers requirements and improved life safety.

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GET INVOLVED!
Four Steps You
Can Take to
Help Protect the
Industry. See
back page.

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GRC Legislative Priority: Effective and Reasonable Licensing

Many states have implemented or are considering statewide licensing programs to regulate the fire equipment industry. The aim of these licensing programs is protect consumers and to provide a statewide standard to replace competing municipal licensing requirements. Some state licensing efforts are well thought out and aimed at protecting consumers and distributors alike. However, in several states, licensing legislation has become a proxy for an ongoing turf battle between union and non-union groups. Many states have seen legislation that prevents distributors from performing work unless they have completed US Department of Labor approved apprenticeship program and the required work experience (generally 8,500 hours). The US DOL does not currently provide an apprenticeship program for work on portables, pre-engineered or special hazard fire protection systems, and as such, these ill-conceived licensing proposals would require distributors to complete an apprenticeship program for a skillset that is not relevant to their profession. Conversely, these proposals would grant distributor licenses to individuals who have completed the required apprenticeship program, but may have no practical experience installing and maintaining portables or systems. This is akin to creating a single licensing program for roofers and carpenters.

The GRC believes that licensing legislation should have separate education and training requirements for separate categories of work.

The GRC monitors legislation and regulations regarding the licensure of fire suppression system installation and maintenance to ensure that proposals are not hastily passed and implemented. The GRC has successfully shaped policy outcomes in several states by making legislators and officials aware of the unintended consequences

“Portable extinguishers and extinguishing systems are vital aspects of a comprehensive fire safety strategy. Allowing for a tradeoff where extinguishers are not required throughout buildings if they are protected with other technologies ignores the importance of redundancy and does not recognize the value of portable extinguishers.”

—Alan Shuman, Former Georgia State Fire Marshal and Immediate Past President, National Association of State Fire Marshals

of imposing unnecessary and overreaching licensing requirements, namely increased costs to businesses and the state, a diminished pool of eligible employees, and decreased public safety. Critical to these efforts has been the willingness of the distributor community to become active in the legislative or rule making process. As the committee continues to advocate for reasonable licensing programs, the GRC will seek opportunities to build and strengthen relationships with the distributor community. Coordinating the advocacy efforts of manufacturers and distributors will enable the fire protection industry to present a coherent and consistent message and to ensure that new laws and regulations are not enacted without critical feedback from the industry.





Successful Advocacy, continued from page 1

In-state distributors have played a key role in this effort. To strengthen the committee's efforts, the GRC works to organize grassroots support among local distributors and members of the fire service. Local distributors and fire service officials generally offer the strongest voice in the debate, as code changes affects them and their businesses directly.

The movement against the 906.1 exception culminated last year when the National Association of State Fire Marshals (NASFM), with the support of the GRC, submitted a code change proposal to the ICC to delete the exception in the IFC. In May 2010, the ICC voted to accept the NASFM proposal and delete the exception in the 2012 IFC.

“The FEMA GRC provided us with the resources and expertise necessary to aggressively fight harmful legislation in Texas. With the help of the GRC, our organization was able to execute an effective advocacy strategy that produced results at the State House and helped raise our profile statewide.”

—Phil Foster
President Fire Equipment Distributors of Texas

Fire Equipment Manufacturers' Association 101

The Fire Equipment Manufacturers' Association is the premier trade association representing leading brands, and spanning dozens of product categories related to fire protection. The Fire Equipment Manufacturers' Association is comprised of four divisions represented by product categories: portable fire extinguishers, interior equipment, fire hose and pre-engineered suppression systems. These divisions work together in an effort to promote balanced fire protection, life safety and initial response when disaster strikes are our main concern. Members of the Fire Equipment Manufacturers' Association have formed a subgroup, the Government Relations Committee (GRC), comprised of representatives from Amerex Corporation, Brooks Equipment Co., Buckeye Fire Equipment, and Tyco Fire Suppression & Building Products, to address legislative and regulatory issues relating to portable fire extinguishers and pre-engineered systems.

The GRC's main goals focus on helping to educate officials by advancing a balanced fire safety philosophy that reflects the need for both sprinklers and portable extinguishers. This newsletter is published periodically to communicate to key members of the fire services and code officials on the importance of balanced fire safety and the role that special application fire suppression systems and portable extinguishers play.



Get Involved! Help Protect the Industry



- 1** Get in touch with a FEMA GRC member company about any legislation or regulation regarding changes to the state fire code or licensing requirements.
- 2** Build a relationship with your State Senator and State Representative; make them aware of legislative issues affecting your business.
- 3** Strengthen your relationships with local fire code officials, including local and state fire marshals; ask that they inform you of any upcoming proposals to revise the state fire code or regulations.
- 4** Send us your extinguisher success stories. The GRC publishes quarterly newsletters featuring media clips that demonstrate extinguishers in use. Our newsletters reach roughly 1,300 individuals in the fire protection and code community, including local and state fire marshals, fire chiefs, code officials, fire protection engineers and state legislators.

“The Fire Equipment Manufacturers’ Association, specifically its Government Relations Committee, was instrumental in restoring the requirements for portable fire extinguishers in the ICC Codes. You may not have known, but the requirements for portable fire extinguishers in certain occupancies had been severely reduced in the International Fire Code. Reinstating these requirements was a monumental undertaking with extraordinary results for public safety.”

— Clayton Norred
NAFED President 2010-2012

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