

THE TENNESSEE COMMISSION ON FIREFIGHTING PERSONNEL STANDARDS AND EDUCATION

July 29, 2025, Business Meeting

Commissioner Bill Scott called the meeting of the Tennessee Commission on Fire Fighting Personnel Standards and Education to order at 9 a.m. on July 29, 2025, at the Putnam County Fire Department in Cookeville, TN. Director Zimmerman called the roll. Commission Members present at the meeting were Brent Ham, Kory Green, Jay Moore, Michael Henry, Travis Solomon, Stephanie Boatright, and Bill Scott. Those not present were David Windrow and Sharrock Cobb. Quorum was met.

Commerce and Insurance / Fire Prevention Staff present at the meeting:

Jason Sparks, Tennessee Fire Service and Codes Academy
Marabeth Nicely, Staff Attorney
Heather Zimmerman, Tennessee Firefighting Commission
Laura Costin, Tennessee Firefighting Commission
Todd Ratley, Tennessee Firefighting Commission
Joshua Holdeman, Tennessee Firefighting Commission

Guest to speak at the meeting:

Jason Sparks – TFACA Intermediate Pump Operations
Chad Young – Nashville Fire Department

Minutes

Minutes from the April 22, 2025, meeting—approved

Discussion/Work Session

- Commissioner Scott asked if the regional coordinators or TFACA had anything to discuss during the work session. They did not.
- Legal: Marabeth Nicely presented a complaint to the commission. Legal received a report concerning possible certification fraud. During an audit, a specific department determined that they were unable to locate a specific certification for a particular firefighter. Upon more investigation of his certifications, it was found that this individual previously had administrator access to Acadis through his department and possibly

falsified certificates. This individual had achieved a firefighter 2 certification in 2014. In 2017, the individual's firefighter 2 certification was revoked because the number on the certification did not belong to that individual but to another person. A fraudulently acquired fire instructor certification that he had obtained.

- Through the progression rules, it was never revoked, so he still had it, even though the firefighter 2 was revoked.

Acadis reflects that there was an HMO certificate from 2004 with a certification number belonging to a different person who worked at the same department, and that the individual who is the subject of this complaint did go back and get an HMO and HMA certification in 2019.

So that's kind of a moot point, but just another fraudulent certificate that we believe occurred.

Acadis records indicate that the individual may have submitted false certification to the Firefighting Commission office. The original submission was accepted, though it was identified by the office in 2017 as being fraudulent. The original number would have been issued less than 30 days from the original firefighter 1 certification, which, under the rules at that time, would not have been possible.

We do believe his firefighter 1 certification was appropriately attained.

The fire instructor was still left in place, and this should not have been allowed to happen, as FF2 is a prerequisite to Fire Instructor 1. While being terminated from his department, the chief found the individual's possessions to also include false certificates for fire officers 1 and 2.

He admitted to the Fire Chief that he was not certified as a Fire Officer 1 or 2. In conclusion, we believe that this individual has created false certificates for at least four disciplines within the fire service. Two false certificates were submitted to the Commission to gain employment, and the department also believes this individual provided false prerequisites to gain the Fire Instructor certification. We have copies of all these documents that were obtained during the investigation, and it's up to the Commission now to decide how to move forward. Legal recommendations for moving forward would be one of two paths: either contacting this individual and having them agree to decertifying the Fire Instructor certification and barring him from participating in Firefighting Commission programs, including testing and educational incentive pay for 10 years, or having a formal hearing. He does have a live burn that was acquired in 2023, so that's where that 10 years came from, which is that it would expire under the new rules before he'd be able to come back into the fire service. To recap: he properly attained HMA, HMO, and live burn. He also has an old (but properly attained Fire Fighter 1 certification. All others were not properly attained.

Discussion. No vote was made at this time. The vote will be at the business meeting.

Old Business – None

EIP/VEIP Subcommittee Report – Kory Green presented. We met yesterday here in Cookeville. The meeting lasted about 10 minutes. We have now been to all three (3) grand divisions, spoken with constituents, and heard what problems they perceive with the VEIP. We will close out that committee in the business meeting. We will then proceed to a hearing to streamline those rules and try to make it easier for volunteers to attain educational incentive pay. This, in turn, should increase our numbers.

Rules Subcommittee—There are numerous changes in the pipeline, including some radical ones. Our main focus was on Chapter 7, which covers the education incentive. We understand that there are numerous issues, particularly for our stakeholders in the volunteer departments. And we needed to address them immediately.

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While we were there, we also had to open Chapter 6, which contains our standards that we adopt, as we are familiar with the NFPA. During the consolidation of the 1010, we needed to start addressing and updating many of those standards within the rule. And then, because of the changes we made between Chapters 6 and 7, we also had to open Chapters 2 and 3.

To just do a little bit of house cleaning, because we didn't want a contradiction to take place between the different chapters.

- In Chapter 3, we essentially relocated the NFPA standards to this standard's language performance, incorporating a directory language in Chapter 6.
- We did that effectively throughout.
- In Chapter 3, there were several oversights during the last rule hearing.
- In Chapter 4, we added the language practical project. Our new accreditation manager made this recommendation to ensure we maintain compliance with IFSAC and the Pro Board.

Director Zimmerman's office had discussed some issues with the way prerequisites were submitted prior to testing, in order to have rosters ready.

- Instead of at the time of the examination, we changed it to 'prior to the time of the examination,' and then we removed the two-week rule. Our intention is to implement an internal policy. As we're in this chapter, we didn't want to rewrite it because, once again, we wanted to keep the package small. And so, this was just basically a clean-up that we did in Chapter 4, just to address some of those things that were just lying out there.
- Coming into chapter 6.

In Chapter 6, we updated all the NFPA standards to the current edition.

We removed the progression rules, so now, instead of the 30-day waiting period, the only

waiting period the Commission proposes would be a 36-month waiting period between achieving Firefighter I and testing for Fire Instructor I.

Chapter 7 – EIP/VEIP – for firefighter eligibility, we are taking out the approved by the Commission for the pre-approval programs. For the career, we have basically no changes, just renumbering. We have put it in the rules that all educational incentives, pay, and proof of training must be submitted to the records management system. Under audit, instead of maintaining records for 60 months, we've put that you should maintain all auditable records up to the next audit. So once you're audited, anything from the past audit is going to be your records maintenance. We have to do that for the Comptroller, but it'll just basically be the most recent audits and paperwork you keep.

Accreditation – Greg Palmer has been reviewing everything to determine our current status and identify areas for improvement to make things right. From an IFSAC standpoint, we're accredited to 29 levels, Pro Board 28.

- The only program that is not dual-accredited is the airport firefighter, and that is just IFSAC

Currently, we're not working on any new levels to add. We are working on getting everything up to speed, making sure it's in compliance with all relevant standards, and then we'll determine what adjustments are needed. This will ensure we're prepared to handle any additional workload before adding more to our current responsibilities. Our upcoming IFSAC site visit will take place from June 1 to June 5, 2026. ProBoard will not be until June of 2027. We'll start with airport firefighter. According to our website, we're using the 2015 edition Practical skills and we should be using the 2019 edition practical skills. Both IFSAC and ProBoard have policies that say we have to use specific editions. ProBoard is two years. So anytime a new standard changes, we have two years to implement it from a pro board standpoint and IFSAC allows for three years because we are dual-accredited and everything except for all of our programs. That should be a red flag in most instances. There are a few programs right now, like the FLSC stuff being a 2014, it was delayed because of the consolidation.

- So, while it looks bad cause it's eleven years ago, it was still technically the current edition. That's acceptable. There are some exceptions to that rule, but as far as the airport firefighter goes, we should have ie 2019 edition as of December 31, 2021.
- So, we're about four years behind on those practical skills.
- Practical skills: Essentially anything that is being conducted in house, we do not have a manner or mechanism in place to ensure that everything's being done uniformly, that the instructor is standing there with the skill sheet, making sure that the student is doing the skills properly. We don't have a mechanism to make sure that while they are doing the testing that the students are being separated because technically by the policies of

ProBoard and IFSAC, students are supposed to be if they're tested, if they've already done their testing, they are not allowed to be with the students that haven't tested yet because they can talk, they can chitter chatter and all that kind of stuff.

- There are rules regarding how the students have to be separated, and there's no positive control over anything that revolves around the proctor. Is the person really qualified to test this skill?

It's basically left up to the department. But from an accreditation standpoint, it's.

- There has to be some governance over who's allowed to do that. From my understanding, the majority of the aircraft rescue and firefighting certification is being done on military installations. From an IFSAC standpoint, ProBoard is not as big on the jurisdictional piece, but IFSAC is big on you having a jurisdiction, and that's where you're allowed to teach and certify your firefighters.
- The state of Tennessee is not allowed to go to Alabama.
The state of Tennessee is not allowed to go to Kentucky and that includes military installations.

The Department of Defense is accredited through IFSAC and Pro Board and we just can't go on to the installation and teach and certify their firefighters to our standard because we're essentially violating the policy of going into their jurisdiction now.

- It doesn't mean it can't be done.
- There's just a process that has to be followed to get Tennessee, DoD, and the state's approval, and then we can do that. However, something needs to be done before any of the classes actually take place, and currently, we're not doing that.
- The last piece is that there is currently no process in place to ensure all the prerequisites have been met for live fire training. 14 O3 2018 Edition 4.3 point one lists out about 11 categories of knowledge that the students have to have done fire.
- Any kind of live fire training is incomplete without a way to capture it, whether it be an attestation or some kind of form. There's no mechanism in place to guarantee that the students who are going for certification have completed that training.
- Wildland Fire—From a compliance date standpoint, I will point out that 'wildland' is the most outdated. We should have implemented the new standards on June 30th, 2023. So, we're officially two years out of compliance with that.
- And that was kind of the same boat with 1033, which they could just send us an email saying, 'Hey, you guys, where are you with this?' Like that e-mail could be in my inbox right now for wildland. And if we don't have an answer, then it's not a matter of us being able to make the decision of pausing it or, you know, getting rid of it. If it gets taken away from us at that point. The question is, should we pause wildland for now?

Next meeting dates: November 3rd (tentative hearing) and November 4th (Work session and Business meeting) in Middle TN at TFACA.

Break then started the Business Meeting

Agenda

No amendments were made to the agenda.

Communications

Steven Morrell – East TN Regional Coordinator – report

Todd Ratley – Middle TN Regional Coordinator – report

Joshua Holdeman – West TN Regional Coordinator – report

Greg Palmer – Accreditation Manager – report from earlier

Jason Sparks, Program Director of Tennessee Fire and Codes Academy (TFACA) – report. Starting a new recruit class on August 11. There are currently 7 open slots if anyone has personnel they need in a recruit class.

Legal Report

- Marabeth Nicely reported possible certification fraud. We believe an individual has falsified approximately 4 certification documents, two of which would have been turned into the Commission. That would include a firefighter II and a fire instructor certification. The Firefighter 2 certification has been decertified with the fire instructor certification. It is still on his Acadis account. We also believe that the HMA and HMO certification were forged. After reviewing all of his academic accounts. The current statuses that he has an active life burn that was rightfully acquired, as well as a more recent HMA and HMO from 2019 that was rightfully acquired. When his agent in his department terminated him, it turned out that he also had physical copies of a Fire Officer I and a Fire Officer II certification that appeared to be forged, and he admitted that he was not, in fact, a certified Fire Officer I or II. For these reasons, we do believe that this individual had fraudulently created certifications for himself.
- And we recommend either offering to cover an agreement with the individual to bar him from the fire service for 10 years.

- Including barring him from the Firefighting Commission programs for 10 years, including testing and educational incentive pay. And decertifying any wrongfully acquired certifications.
- Or, in the alternative, we recommend filing those appearing in charges and having a disciplinary hearing in front of the Commission.

Motion was made by Commissioner Henry to have the person come in front of the commission. A second by Commissioner Solomon. A roll call vote was taken. All in favor. A recommendation is made to flag his Acadis account, stating “pending decertification”. The motion was made by Commissioner Henry and seconded by Commissioner Green. A roll call vote was taken. The motion was unanimously approved.

Director’s Report

- Heather Zimmerman, Director of the Firefighting Commission office, reported on the Acadis split from TLETA/POST. This should open up some new functions in Acadis that we have not been able to utilize. She also talked about a survey coming out soon to see who may be interested in hosting test events once we implement online testing and the changes we have made to the website.

New Business

2024 Audits – East TN – . Motion made by Commissioner Green to approve as a batch. Seconded by Commissioner Moore. Commissioner Boatright abstained. All in favor.

EIP/VEIP Subcommittee – EIP/VEIP Subcommittee Report – Kory Green presented. We met yesterday here in Cookeville. The meeting lasted about 10 minutes. We have now been to all three (3) grand divisions, spoken with constituents, and heard what problems they perceive with the VEIP. We will close out that committee in the business meeting. We will then move towards a hearing to slim line those rules and try to make it easier for volunteers to attain educational incentive pay. This, in turn, should increase our numbers. Motion was made to close this subcommittee by Commissioner Green and seconded by Commissioner Boatright. The motion was unanimously approved.

Rules Subcommittee: Many changes, including radical changes, are in the pipeline. Our main focus was on Chapter 7, which covers the education incentive. We understand that there are a lot of issues, especially for our stakeholders in the volunteer departments. And we needed to address them immediately.

- While we were there, we also had to open Chapter 6, which contains our standards that we adopt, as we know, NFPA. Doing the consolidation, the 1010, we needed to start addressing and updating many of those standards within the rule. And then, because of changes we made between Chapters 6 and 7, we also had to open Chapters 2 and 3.
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So instead of at the time of the examination, we turned that into prior to the time of the examination, and then we removed the two-week rule. Our intent with that is to use an internal policy. And as we're in this chapter, we didn't want to do a rewrite of this chapter because once again, we wanted to keep the package small. And so, this was just basically a clean-up that we did in Chapter 4, just to address some of those things that were just lying out there.

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Motion was made to close the rules subcommittee and move forward with the rules hearing by Commissioner Solomon and seconded by Commissioner Green. A motion was made by Commissioner Solomon to amend Chapter 7 rules for fire investigator hours from 16 to 20 hours for EMS and law enforcement. Seconded by Commissioner Boatright. The motion was unanimously approved.

- **Accreditation** – Greg Palmer has been going through everything to figure out where we are at and where we stand to make things right. From an IFSAC standpoint, we're accredited to 29 levels, Pro Board 28.

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Motion was made by Commissioner Solomon and seconded by Commissioner Green. The motion was unanimously approved.

Motion was made by Commissioner Green to get an MOU for the September ARF class so they can finish up their training, then it will be paused for 6 months. Seconded by Commissioner Ham. The motion was unanimously approved.

Jason Sparks – TFACA – Intermediate pump operations. Motion made by Commissioner Boatright to approve. Seconded by Commissioner Solomon. The motion was unanimously approved.

UT Center for Industrial Services Course – Motion was made by Commissioner Solomon to approve the Structural Collapse course. Seconded by Commissioner Boatright. The motion was unanimously approved.

A motion was made by Commissioner Green to approve the Machinery Rescue (Awareness Operations and Technicians) course. Seconded by Commissioner Moore. The motion was unanimously approved.

Fire Engineering Courses – Motion made by Commissioner Green to approve. Seconded by Commissioner Solomon. The motion was unanimously approved.

Vector Course – Motion to approve by Commissioner Boatright. Seconded by Commissioner Moore. The motion was unanimously approved.

Tennessee Fire Chiefs Association, Southeastern Association of Fire Chiefs Conference courses – Motion made by Commissioner Green to approve courses. Seconded by Commissioner Solomon. The motion was unanimously approved.

Public Comment

No public comment

Future Meetings

Next meeting dates: November 3rd (tentative hearing) and November 4th (Work session and Business meeting) in Middle TN at TFACA. Motion made by Commissioner Green. Seconded by Commissioner Henry. The motion was unanimously approved.

Adjournment – Motion made by Commissioner Henry to adjourn. Seconded by Commissioner Green. The motion was unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned with no further business to come before the Commission.