

Recertification is the Right Thing to Do.

By David Schliek, Chairman

As the window for recertifying your firefighters draws near, I thought I would highlight a few reference documents that many use in the delivery of emergency services. There has often been a concern or question about why one needs to recertify firefighters within the Minnesota certification system. Per policy this happens on April 30 at the end of a three year certification period.

The Board developed this policy a number of years ago as a proactive means of keeping firefighters in the system operating at a high level of proficiency. Most of the fire service involved in the program agreed and have wholeheartedly done an excellent job in keeping personnel current with existing standards. As years have past, many non-recertifying departments have seen the value of this process and have begun to recertify firefighters at respective levels. Where are you at????

The National Fallen Firefighters Foundation in developing their *16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives*, recognized the need for recertification as paramount as it pertains to the safety of the fire service. Initiative #5 states:

Develop and implement national standards for training, qualifications, and certification (including regular recertification) that are equally applicable to all firefighters based on the duties they are expected to perform (NFFF).

The safety of firefighters as they perform their job should be the #1 concern of all those that participate in the profession.

The 2008 Edition of NFPA 1001: *Standard for Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications* was written with a few changes, one of which was a “skills maintenance requirement”. Listed below is verbage taken from the standard that address the skills maintenance requirement.

Chapter I – Administration

1.3.8 The firefighters at all levels of progression shall remain current with fire protection technology, fire suppression practices, and applicable standards by attending workshops and seminars, undergoing certification testing, and accessing professional publications (NFPA p. 1001-6).

Annex – Explanatory Material

A.1.3.8 Continuing education or training is necessary to ensure that firefighters remain current and update their knowledge and skills in the evolving field of firefighting. Nationally recognized certification is one means of demonstrating proficiency in current practices (NFPA p. 1001-13).

Although the standard does not specifically refer to recertification, it does address the need of keeping skills current and up to date. This skills maintenance requirement is being written into many of the newly updated versions of Professional Qualification standards.

Within the Resource Management chapter of *NIMS*, there is also a reference that identifies need for personnel to possess a minimum common level of training, currency, experience, physical and medical fitness.....(NIMS p. 47). Again another nationally recognized document placing importance on keeping personnel training and operating at current levels of professional qualification. “Certifications with requirement for recertification compel firefighters to maintain awareness.” (Kistner, 2010, January).

As many fire organizations nationwide are seeing the need to include a currency/recertification component into newly established guidelines, many in Minnesota

have shared this belief for a long time. If you have questions about the status of your fire department and its personnel, give Theresa a call at 866-566-0911. Keep up the good work.

Kistner, D. (2010, January). Study Up! *FIRERESCUE*. p. 64-65.

NFFF. 16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives. <http://www.everyonegoeshome.com/initiatives.html>.

NFPA 1001. (2008). *Standard for Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications*. 2008 Ed. Quincy, Ma.: Author

NIMS. (2004, March). Department of Homeland Security. Washington D.C.: Author