

## NFPA 1710 Fire Standard Changes Move Forward

By Cathy Spain, NLC

Improvements to the 2004 version of the voluntary National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1710 standard were given preliminary approval by the technical committee responsible for its five-year revision process in early October. Included in the revisions are two substantive changes proposed by NLC. Technical committee members, including two NLC representatives, will formally vote on the changes by paper ballot by November 7.

The revised standard, which is formally known as the Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Career Fire Departments, will be released to the public on February 20, 2009, and is slated for final approval at the NFPA annual conference June 7-10, 2009 in Chicago, if there are no objections to the technical committee's work.

Working with the Council on Public Safety Excellence and the International City/County Management Association, NLC proposed daytime turnout times of 60 and 80 seconds for emergency medical services and fire suppression, respectively, 90 percent of the time during the public-comment stage of the revision process. For night responses (10 p.m. to 6:59 a.m.), the proposed objectives were 80 and 100 seconds 90 percent of the time. The turnout time objective in the current standard is 60 seconds — and in general terms turnout time refers to the time it takes firefighters to suit up after the fire alarm is sounded and get out of the firehouse.

After considerable discussion and some resistance from representatives of firefighter unions on the committee, the 1710 technical committee agreed to increase the standard to 80 seconds 90 percent of the time for fire suppression and special operations. The committee also agreed to undertake further study of the issue. A subgroup will oversee the research with representation from fire chiefs, firefighter union officials and management.

Another NLC-endorsed change adds a new annex to the standard providing an explanation of a community-wide risk management model. Annexes are used to give guidance to readers of standards. NLC sought to include language that is already found in the NFPA 1720 standard, which applies to volunteer companies. It outlines the wide range of activities that are undertaken by cities to protect both citizens and property, provides the context for evaluating response times and staffing recommendations in the 1710 standard, and recognizes varying community needs. These activities address fire prevention, education, enforcement and fire impact management

Because there has been considerable confusion about the application of the voluntary 1710 standard and how it is to be used, NLC sought other clarifying changes in the standard throughout the revision process. Language was added to explain its scope and application and how the time and staffing objectives it contains can be used as guidelines or performance benchmarks. The technical committee did not make any changes to the staffing objectives in the current version of the 1710 standard.

NLC's two representatives on the 1710 technical committee are Chris McKenzie, executive director, League of California Cities, and Kevin Ritchie, former executive director, Alaska Municipal League. Richard Brown, city manager, East Providence, R.I., represents the International City/County Management Association.

**Details:** For more information about the 1710 standard, contact Cathy Spain, director, NLC Center for Member Programs, at (202) 626-3123 or [spain@nlc.org](mailto:spain@nlc.org).

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