



STATE OF ARKANSAS FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES BOARD

June 3, 2026 Minutes



Meeting held at the Arkansas Fire Conference in Hot Springs, Arkansas.

Members Present:

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| ○ Michael Cossey, APFF | ○ Bo Higginbotham, ASFFA | ○ Brandon Taylor, ASFFA |
| ○ Travis Dover, APFF (<i>Virtual</i>) | ○ Kathryn Mahan-Hooten, AFD | ● Grant Warner, AFTA |
| ○ Brian Dunavan, AAFC | ○ Mark McCollum, AAFC | ○ Michael Willhite, ASFFA |
| ○ Ben Hammond, AFMA | ○ Brad Moore, ASFFA | ○ Shane Wood, AAFC (<i>Virtual</i>) |
| ○ Brad Hardin, AAFC | | |

Members Absent:

- | | | |
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| ○ Scott Baltz, ARVFA | ○ Marty Hamrick, APFF | ○ Vacant Position, APFF |
| ● Dennis Free, State Fire Marshal | ○ Keith Hillman, ARVFA | ○ Jason Wills, AFMA |
| ● A.J. Gary, ADEM | | |

Others Present:

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| ○ Louis Eckelhoff, State Fire Service Coordinator | ● Denotes <i>ex officio</i> members |
| ○ Tawnie Hughes, Assistant Attorney General (<i>Virtual</i>) | |

Meeting called to order by Chairman Brad Hardin at 1:02 pm.

Previous Minutes

Motion to approve previous minutes was made by Bo Higginbotham, seconded by Kathryn Mahan-Hooten and passed unanimously.

Arkansas Division of Emergency Management Report:

On behalf of State Fire Marshal Dennis Free, Louis Eckelhoff reported that the state fire code review process had begun; John Hogue has been hired as inspector to replace Barry Burke; and \$63,325 had been collected in fireworks permit fees. Thirty fire deaths have been reported in the state with 27 occurring in residential structure fires. Only two of those fire deaths had working smoke alarms. June 18 will be Fire Marshal Free's last day in the office before retirement.

Louis Eckelhoff, State Fire Service Coordinator, reported he received 542 Act 833 applications with 270 certified.

Arkansas Department of Agriculture Report:

Kathryn Mahan-Hooten, Rural Fire Protection Administrator, presented her report on property and equipment acquired from federal surplus and distributed to fire departments in the state.

During the period of March 2026 – May 2026, the division received 79 warehouse items worth \$55,995.36. Things includes sleeping bags and tool boxes. They received \$1,643,894.00 worth of large equipment, which included three fire trucks, 44 generator sets, one cargo trailer, three truck tractors, two firefighting tank trails and one type VI engine truck bed. Equipment distributed to fire departments included three truck tractors, two firefighting tank trailers, one cargo trailer and 12 generator sets. The value of all property distributed was \$314,569.60.

During that same period, the Forestry Division conducted 19 wildland training courses with 394 students in attendance from 161 fire departments. Two interest-free revolving fund loans totaling \$29,272.55 were provided to two fire departments. One refurbishment grant to cover repairs and refurbishment costs of FFP and FEPP equipment going out to fire departments was issued for \$9,102.95. Three state contract sales of three pump/engines and two foam skid units were made totaling \$44,592.00. Sixty-five Wildland Suppression Kits had been delivered. Each kit has

an average value of \$4,718.93. The 2026 Rural Fire Show will be held on Saturday, October 3 at the Conway Expo Center.

The total assistance provided by the Rural Fire Protection program to fire departments across the state during this time was \$760,262.94.

Arkansas Fire Training Academy Report:

Arkansas Fire Training Academy Director Grant Warner provided a report on items of interest at the academy. January 1 through March 31 this year, 7,675 firefighters have registered for courses, 6,291 firefighters have completed courses totaling 18,698 hours in 835 classes with a total of 1,870 IFSAC seals issued.

Director Warner reported there are three open instructor positions across the state. He also reported the AFTA budget will remain flat for the next two years as it has for the last two years.

Committee Reports:

FIRE PREVENTION COMMITTEE – Bed Hammond reported that the Fire Prevention Committee met in March. In the new fiscal year, the goal is to update the grant application package. The committee will explore creating packages for fire departments to apply for based on their size to help departments without a prevention program to create one. Louis Ecklehoff reported that during the committee meeting, the Fire Prevention Committee approved seven applications for smoke alarms with a total of 1,300 smoke alarms being awarded. Five additional applications have been received. 900 additional smoke detectors were purchased for \$22,393.29, which leaves \$12 in the fire prevention account at the end of the fiscal year. Pending applications include 1,000 requested by Benton County for all of their county fire departments. Brad Moore made a motion to purchase an additional \$10,000 in smoke detectors when the new fiscal year begins. The motion was seconded by Michael Willhite and passed unanimously.

FIREFIGHTER CERTIFICATION COMMITTEE – Committee Chairman Michael Cossey reported the committee will meet June 17th at 1:30 PM.

TRAINING COMMITTEE – The committee met March 18 to discuss Driver/Operator Pumper Aerial, Officer and Instructor textbooks. Brad Moore made a motion to approve Company Officer 7th edition, Driver/Operator 4th edition and Instructor 10th edition from IFSTA as the preferred textbooks. The motion was seconded by Michael Cossey and passed unanimously.

STRATEGIC PLAN COMMITTEE – Chairman Hardin presented a draft 2026-2030 plan for review by the Board to be at the March 2026 meeting. Ben Hammond made a motion to adopt the draft plan as a fluid document with the understanding that it will continued to be revised. The motion was seconded by Brad Moore and passed unanimously.

Unfinished Business:

FIRE DEPARTMENT CLASSIFICATION & CERTIFICATION – Chairman Hardin reported that the draft Board rule for the classification and certification of fire departments was still undergoing review by the Governor's Office. Extensive discussion occurred regarding the Board's desire to establish an ISO Class 8 rating as the minimum standard for the Act 833 program. No action was taken.

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent at 2:15 PM.