

EST Advisory Committee Minutes

April 9, 2008

- The meeting was called to order by Chairman Shannon Crays at 9:05 A.M.

Attending:

Shannon Crays
Dean Ellis
John DeBernardi
Steve Donahue
Bob Bailey
Alan Farnsworth
Jason Blubaum
Robert Maines
Jerry Settle

Justin Clemons (by phone)
John Miller
Mark Larson
Pat Mooney
Denny Neibaur
Ann Stephens
Burton Waite
Jerry Schroeder
Jeff Cappe

- **Review of minutes from last conference call** - Shannon Crays asked for a motion to accept the minutes as recorded. A motion was made and seconded and the minutes were accepted as written.
- **Recognition of retiring Advisory Committee members** - Ann Stephens thanked Bob Bailey for his service on the Advisory Committee.
- **New website** - Jerry Settle demonstrated an overview of new website. Jeff gave an overview of the new training calendar for EST.
- **Instructor issues** -
 - Lead time for instructor qualification – Jeff said that he receives course requests with instructor applications attached. In some cases, instructors are seeking approval to teach classes which have not yet been approved by the State Board of Education. He suggested the instructor applications have at least a 30 day processing time before approval of the application. He wants EST to remain customer friendly and keep time as short as possible. Motion by the Committee to recommend the suggested lead time be adopted and published in EST policy. Motion passed.
 - Mentoring outside your home department – A discussion about mentoring inside the instructor’s own department was held and the Committee felt that mentoring within an instructor’s own department might not give an honest assessment. The decision was made that instructors had to mentor outside their own department for qualification to teach EST classes. This process would not apply to instructors who teach In-House only. Also, EST does not pay mentoring until the instructor is teaching. Motion by the Committee to require instructors who are mentoring to become state-qualified instructors to mentor outside their own department. The motion passed.

Action Item: Staff to report back in a year how the mentoring process is working.

A discussion was held concerning how to qualify instructors to teach new classes such as those coming back from FDIC. In most cases, the curriculum has not even been submitted for State Board of Education approval. The idea of using a “Specialty Instructor” designation was discussed. The idea of scheduling a pilot delivery with field evaluation by state qualified instructors was discussed. EST will write a policy defining the field evaluation process to allow instructors to qualify as “Specialty Instructors” to teach new curricula and test it when the opportunity presents itself.

Action Item: EST will develop a process to qualify “Specialty Instructors.”

- **Certification issues**

- IFSAC reaccreditation site visit. - Jerry Schroeder reported that the IFSAC site visit for reaccreditation went well. The IFSAC Team reported the issues that they found during their exit interview. There were two concerns addressed:

1. Idaho's certification testing process is not referenced to the latest edition of the applicable NFPA Standards. Jerry noted this is an IFSAC requirement to update to the new Standard within three years of its adoption. It will be noted on the site visit report to IFSAC, but it will not affect our ability to continue to issue certifications as long as we comply with the three-year rule and update within three years of the adoption of the new edition of the Standard. Jerry further noted it would take about 1-1/2 to 2 years to comply with this requirement. This is the amount of time it takes for the publishers to create new textbooks and curriculum based on the new Standard. There also needs to be time for new questions and skill sheets to be written based on the new texts, and for the validation of those new questions and skill sheets.

2. The site team also expressed concern about Idaho's ability to do live-fire testing. Jerry reported EST has a very limited ability to do live-fire testing around the state with no site able to do all the live-fire skills testing using live-fire. Because of this, we can't do a random selection of skill sheets that test live fire training. Therefore, we had to write a policy that demonstrates how we would do live-fire testing in a fair and equitable manner statewide. The live-fire testing policy says all candidates will have one year from the start of the testing process to successfully complete a required live-fire skill sheet. The required skill sheet will be Firefighter 1 Skill Sheet # 24 – Attack an Interior Structure Fire, Ground Level. All remaining fire attack skill sheets remain available for random selection. If selected, any of the remaining fire attack scenarios will be run simulating the live-fire conditions.

Steve Donahue wanted it noted in the minutes that the EST staff did a great job to make the IFSAC Visit a success.

- If not regional testing, then what? — The certification program has grown to the point it is consuming a significant portion of the EST training budget. A discussion was held concerning ways to limit the impact certification testing is having on EST training funds. Jason Blubaum made a motion to make certification testing self supporting. Motion was seconded and passed.

Action Item: EST will develop a transition plan for the transfer of testing costs to individuals or Fire Departments.

- Consolidating testing events. -- Jerry Settle reported on progress he has made consolidating testing events. Multiple departments are now represented at most firefighter certification testing events. Driver/Operator -- Pumper testing is a large problem because of the apparatus required. Most departments do not allow their apparatus to be operated by individuals outside their department. Jerry also reported we are allowing lead evaluators as to work as skills evaluators in smaller testing events as a cost saving measure. The feedback from evaluators favors retaining the old practice of having the lead evaluator function as a test site manager. We will continue that practice at the larger testing events.

Motion was made by Steve Donahue and seconded that EST establish criteria for optimum numbers for testing, and that EST explore giving incentives to the host department for hosting a testing event with optimum numbers. Motion Passed.

Action Item: EST will develop an incentive plan to encourage hosting departments to provide optimum candidate numbers for certification testing.

○ A “Three Strikes and You’re Out” testing policy was discussed. The committee was not in favor of this idea. They felt by charging for testing, the problem of inadequately prepared candidates would become a non-issue.

○ Refresher training for evaluators? Jerry Settle reported EST is having problems getting all evaluators to attend the required annual refresher training. The question is how to get all of them advised of changes in policies and testing procedures? It was suggested we try on-line training like they have at the State Fire Marshal’s office. Mark Larson said that they have had very positive feedback for the on-line training. He felt online training would enhance the consistent training of evaluators. Jerry Schroeder will follow-up with Mark about the on-line training and report back at the next meeting.

Action Item: Jerry Schroeder to report on this online approach to evaluator training at the next meeting.

● Mobile live-fire training prop initiative. Jerry Schroeder reported the live-fire training proposal had been excluded from the Professional-Technical Education (PTE) budget by the Joint Finance and Appropriations Committee (JFAC) at this year’s legislative session. We learned from a member of JFAC that there had been some opposition to the proposal voiced to JFAC by members of the North Idaho Fire Chiefs. Without a consensus on how we want to approach live-fire training in Idaho, we have little chance of gaining legislative support for any approach to live-fire training and testing. A discussion of the pros and cons of fixed site versus mobile live-fire training props ensued. The following ideas were presented during the discussion:

1. The fire service must decide how they want to do live-fire training and testing. We must create a vision of what training looks like in the future, and develop a plan on how to get there. That plan should include an interim solution, short-term goals, and a long term goal.
2. The fire service must educate the general public and the legislature about the need for, and the value of live-fire training and testing.
3. EST does not have a working agreement in place to utilize any fixed facility in the state. One of the biggest stumbling blocks has been liability of the host department while their facilities are being used by fire personnel from outside their agency.
4. Perhaps the best short-term solution is a combination approach, utilizing existing live-fire facilities and a mobile live-fire prop.

Action Item- Jerry Schroeder will work on putting together a subcommittee to facilitate better communication.

● Curriculum and certification testing updates to conform with new NFPA 1001 and 472 Standards -- Jerry Schroeder reported the new IFSTA Essentials of Firefighting, 5th edition is now available. EST is receiving some requests to use “Fundamentals of Firefighter Skills, 2nd addition from Jones and Bartlett. Jerry is planning to host a Training Curricula meeting in July where the publishers will do a presentation on their curriculum and we can make a determination as to which curriculum we want to use in Idaho. We will address the issue of updating our certification testing processes to the new NFPA Standards at that meeting. Transition plans from the old to the new curriculum will be finalized at that time. EST currently plans to support IFSTA 4th edition Essentials until the end of 2008, if publisher supplies last that long. There will be a one year transition period starting September 1, 2008 where certification tests will be referenced to both the old and the new edition of the Standard. Haz Mat Operations will be tested with FF-1 beginning September 1, 2008. It was suggested by the Advisory Committee that we pick one book and stick with it.

● Vehicle extrication curriculum update project. Jeff Cappe reported he is beginning a curriculum revision project for the State Extrication curriculum. He brought several extrication instructors together in Payette to look at a curriculum used by a training team from L. N. Curtis. Alan Farnsworth was there and suggested that we merge the two curricula, including the skill sheets that go through basic operations. Jerry said the EMS bureau has asked to participate in the update of the patient care portion of the curriculum.

- Funding for academies Jeff reported EST will be working to develop a new formula for funding training at fire academies, schools, and conferences. The demand for training dollars has outstripped the supply, so we are forced to look at the way we determine EST's level of support.
- Discussion on increased or additional funding for training and testing. Mark Larson spoke about how we can build support in the field for additional funding. We need to use a grassroots approach so that the legislature gets the message that the fire service needs more training dollars to address training needs.
- Recertification policies – When an individual tests for a new certification level all previous certifications are adjusted to the new date and they get a valid until sticker for all certificates. This makes it easier for the training officer to deal with dates all at one time and they do not have to wait until 3 year to do the recertification. This is going to be published very shortly on the website and we are already dealing with recertification this way.

EST will send recertification notifications to the fire departments rather than to the individuals. Burton will prepare a list of firefighters for each department for confirmation that they are still at that department. EST will include a form on our website for updating contact information.

- **Other items**

Student ID numbers – A numbering system to replace Social Security numbers as student identifiers was discussed. So far, a dominant system to replace Social security numbers has not emerged. The IFSAC-sanctioned numbering scheme has been found to have a problem dealing with twins born on the same date. Neither FEMA nor the National Intergration Center have yet come out with their proposal for a unique responder identification number. EST is hoping that a new identification system will emerge soon so we can transition away from using Social Security numbers as identifiers. We would prefer to only make the change to the programming in our database only once if possible.

Return of the test booklets – EST will check into a system to pre-pay for return envelopes from testing events

NCR half sheets – printing is very expensive – Burton will look into the cost for this.

Justin – chat room or blog onto website – state can't afford the liability – can put a link but not liable for - will report back –

Action Item: Task PTE IT Support personnel to research State Department of Administration policies and the possibility of hosting a discussion board on our website. EST to report back with findings at next meeting.

- Next meeting: conference call – Wednesday, July 23rd – 09:00 AM MTN time
- Motion to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 3:30 P.M.

Reports on previous EST Advisory Committee Action Items:

Action item: Arrange firefighter skills workshops at the regional fire academies. We looked at this and chose not to move ahead on this. EST does not feel this is practical because most academies are already taxing local resources just to support academy classes. Jeff has asked instructors to use skill sheets for the hands on portion during academy classes. Jason Blubaum used the skill sheets during hands-on practice at the Clearwater Fire Academy. He reported that it worked well.

Action Item: Jerry Schroeder will find examples of study guides from other states and send them out to the committee to evaluate. It was also suggested EST publish study guides for the certification levels. Jerry has looked at study guides and decided not go there now. We will revisit this when we transition into the new curriculum based on the latest editions of the NFPA Professional Firefighter Qualification Standards.

Action item: Jerry Settle will check with departments about consolidating testing events when he coordinates testing. Jerry has done this, and it is working quite well.

Action item: Jerry Schroeder will research the NIMS compliance issue for Haz Mat curricula and will advise at the next meeting. – Jerry reported that our Hazardous Materials Awareness and Operations level curriculum are NIMS compliant.

Action item: Report of acceptable times for skill sheets-- Alan Farnsworth, Steve Donahue, Bob Maines, John DeBernardi, and Justin Clemons. – Alan reported the certification committee had not been able to reach a consensus on times. Alan asked if a check box asking if the skill was done swiftly, safely, and with competence could be added to the skill sheets. EST will add the additional criteria to the skill sheets.

Action item: Timely paperwork submission problem. This problem has improved considerably. If it becomes a problem again, EST will publish a list of offending instructors, and forward to the appropriate regional Fire Chiefs Association for local assistance to clear up the problem.

Action item: Report on web site changes. Jerry Settle reported on changes to the EST website which included elimination of “From the Manager,” and the addition of a “News Alert” feature. Jeff Cappe demonstrated the new training calendar format which allows all training and testing to show on one calendar, or a customized calendar showing only the types of training or testing you wish to see.