



STATE FIRE MARSHAL

Spring 2019 • 8895 East Main Street, Reynoldsburg, Ohio 43068 • Ohio Department of Commerce

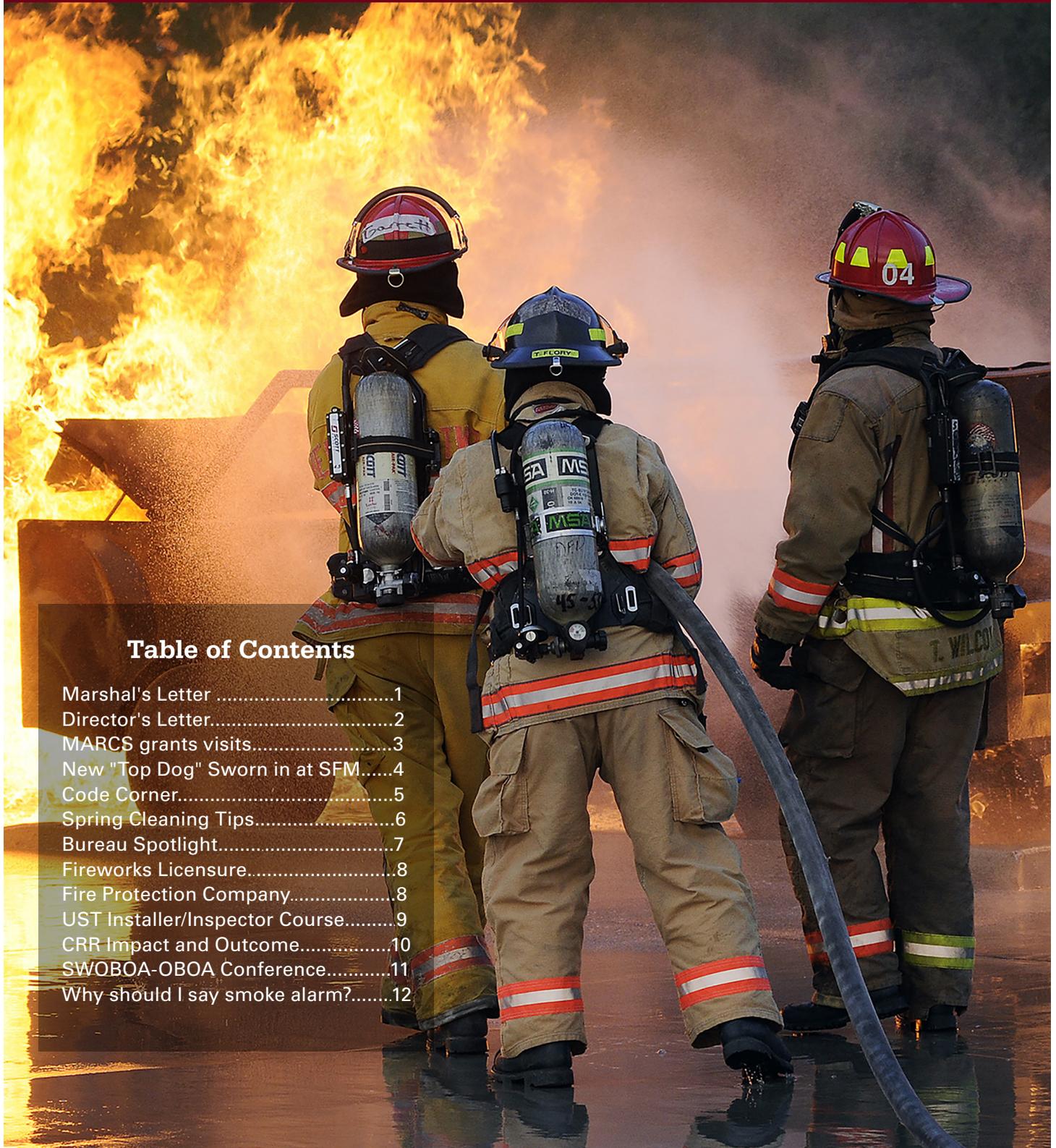


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Mike DeWine
Governor

Jon Husted
Lt. Governor

Sheryl Maxfield
Director

Jeff Hussey
State Fire Marshal



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A Message From Marshal Hussey



Amish–State Collaborative

Two years ago, our staff helped lead the creation of a robust, holistic approach to safety programs within the Amish and Mennonite communities – groups our office has a long history of serving.

We have, historically, provided some limited educational programs – mainly in the form of safety fairs within Amish communities throughout Ohio; and while these have been perceived as productive, there were certainly opportunities to enhance our efforts and improve relations with the Amish and Mennonite residents. These efforts have grown into an Amish–State Collaborative that now meets quarterly in Holmes County to address a variety of community risks.

As this group began its work, it became apparent the basis for success would require building relationships and trust with the Amish community. The collaboration consists of many governmental entities, including the Ohio State Fire Marshal (SFM), Ohio Department of Health, Ohio State Highway Patrol, Ohio Department of Transportation, Ohio Emergency Management Agency, along with several state legislators. The key to success has been the involvement and leadership of several Amish community leaders who have steered the group's efforts to build trust and respect. In turn, they have shared information with their own community members and paved the way for Amish and Mennonite residents to participate in numerous safety and health programs. While this may sound simple, it has been a major accomplishment and has required a great deal of cultural sensitivity.

Some examples of the work of this group have included greatly expanded Amish Health and Safety Day events in six counties. More than 1,500 residents participated in the event last fall in Holmes County. Several years ago, only 100 people would typically attend such an event. Attendees learned about fire safety, mental health, buggy safety and visibility, and health care opportunities.

Other results of the collaborative's efforts include pavement improvements with buggy lanes in low-visibility areas, as well as traffic safety outreach messages for tourists in these areas. Our Fire Prevention Bureau staff, along with the Ohio State Highway Patrol, have recently been invited into several Amish schools to teach safety programs to children. This was unheard of just a few years ago and is a testament to the dramatically improved relationship between committee members and the community.

As a result of this work, the collaboration is now effectively serving many of Ohio's approximately 75,000 Amish and Mennonite residents. There is still much work to do. Some upcoming goals include educating residents about cancer prevention and treatment, as well as providing grant funded immunizations. To help continue bridging cultural differences, the Amish leaders have offered to have members of their community teach cultural awareness courses to first responders and governmental agents.

I am proud of the work this group has done. I would like to especially thank Suzanne Snyder, the leader of the collaborative, as well as SFM Fire Safety Educator Steve Waltman, who has been working with this community for many years. This program should serve as a model for any of us serving populations with various cultural differences within our communities.

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A Message From Sheryl Maxfield



My name is Sherry Maxfield, and I am the new Director of the Ohio Department of Commerce. It is exciting to be in this role in the DeWine-Husted Administration, and I am grateful for the opportunity to serve. I come from a long line of public servants: My father was the mayor of the city in which I grew up, my grandfather also worked for the city and my great grandfather was the postmaster.

My upbringing was steeped in the idea government exists to help the community and improve the lives of the citizens who live and work there. Given that influence, it surprised few who knew me that I would spend my own career in public service as well. I spent more than 34 years at the Ohio Attorney General's Office – an agency that exists to protect Ohio families. On Jan. 14, I became the Director of the Department of Commerce – another agency that exists to protect Ohio families! Many of the core operations of these two state agencies, especially as it relates to the State Fire Marshal, are similar.

At the Attorney General's Office, the Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) does criminal investigations and has its own forensic laboratory to assist in that role. The State Fire Marshal does investigations and has its own forensic laboratory to assist in that role. The Attorney General's Office is responsible for the operation of the Ohio Police Officers Training Academy (OPOTA). The Department of Commerce operates the Ohio Fire Academy. OPOTA has a gun range and a driving track. The State Fire Marshal has the burn building. Basically, the Attorney General is responsible for one set of first responders and the Department of Commerce is responsible for another.

My exposure to OPOTA imprinted on me the importance of up-to-date training for first responders. While the Ohio Fire Academy already provides excellent training, our Department will continue to look for ways to make sure the latest information and techniques are provided. We will continue to provide training that is accessible and relevant to our community fire service partners. If you are not seeing areas covered by our curriculum you believe should, please contact us. Your input on what training is needed is an important component of our planning activities. Our goal is to make sure members of Ohio's fire service are prepared for the emergencies they respond to every day.

Our Department is actively engaged in the state budget process for the 2020-2021 biennium. Our budget request on behalf of the State Fire Marshal includes more than \$5 million in grant funding for MARCS radios and for training and other equipment. We are hopeful this request makes it through intact, so the Fire Marshal can continue to provide opportunities for our community fire service partners.

While I have only been on the job for a few months, I have been impressed by the quality work being done by the staff at the State Fire Marshal. Their professionalism and dedication to public protection is inspiring. I have heard from many of you about the State Fire Marshal's contributions to or cooperation on community fire service issues. Thank you for that feedback. The Department of Commerce values your input. Please contact us if there is some way in which you think this office can help you in the future.

Sherry

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Marshal Wraps Up Visits to MARCS Grant Recipients

State Fire Marshal Jeff Hussey recently wrapped up his yearly visits to recipients of the popular MARCS (Multi-Agency Radio Communications Systems) Grant.

The MARCS radio system allows first responders to seamlessly communicate, not only with each other, but with other agencies responding to an incident.

“When all responders are able to communicate instantly and seamlessly, it can speed up the resolution of the incident, protect lives and help minimize the spread of damage,” said Marshal Hussey.

Marshal Hussey schedules visits to the counties receiving the most funding each fiscal year and presents them with ceremonial checks. This year, Hussey visited Crawford, Defiance, Fairfield, Scioto, Washington and Wyandot counties. The award amounts were:

- Crawford County - \$619,478.58
- Fairfield County - \$549,782.95
- Defiance County - \$496,256.56
- Washington County - \$378,115.49
- Scioto County - \$360,000
- Wyandot County - \$279,017.29

The State Fire Marshal’s (SFM) office received more than \$12 million in requests for the \$3 million in available funding. In total, 242 fire departments in 40 counties received funding this year from the grant.

Marshal Hussey not only recognizes the importance of the opportunities this grant gives local fire departments, but he also values the chance these visits give him to spend time with our friends in the fire service.

This is the fifth year the State Fire Marshal’s office has offered this grant opportunity.



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New “Top Dog” Sworn In at SFM



There’s a new “top dog” at the State Fire Marshal’s (SFM) office!

Two-year-old German shepherd Rena was officially sworn-in as the newest explosive detection canine at SFM on May 14. She will replace 9-year-old Labrador retriever, Dodger, who is set to retire at the upcoming Fire Expo & Muster on June 22 after eight years of service.

Ohio Department of Commerce Director Sheryl Maxfield joined State Fire Marshal Jeff Hussey at the brief ceremony as Rena’s handler, Investigator Ron Stemen, took an oath and placed a badge on his new canine partner.

The work of an explosive detection canine goes far beyond just searching for evidence. Throughout her career, Rena will be dispatched to bomb threats, pre-event sweeps at events such as the Arnold Sports Festival, protection details for dignitaries such as the president of the United States, and much more.

Rena went through roughly three-and-a-half months of training to learn to identify explosives, as well as learn her search patterns and how to search. She was trained through the Columbus Division of Fire’s Bomb Squad by trainer Dennis Hammond; but, like her canine predecessor, she’ll continue to learn and grow throughout her career.

“These canines are really so fundamental in the work we do here,” Marshal Hussey said at the ceremony. “She’s going to go to bomb threats and do security sweeps – any time there’s an event where there’s a need for explosive security, there’s a good chance she’ll be there.”

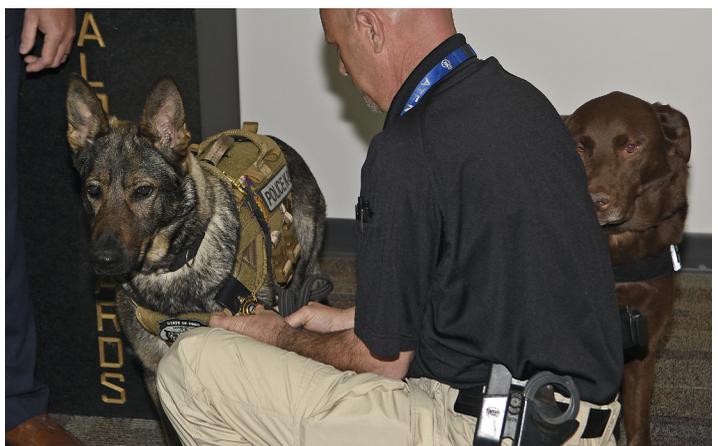
Throughout Dodger’s career, he participated in 1,438 missions – serving more than 15 million people. Like a lot of folks who retire, Dodger will still pop into the office every now and then. But mostly, he’s just going to enjoy spending time with his family and eating out of a bowl.

Come meet Rena and wish Dodger well in his retirement next month at the Fire Expo! Admission is free for this family friendly event dedicated to all things fire service!



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Code Corner

2017 Ohio Fire Code Distance Requirements for Open Burning, Recreational Fires and Portable Outdoor Fireplaces/Fire pits

As springtime brings warmer temperatures and sunnier conditions all throughout Ohio, it's important people in the communities you serve know and understand the state's laws on open burning, recreational fires and fire pits. Open burning and prescribed fires of any kind are prohibited between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. in the months of March, April, May, October and November. This includes the burning of trash and debris – even in a burn barrel. Outside of these restrictions, anyone wishing to conduct a burn must obtain landowner permission, remain with the fire while it burns and take all precautions to prevent the fire from spreading elsewhere.

See below for the full 2017 Ohio Fire Code distance requirements for open burning, recreational fires and portable outdoor fireplaces/fire pits.

Extinguishment authority.

Where open burning creates or adds to a hazardous situation, or a required permit for open burning has not been obtained, the fire code official is authorized to order the extinguishment of the open burning operation. (3) 307.3

Location.

The location for open burning shall not be less than 50 feet (15 240 mm) from any structure, and provisions shall be made to prevent the fire from spreading to within 50 feet (15 240 mm) of any structure. (4) 307.4

Exceptions:

1. Fires in approved containers that are not less than 15 feet (4572 mm) from a structure.
2. The minimum required distance from a structure shall be 25 feet (7620 mm) where the pile size is 3 feet (914 mm) or less in diameter and 2 feet (610 mm) or less in height.

Bonfires.

A bonfire shall not be conducted within 50 feet (15 240 mm) of a structure or combustible material unless the fire is contained in a barbecue pit. Conditions that could cause a fire to spread within 50 feet (15 240 mm) of a structure shall be eliminated prior to ignition. (a) 307.4.1

Recreational fires.

Recreational fires shall not be conducted within 25 feet (7620 mm) of a structure or combustible material. Conditions that could cause a fire to spread within 25 feet (7620 mm) of a structure shall be eliminated prior to ignition. (b) 307.4.2

Fire pits.

Recreational fires conducted in gas-fired recreational pits shall not be conducted within 15 feet of a structure or combustible materials. (i) 307.4.2.1

Portable outdoor fireplaces.

Portable outdoor fireplaces shall be used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and shall not be operated within 15 feet (3048 mm) of a structure or combustible material. (c) 307.4.3

Exception:

Portable outdoor fireplaces used at one-and two-family dwellings.

Attendance.

Open burning, bonfires, recreational fires and use of portable outdoor fireplaces shall be constantly attended until the fire is extinguished. A minimum of one portable fire extinguisher complying with paragraph (F)(906) of rule 1301:7-7-09 of the Administrative Code with a minimum 4-A rating or other approved on-site fire-extinguishing equipment, such as dirt, sand, water barrel, garden hose or water truck, shall be available for immediate utilization. (5) 307.5

For any questions, contact Code Enforcement Bureau Chief Alan Smith at 614- 752-7134.

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Spring Cleaning Fire Safety

We're finally thawing out here in Ohio, and that means it's time for some spring cleaning! As you begin your spring cleaning, remove clutter that may have built up over the winter months, including boxes, papers and other combustible materials taking up space in your home.



Paper & Boxes

Never store paper products near furnaces and water heaters. Move these items away from those appliances or discard them in your community recycle bins.

Avoid burning boxes and other paper items in fireplaces, wood stoves, outdoor fire pits and bonfires. Embers from paper products can be carried away by rising heat from fire and spread to neighboring buildings and properties. Paper also adds layers of creosote to your chimney, which can build up over time and cause chimney fires.



Clothes Dryers

While most people were taught to clean the lint trap inside their clothes dryer, it is equally as important to clean behind and under the dryer, as well. The tubing coming from the back of the dryer – as well as the rigid vent pipes leading outside – can clog with lint and dust, leading to a potential fire hazard.

If your dryer is taking too long to dry clothes or you smell something odd each time you use it, immediately check all vents, pipes and tubes coming from the back of the dryer. Additionally, do not operate your dryer while you're not home or sleeping.



Smoke Alarms

Just because you've changed the batteries in your smoke alarm, doesn't mean it cannot still malfunction. Dust can accumulate inside a smoke alarm, causing a malfunction or leading to nuisance alarms. That means you should vacuum your alarms to get rid of any dust. Use the soft brush attachment on a traditional vacuum cleaner or a hand vacuum, to reach up and gently clean the alarm of any possible dust buildup. While you're there, make sure to check the date of the alarm to ensure it's not more than 10 years old. Manufacturers recommend replacing smoke alarms before 10 years so you always have the protection your household needs.

Many hazards can easily be found and corrected if you take the time during your spring cleaning efforts. [Check out the Home Fire Safety Checklist](#) for some help!

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Bureau Spotlight: Testing and Registration

Within the State Fire Marshal’s office, the Bureau of Testing and Registration (T & R) is tasked with licensure requirements. A very small group, the T & R staff is responsible for the issuance of 40,000 licenses per year and processes \$3.8 million dollars in revenue annually.

- The bureau licenses the nearly 20,000 individuals and 2,000 companies who service, test, repair and install fire protection or firefighting equipment.
- The bureau licenses fireworks exhibitors and assistants, and also fireworks wholesalers, fireworks manufacturers and fireworks out-of-state shippers.
- T & R also licenses nearly 1,700 hotels and motels around the state.

The Testing and Registration Bureau also licenses

- More than 21,000 underground storage tanks located at gas stations, hospitals and other businesses, as well as the Installers and Inspectors who work on those underground storage tanks.
- In Ohio, there are more than 100 locations that store explosives, like black powder, and T & R staff issues permits for them to do business.
- The bureau even regulates cigarette manufacturers to ensure these companies produce cigarettes in such a way that reduces their tendency to ignite.

Testing and Registration is a tight-knit group full of staffers who enjoy regular potlucks, summer weather, and a good laugh. The bureau is comprised of nine people which include a bureau chief, asst. chief, and seven staff members. The goal of the bureau is to always provide excellent, customer-focused service to licensees and the public.

License verification can be viewed 24/7 online here! Simply search using name, license number, or complete a general search by license type or zip code.

T&R End of Calendar Year 2018 Numbers



\$3,844,935.00
TESTING AND
REGISTRATION REVENUE



40,000
LICENSES/PERMITS/
REGISTRATIONS PROCESSED



413
WALK-IN
CUSTOMERS

12,000
CALLS RECEIVED

Licensing Categories with number count (as of 3/8/19)

19,389 INDIVIDUAL FIRE PROTECTION	23 FIREWORK OUT-OF-STATE SHIPPERS
2,388 COMPANY FIRE PROTECTION	642 UST INSTALLERS AND INSPECTORS
163 PROVISIONAL FIRE PROTECTION	116 EXPLOSIVE MAGAZINE STORAGE
1,669 HOTELS/MOTELS	26 CIGARETTE MANUFACTURERS
2053 FIREWORK EXHIBITORS & EXHIBITOR ASSISTANTS	21,169 UNDERGROUND STORAGE TANKS
56 FIREWORK MANUFACTURERS, WHOLESALERS, AND FIREWORKS STORAGE LOCATIONS	1,037 UNDERGROUND STORAGE TANK PERMITS ISSUED

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Testing & Registration Fireworks Licensure

Fireworks season is fast approaching, so it's important to remember only those who have a fireworks exhibitor's license are legally permitted to shoot off fireworks in Ohio.

To become a licensed exhibitor in the state of Ohio, you will need to pass an examination with a score of at least 70 percent. Before you can take the exam, however, there are prerequisites outlined on the application that will need to be satisfied, including:

- Passing a national background check showing no felony convictions.
- Obtaining a letter of proficiency, written by a licensed exhibitor or wholesaler/manufacturer in Ohio stating you are proficient and safe in handling, transporting and discharging fireworks.

If you are new to the state of Ohio but are a licensed exhibitor in another state, a copy of that license will be accepted in lieu of a letter of proficiency. Documentation showing sufficient experience may also be accepted.

Most individuals who are new to the fireworks industry become licensed assistants first. As a license assistant, you can work with the exhibitor during show and learn the proper procedures for the safe handling of fireworks. Following a training period, the experience of our office has shown the exhibitor you are working for will usually write a letter of proficiency.

Check our [website](#) for a list of all licensed exhibitors and license wholesalers who can be contacted for assistant opportunities.

Additional information on the regulation and permitting can be found in the [2019 Red Book](#).



Fire Protection Company

Did you know all for-profit companies involved in the installation, service, or maintenance of "fire protection equipment," are required to be licensed? This equipment includes water lines, sprinkler systems, emergency lighting, smoke and fire detection, fire extinguishing systems and fire extinguishers.

All fire protection company licenses renew each year on July 1 and carry a renewal fee of \$150.

To apply for a Company Fire Protection Certification, click [here](#).



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Underground Storage Tank Renewal Fee Change

The State Fire Marshal's Testing and Registration Bureau began sending 2019-2020 registration renewals for properties with underground storage tanks via email the second week of April.

Annual registrations can be completed online in a completely paperless system. If you choose not to renew online, hardcopy renewals will be mailed automatically this month.

The deadline is June 30, 2019 to avoid any late penalty.

BUSTR Installer and Inspector Course 2019

In the first quarter of 2019, the Bureau of Underground Storage Tank Regulations (BUSTR) successfully completed Underground Storage Tank Installer and Inspector courses at the Ohio Fire Academy in Reynoldsburg.

This annual course graduated 15 students through both classes with all receiving the Certified Underground Storage Tank Inspector (CUSTI) licensure. Certified UST Inspectors are qualified to perform permitted inspection within their delegated fire departments, as well as private inspections in non-delegated areas throughout Ohio.

The installer course is geared towards fire department personnel who possess a Fire Safety Inspector (FSI) licensure from the Ohio Division of Public Safety. The course covers UST system activities such as installation, modification, major repair, removal etc. The class also discusses Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) construction safety and maintenance of UST systems, as well as environmental considerations and industry expert presentations.

The inspector course is geared towards fire department personnel who possess FSI licensure and have taken the installer course. The inspector course covers inspection of UST system: installation, modification, major repair, removal, out-of-service etc. The class covers the safety aspects of fire and explosion hazards while working on UST systems, reporting requirements and regulatory authority determinations. The course also covers nationally recognized standards from: American Petroleum Institute, National Fire Protection Association and Petroleum Equipment Institute.

Both courses culminate with the Certified UST Inspector (CUSTI) Certification Exam. Once the student passes both the certification exam and a background check, they are licensed as a CUSTI for the state of Ohio.

BUSTR anticipates making another course available in the first quarter of 2020.



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CRR: Evaluating Our Impact and Outcome | Part 2

by Richard Palmer, CPM – Assistant Chief, Fire Prevention Bureau

The following is the second part in our series on Community Risk Reduction (CRR). To read part 1 of this series, [click here](#).

The first part of this series focused on the need for fire departments to start processes to determine not only high-risk areas in their communities, but also to help decide where and how resources might be used more effectively. As to be expected, the activity of collecting data from various sources was mentioned.

These formative steps enable us to decide what to address and how to move forward. As we implement our strategies, we continue to collect data which will be used to identify how our approach impacts the community. It eventually measures the outcome of our efforts.

Impact is the realization of changes to an operation, a program, or even a safety education initiative. Impact is measured when good information is collected at the beginning of a process. From an education view, impact measures behavioral or

environmental change. From an engineering and enforcement view, it can be the installation of technologies with possible legislation to regulate use.

To realize what has changed, we must know – and document – where we started. A fire department, with its community partners, can gain useful information through a Community Risk Assessment.

There are six steps to this process as defined by the Institution of Fire Engineers, USA Branch project called Vision 20/20:

Step 1: Identify Risks

Step 2: Prioritize Risks

Step 3: Develop Strategies & Tactics to Mitigate Risks

Step 4: Prepare the CRR Plan

Step 5: Implement the CRR Plan

Step 6: Monitor, Evaluate, and Modify the CRR Plan

Vision 20/20 information states:

“The Community Risk Assessment Guide has been developed to help fire departments and other organizations to conduct a basic or more complex assessment of risks within their community. Ultimately, the results of the risk assessment can be used to develop a CRR plan.

“The guide describes various processes and methods used in the first two steps of developing a CRR plan: Identification of Risks and Prioritization of Risks. This is followed by a description on how to put it all together, with an example of how a risk assessment document might be compiled. The guide also includes a comprehensive list of additional resources that can be utilized in developing a risk assessment.”

Impact can often be seen by organizations very soon after they start a focused CRR effort. The outcome obviously takes longer to realize – and sometimes years to measure - but many model agencies are sharing significant outcomes that document improved service, financial savings and safer communities.

Find the Vision 20/20 Community Risk Assessment guide in the CRR Portal at strategicfire.org.



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SFM Participates in Annual Building Officials Conference in Cincinnati

This year's joint conference between the Ohio Building Officials Association (OBOA) and Southwest Ohio Building Officials Association (SWOBOA) was a little different than previous years.

For the 29th year of this annual conference – titled EXPERIENCE 2019 – Ohio's building officials were joined in Cincinnati by an enthusiastic audience of contractors, plans examiners and inspectors who all gathered to network and gain a deeper understanding of the work they do every day. For two-and-a-half days, leaders in the fields of electrical, structural, disaster mitigation, plumbing, and fire suppression and prevention hosted engaging and comprehensive training sessions to encourage a broader knowledge of their respective trades and provide vital continued education for their peers to maintain necessary certifications.

The State Fire Marshal's (SFM) Code Enforcement and Fire Prevention bureaus had the privilege of participating in this conference, discussing everything from the proper installation of underground fire mains and inspection/maintenance of fire sprinkler systems to the importance of fire safety during construction, demolition and renovation. At each session, many of those in attendance were from the building and fire officials world; however, there were also electricians, contractors, and mechanics.

In SFM's fire sprinkler session, the group discussed fire department connection requirements and component testing. During the underground fire mains portion of the program, SFM's presenters clarified conflicting understandings of building officials had regarding their authority for reviewing and approving those lines – highlighting the importance of including local fire officials when doing so. When talking about fire safety during construction, demolition and renovation, many in attendance were unaware of the importance of obtaining a "Hot Work" permit, which allows for work involving burning, welding or use of fire- or spark-producing tools.

In order to make our society safer, it is imperative the fire service be educated in the importance of the various safety codes. Collaboration between building officials, fire officials, and contractors allows for a smoother, more efficient construction process. In turn, this improves the customer experience and allows for a quicker completion of work. The success of this joint effort between the professionals during this conference shows Ohio is a leader in life safety prevention – working together to be knowledgeable in the art of keeping safety the number one priority of this collective industry.



Nomination Period Open

What better way to honor a colleague or outstanding community member than by nominating them for an Ohio Fire Service Hall of Fame Award!

State Fire Marshal and Division of EMS award categories include:

- Citizen's Award
- First Responder Award
- Valor Award
- Distinguished Service Award
- William L. Howard Public Service Award
- Fire Department of the Year Award
- Fire Instructor of the Year Award
- Fire Officer of the Year Award
- Fire Prevention Educator of the Year Award
- Fire Educator Lifetime Achievement Award

For the criteria and nomination form, [click here](#).

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Why Should I Say Smoke Alarm?

By Richard Palmer, CPM, Assistant Chief, Fire Prevention Bureau

Many firefighters and fire safety professionals still use the term “smoke detector” when talking about home smoke alarms.

We’ve long known there is a difference between smoke detectors and smoke alarms – the device placed on the ceiling or wall in a home to alert the residents to a fire is a smoke alarm.

“What’s the big deal?” you may ask. “People know what we’re talking about when we say it.”

We, the fire safety experts, should be sharing correct information. Saying the right words can make a difference.

Smoke Alarm

Underwriters Laboratories (UL) Standard UL 217 refers to a smoke alarm as a self-contained fire alarm device. The standard notes single-station alarms can be interconnected to become multiple-station units. Not only does a smoke alarm have the components to sense smoke, it has the necessary technology built into the device to sound an alarm. This is important as it pertains to our educational messaging.

Smoke Detector

UL Standard 268 gives a different perspective for detectors. This device is part of a system – an assembly of electrical components arranged to detect one or more products of combustion. It can be connected to other technology that ultimately includes alarms, but it does not have built-in alerting components. This device is typically found in commercial installations.

Educating the Community

It seems reasonable that people know what we’re talking about when we say detector. However, recognizing the device and having a mental picture of it doesn’t mean they act appropriately. Do they take the correct actions when an alarm sounds? Do they understand the alert means to take immediate action to exit the home? Do they believe simply having a “detector” on their ceiling is going to save their lives?

For decades, fire departments have told the public they need working smoke alarms. We’ve used the words “alarm” and “detector” interchangeably. We have reminded them smoke is dangerous and often lethal. We stress the importance of having working alarms in the home. We have told them the devices “save lives.” In recent years, we’ve become wise to the importance of effective messaging. We are telling people more prescriptive actions they should take, such as, “When the alarm sounds, get outside.”

For a person to act on a condition, they must first know and understand the expectations. They must have a personal investment in the response. Detectors determine changes in the environment; alarms give an alert indicating action is needed. It is important all messages we share stress the responsibility to act.

Let’s share our messages more wisely. It’s not enough to tell people to have alarms in place and to be sure they are working. We should instill behaviors that create action. Use the word alarm to designate that action should be taken.

Every step we take toward better messaging leads to a potential life saved.

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The Ohio Department of Commerce
Division of State Fire Marshal
8895 East Main Street
Reynoldsburg, OH 43068

614-752-8200
888-252-0803 Toll-Free
800-750-0750 TTY/TDD

websfm@com.state.oh.us
www.com.ohio.gov/fire

Mike DeWine
Governor

Jon Husted
Lt. Governor

Sheryl Maxfield
Director

Jeff Hussey
State Fire Marshal