

NEW FIRE SPRINKLER FITTER CERTIFICATION REGULATION TAKES EFFECT JULY 1, 2017

The Fire Sprinkler Fitter Certification Regulation had been approved and is set to go into effect on July 1, 2017.

The following is a summary of the new regulation's key components and the anticipated impact on CALSAFE members who are performing sprinkler work.

This regulation will impact all who perform “installation” work on Water based fire protection systems.

They include:

Wet, dry, pre-action and deluge fire sprinkler systems, including small hose connections, standpipe systems, private fire service mains and their appurtenances, including hydrants and monitor nozzles, water spray systems, foam water systems, fire pumps, water storage tanks, low, medium, and high expansion foam systems, and water mist systems.

The only items that are excluded are:

One and two family residential sprinkler systems, underground water supply lines to the first joint or mechanical connection at the base of the system riser, and pre-engineered systems water-based fixed extinguishing systems (an example is a kitchen hood system)

Installation is defined as:

Work performed on the above systems that include, new installation, retrofit, alteration, or repair.

Alteration is defined as a modification or an addition to an existing water-based fire suppression system.

Repair is defined as “to restore to normal working condition or fix damage”.

CALSAFE Comment: What will have to be determined through discussion with the OSFM is if the replacement of a painted sprinkler head, bad gauge, sprinkler escutcheon or even break caps will be defined as “repair”. **If so, then that work will have to be done by a Certified Sprinkler Fitter working for a C16 contractor. An OSFM A licensee will not be able to have their sprinkler fitter certified now perform a repair no matter how much or little it costs.**

There are two certifications for Fire Sprinkler Fitters, one is Commercial and one is Multi Family Residential:

A Commercial certified fire sprinkler fitter can install any of these water-based systems. A Multifamily Residential can only install in *residential* occupancy only of 3 or more dwelling units *up to 4 stories high*. (Remember one- and two-story family dwellings are specifically excluded.)

During the first 180 days --which would be from July 1, 2017 through December 27, 2017 -- an individual may apply for Sprinkler Fitter Certification if they can have an employer verify that they have the required hours and experience in the installation of these systems. These hours and this experience must be verified by an employer on their letterhead under penalty of perjury. The minimum requirement for a Commercial Certification is 7,000 hours and 5 years. For a Multifamily Residential Certification, it is 3,500 hours and 2 years. That verification along with the certification application must be sent to the State Fire Marshal along with a \$ 150.00 fee. If the State Fire Marshal accepts the verification of hours and experience they can issue the certification without the applicant taking a test.

CALSAFE Comment: Contractors need to take note that the waiver will only be available during the first 180 days!

After December 27, 2017, the fitter must have completed a California State or federally approved fire sprinkler fitter apprenticeship program.

A Journeyman, which is defined as a person who has successfully completed the required hours and years of experience of a California State or federally approved Fire Sprinkler Fitter Apprenticeship Program and a C16 license holder can also obtain a certification without having to take the test during this initial 180-day period.

After the 180 days ends on December 27, 2017, to apply for the Sprinkler Fitter Certification an applicant must be at least 16 years old and have the following qualifications:

Commercial Certification: The applicant must have at least 7,000 hours in a California State or federally approved fire sprinkler fitter apprenticeship program along with at least 5 years' experience working on these systems.

Multi-family certification: The applicant must have at least 3,500 hours in a State or federally approved fire sprinkler fitter apprenticeship program with 2 years of experience.

There would appear to be two exceptions to these requirements: The first is if the applicant is a C16 license holder this alternative appears under both the Certification Qualifications section 945 and the Certification Requirements Section 939. The second is if the applicant has attended a program in another state providing that the OSFM can determine if the curriculum meets the minimum requirements of the California DAS. This second exception appears under the Certification Qualifications section 939 but does not appear under the Requirements for Certification 945.

The applicant will then be required to pass a written test.

If the applicant has not gone through an approved fire sprinkler fitter apprenticeship program or if they are not the C16 license holder they will not be able to obtain certification after the initial 180 days!

CALSAFE Comment: CALSAFE is asking for clarification on the acceptance of the C16 license holder in-lieu of the apprenticeship program experience. The way the regulation is written it is confusing if this will be acceptable. One of the questions to ask is “who is the license holder?”

Any apprentice working on a job site will be required to have a Registration card issued from the OSFM. To obtain a registration card the applicant must be over 16 years of age and be enrolled and accepted in an approved California State or federally approved fire sprinkler fitter apprenticeship program and working for a C16 contractor.

As in most apprenticeship programs no more than one apprentice can work on a job site for every journeyman on the job site This means an apprentice is prohibited from working alone, they must have a journeyman supervising their work and there cannot be multiple apprentices on a job site working with one journeyman. The ratio is one to one. The regulation specifically defines the Direct Supervision requirement for a journeyman to be “on-site” supervision.

There is a provision for Trainee’s. A trainee is defined as a person or individual installing water based fire protection systems at an entry-level position for a C16 contractor. They must also be registered with the OSFM but can work for 90 days after their hire date before registering. If they are going to continue to work on installation jobs they must register no later than the 90 day period after their hire date. Once registered they have to have enrolled in an approved apprenticeship program before they reach the end of a 1 year period after their hire date. If they fail to do this, their Trainee registration is no longer valid and that

Trainee is barred from working on install jobs after that date. The only option would be for the Trainee to register and be accepted in an apprenticeship program, apply for an apprenticeship certification and begin work again after they have obtained the new certification or simply no longer work in the installation field. **A journeyman can supervise 2 Trainees on a job site.**

The fee for all of these certifications, registrations and their renewals is \$ 150.00. It is valid for the first year from the date it is issued until the following June 30th. The certification has to be renewed annually before May 1st of each year and will be valid annually from July 1st through the following June 30th. If a renewal is not made by the current year expiration date (June 30th) the applicant must start the application over as a new applicant and take the appropriate test in order to obtain a new certificate or registration. There is no grace period and anything renewed between May 1st and June

30th will have a 50% penalty added to the registration fee. (it would be \$ 225.00 instead of \$ 150.00 but is not available after June 30th)

Anyone with a Sprinkler Fitter Certification will have to submit proof of 3 units of continuing education units (CEU's) every three years by the time of the renewal (May 1st) of that third year or their certificate will not be renewed. These CEU's have to be meet using accredited programs. The OSFM will have a list of acceptable programs on their website. If this requirement is not met before the end of the three years, the certification will not be renewed and the applicant must fulfill the requirement, reapply and retest in order to obtain a certificate. In the mean time they will not be able to work because their certificate is not valid.

CALSAFE comment: While this is a personal requirement for the fitter to fulfill, if the employer is not vigilant in monitoring this, the contractor may end up with a fitter that cannot work because they have not completed their CEU's before the end of the three-year period.

An employer must insure everyone working on the job site has the proper certification and registration cards, have the correct ratios of journeymen to apprentices and trainees as well as notify the OSFM within 72 hours of a certified, apprentice or trainee new hire. In the case of trainees this will start the 90-day and one-year clock.

All Certified Sprinkler Fitters, Registered Apprentices and Registered Trainees must carry their cards while performing installation.

The OFSM or the local AHJ can ask to verify certification or registration cards on a job site. If there is a violation, (workers without valid cards or improper ratios) a Notice of Violation (NOV) or Correction Order can be issued. If not "corrected" in a 72-hour period, a **Stop Work Order can be issued.** *It is imperative that you research the ramifications of a "stop work order" on a job-site.* A Correction Order is defined as identifying what is wrong in a written direction or command delivered by an AHJ.

CALSAFE comment: It is unclear what the correction would be. Is it ensuring that all workers on the site have the proper cards, or will there be a requirement to remove any work that the un-carded workers installed. CALSAFE is asking OSFM for more clarity on this point.

Violations of the chapter can result in a civil penalty and possible misdemeanor charges.

Violations can also result in unfair business practice lawsuits.

CALSAFE comment: Employers may be the violator as they are required to insure all employees performing installation be certified or registered and the proper ratios are maintained.

Implementation Period:

July 1,2017 – December 27,2017: No card is required on the job site and those who want to obtain a Sprinkler Fitter Certification based on verified experience only must have submitted an application. Otherwise they will have to have be either a graduate of an approved apprenticeship program, be the C16 license holder or have proof of an out of state apprenticeship training program equal to the State's and take a test.

December 28,2017 – June 30,2018: No card is required on the job site, all applicants must meet the normal qualification requirements.

July 1,2018 – December 28,2018: Every job must have at least one Certified Sprinkler Fitter.

December 29, 2018 and thereafter: All jobs must have Certified Sprinkler Fitters performing the work with the proper ratio for any Registered Apprentices and Registered Trainees.

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