

NFPA®

1720

**Standard for the
Organization and Deployment
of Fire Suppression Operations,
Emergency Medical Operations,
and Special Operations to
the Public by Volunteer Fire
Departments**

2020



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NFPA® 1720

Standard for the

Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Volunteer Fire Departments

2020 Edition

This edition of NFPA 1720, *Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Volunteer Fire Departments*, was prepared by the Technical Committee on Fire and Emergency Service Organization and Deployment—Volunteer. It was issued by the Standards Council on April 28, 2019, with an effective date of May 18, 2019, and supersedes all previous editions.

This edition of NFPA 1720 was approved as an American National Standard on May 18, 2019.

Origin and Development of NFPA 1720

In 2001, the first edition of NFPA 1720 was issued. The development of that benchmark standard was the result of a considerable amount of hard work and tenacity by the Technical Committee members and the organizations they represented. That standard was the first organized approach to defining levels of service, deployment capabilities, and staffing levels for substantially volunteer fire departments. Research work and empirical studies in North America were used by the Committee as a basis for developing response times and resource capabilities for those services, as identified by the fire department.

Following the issuance of the first edition, the NFPA Standards Council asked the Technical Committee to begin the revision process for a 2004 edition of the standard. The Committee reviewed and revised the first edition of NFPA 1720. Existing definitions were cleaned up and new definitions added where needed to assist users of the standard. A new section on community risk management was added as was an annex titled “Risk Management Model.” New sections were also added on “reporting requirements” and “initial attack.” Annex material that included extracted figures from NFPA 1221, *Standard for the Installation, Maintenance, and Use of Emergency Services Communications Systems*, was added to assist users in determining if calls for service were being properly handled.

The 2010 edition of NFPA 1720 standardized and refined terminology and definitions used in the document. Table 4.3.2 was editorially revised to make it more understandable and the requirement that the fire department have the capability to initiate an attack within 2 minutes of having necessary resources at the scene in remote areas was moved from the footnotes to a new paragraph and made applicable to all operations. Introductory material for Table 4.3.2 was modified to indicate the requirements apply to a structure fire in a typical 2000 ft² (186 m²), two-story single family dwelling without basement and with no exposures. Text was added in the annex to assist users in calculating the percentage of times they meet the objective.

A new section on sustained firefighting operations was added, and several sections were revised and reorganized to present the requirements in a more logical order.

The annex material that discusses the requirements in NFPA 1221 was expanded and the two figures extracted from NFPA 1221 updated. Annex B was extensively revised to make it more concise by removing ambiguous text and figures. Annex C was deleted in its entirety.

The work done by the committee provided the user with a template for developing an implementation plan on the standard. Most important, it provided the body politic and the citizens a true picture of the risks in their community and the fire department’s capabilities to respond to and manage those risks.

For the 2014 edition of NFPA 1720, the committee reaffirmed the existing approach to providing emergency services for substantially volunteer fire departments. They also added a turnout time requirement for staffed stations.

For the 2020 edition of NFPA 1720, the committee made several changes throughout the document, including the addition of fire prevention practices as well as fire investigations. The committee also spent considerable time discussing the definition of *volunteer fire department*. As a result of these discussions, new annex material was added to clarify the definition.

Also included is a new plan development requirement for the AHJ to use to address those identified areas of NFPA 1720 that are not being met or that could develop over the following 3 years. Finally, the committee added a new requirement that pre-incident plans be in accordance with NFPA 1620.

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This list represents the membership at the time the Committee was balloted on the final text of this edition. Since that time, changes in the membership may have occurred. A key to classifications is found at the back of the document.

NOTE: Membership on a committee shall not in and of itself constitute an endorsement of the Association or any document developed by the committee on which the member serves.

Committee Scope: This Committee shall have primary responsibility for documents on the organization, operation, deployment, and evaluation of substantially all volunteer public fire protection and emergency medical services.

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NFPA 1720

Standard for the

Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Volunteer Fire Departments

2020 Edition

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NOTICE: An asterisk (*) following the number or letter designating a paragraph indicates that explanatory material on the paragraph can be found in Annex A.

A reference in brackets [] following a section or paragraph indicates material that has been extracted from another NFPA document. Extracted text may be edited for consistency and style and may include the revision of internal paragraph references and other references as appropriate. Requests for interpretations or revisions of extracted text shall be sent to the technical committee responsible for the source document.

Information on referenced and extracted publications can be found in Chapter 2 and Annex C.

Chapter 1 Administration

1.1* Scope. This standard contains minimum requirements relating to the organization and deployment of fire suppression operations, emergency medical operations, and special operations to the public by volunteer and combination fire departments.

1.1.1* The requirements address functions and outcomes of fire department emergency service delivery, response capabilities, and resources.

1.1.2 This standard also contains minimum requirements for managing resources and systems, such as health and safety, incident management, training, communications, and pre-incident planning.

1.1.3 This standard addresses the strategic and system issues involving the organization, operation, and deployment of a fire

department and does not address tactical operations at a specific emergency incident.

1.1.4 This standard does not address community education, support services, personnel management, and budgeting.

1.2 Purpose.

1.2.1 The purpose of this standard is to specify the minimum criteria addressing the effectiveness and efficiency of the volunteer and combination public fire suppression operations, emergency medical service, and special operations delivery in protecting the citizens of the jurisdiction.

1.2.2 Nothing herein is intended to restrict any jurisdiction from exceeding these minimum requirements.

1.3 Application.

1.3.1* The authority having jurisdiction determines if this standard is applicable to its fire department.

1.3.2 The standard is a benchmark for a common response and a platform for developing the appropriate plans for deployment of resources for fires in higher hazard occupancies or more complex incidents.

1.4* Equivalency. Nothing in this standard is intended to prohibit the use of systems, methods, or approaches of equivalent or superior performance to those prescribed in this standard, provided technical documentation is submitted to the authority having jurisdiction to demonstrate equivalency.

Chapter 2 Referenced Publications

2.1 General. The documents or portions thereof listed in this chapter are referenced within this standard and shall be considered part of the requirements of this document.

2.2 NFPA Publications. National Fire Protection Association, 1 Batterymarch Park, Quincy, MA 02169-7471.

NFPA 472, *Standard for Competence of Responders to Hazardous Materials/Weapons of Mass Destruction Incidents*, 2018 edition.

NFPA 1221, *Standard for the Installation, Maintenance, and Use of Emergency Services Communications Systems*, 2019 edition.

NFPA 1500, *Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety, Health, and Wellness Program*, 2018 edition.

NFPA 1561, *Standard on Emergency Services Incident Management System and Command Safety*, 2014 edition.

NFPA 1620, *Standard for Pre-Incident Planning*, 2015 edition.

2.3 Other Publications.

2.3.1 FEMA Publications. Federal Emergency Management Agency, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 500 C Street SW, Washington, DC 20472.

National Incident Management System, March 1, 2004, available at http://www.fema.gov/pdf/emergency/nims/nims_doc_full.pdf.

National Response Framework, January 2008, available at <http://www.fema.gov/pdf/emergency/nrf/nrf-core.pdf>.

2.3.2 Other Publications.

Merriam-Webster’s *Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th edition, Merriam-Webster, Inc., Springfield, MA, 2003.

2.4 References for Extracts in Mandatory Sections.

NFPA 472, *Standard for Competence of Responders to Hazardous Materials/Weapons of Mass Destruction Incidents*, 2018 edition.

NFPA 1142, *Standard on Water Supplies for Suburban and Rural Fire Fighting*, 2017 edition.

NFPA 1221, *Standard for the Installation, Maintenance, and Use of Emergency Services Communications Systems*, 2019 edition.

NFPA 1500™, *Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety, Health, and Wellness Program*, 2018 edition.

NFPA 1521, *Standard for Fire Department Safety Officer Professional Qualifications*, 2015 edition.

NFPA 1710, *Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Career Fire Departments*, 2016 edition.

NFPA 1901, *Standard for Automotive Fire Apparatus*, 2016 edition.

Chapter 3 Definitions

3.1 General. The definitions contained in this chapter shall apply to the terms used in this standard. Where terms are not defined in this chapter or within another chapter, they shall be defined using their ordinarily accepted meanings within the context in which they are used. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th edition, shall be the source for the ordinarily accepted meaning.

3.2 NFPA Official Definitions.

3.2.1* Approved. Acceptable to the authority having jurisdiction.

3.2.2* Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ). An organization, office, or individual responsible for enforcing the requirements of a code or standard, or for approving equipment, materials, an installation, or a procedure.

3.2.3 Shall. Indicates a mandatory requirement.

3.2.4 Should. Indicates a recommendation or that which is advised but not required.

3.2.5 Standard. An NFPA Standard, the main text of which contains only mandatory provisions using the word “shall” to indicate requirements and that is in a form generally suitable for mandatory reference by another standard or code or for adoption into law. Nonmandatory provisions are not to be considered a part of the requirements of a standard and shall be located in an appendix, annex, footnote, informational note, or other means as permitted in the NFPA Manuals of Style. When used in a generic sense, such as in the phrase “standards development process” or “standards development activities,” the term “standards” includes all NFPA Standards, including Codes, Standards, Recommended Practices, and Guides.

3.3 General Definitions.

3.3.1 Advanced Life Support (ALS). See 3.3.27.1.

3.3.2 Aid.

3.3.2.1* Automatic Aid. A plan developed between two or more fire departments for immediate joint response on first alarms. [1142, 2017]

3.3.2.2 Mutual Aid. Reciprocal assistance by emergency services under a written plan among AHJs that is part of communication center's dispatch protocol.

3.3.3* Alarm. A signal or message from a person or device indicating the existence of an emergency or other situation that requires action by an emergency response agency. [1221, 2019]

3.3.4 Area.

3.3.4.1 Remote Area. A geographic area that requires a travel distance of at least 8 mi (12.87 km) from a fire station to provide emergency services.

3.3.4.2 Rural Area. As defined by the U.S. Census Bureau, an area with fewer than 500 people per square mile.

3.3.4.3 Suburban Area. As defined by the U.S. Census Bureau, an area with between 500 people and 1000 people per square mile.

3.3.4.4 Urban Area. As defined by the U.S. Census Bureau, an area with at least 1000 people per square mile.

3.3.5 Automatic Aid. See 3.3.2.1.

3.3.6 Basic Life Support (BLS). See 3.3.27.2.

3.3.7 Combination Fire Department. See 3.3.16.1.

3.3.8 Company. A group of members assembled at the scene that operate under direct supervision and are trained and equipped to perform assigned tasks.

3.3.9* Company Officer. A supervisor of a crew/company of personnel. [1710, 2016]

3.3.10 Crew. See 3.3.39, Team.

3.3.11* Demand Zones. An area used to define or limit the management of a risk situation.

3.3.12 Emergency Incident. Any situation to which an emergency services organization responds in order to deliver emergency services, including rescue, fire suppression, emergency medical service, special operations, law enforcement, and other forms of hazard control and mitigation.

3.3.13 Emergency Medical Service. The treatment of patients using first aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, basic life support, advanced life support, and other medical procedures prior to arrival at a hospital or other health care facility. [See also 3.3.27.1, *Advanced Life Support (ALS)*; 3.3.27.2, *Basic Life Support (BLS)*; and 3.3.20, *First Responder (EMS)*.]

3.3.14 Emergency Operations. See 3.3.30.1.

3.3.15 Fire Apparatus. A vehicle designed to be used under emergency conditions to transport personnel and equipment, and to support the suppression of fires and mitigation of other hazardous situations. [1901, 2016]

3.3.16 Fire Department. An organization providing rescue, fire suppression, emergency medical services, and related activities to the public.

3.3.16.1 Combination Fire Department. A fire department having emergency service personnel comprising less than 85 percent majority of either volunteer or career membership.