Overview of Process for Certification to NFPA Standards for Fire and Emergency Services

PPE

IOM Workshop on Certification of PPT

April, 13, 2010
NFPA Standards

- Provides voluntary consensus standards for fire and emergency services PPE
- NFPA organization establishes standards committees (TCs) for specific categories of PPE. Technical committees operate with TCC.
- Committees are balanced to include participation by fire service and emergency responders, manufacturers and general interest members, including certification organizations
- Standards are frequently updated and revised, typically on a 5 year schedule
- NFPA approval process is systematic: announcement/first draft/public proposal/public comments/report on comments/annual meeting/standards council/final approval
Examples of NFPA Standards

• NFPA 1971 - Protective ensemble for structural fire fighting

• NFPA 1999 - Protective clothing for emergency medical operations

• NFPA 1977 - Protective clothing and equipment for wildland fire fighting

• NFPA 1994 - Protective ensemble for first responders at CBRN terrorism incidents
Certification to NFPA Standards

- NFPA does not evaluate, test or approve any products or systems.
- All NFPA standards for emergency services PPE require that products be certified.
- Each NFPA standard contains the requirements for certification to that standard in Chapter 4.
Certification Process

• Certifying organization (e.g. UL, SEI) responsible for inspection, evaluation, testing to NFPA standard to determine product compliance
• Certifying organization must be independent 3rd party accredited to ISO Guide 65. Accreditation organization must meet ISO 17011, requirements for conformity assessment
• Certification organization labs accredited to ISO 17025
Certification Process

• Product is labeled and listed by certification organization
• Compliant product bears certification organization’s mark, label and statement of compliance with NFPA standard (with specific wording)
Manufacturer’s Quality Assurance Program

• Product is tested initially and annually to verify compliance
• Follow-up program at least twice each year
• Manufacturer must provide quality assurance program in accord with ISO 9001; products are always evaluated to NFPA standards
Hazards, Complaints and Safety Alerts

- Certification organization must establish procedures to be followed if compliant product is found to be hazardous
- Manufacturers must have systems for safety alerts and product recall
- Requires manufacturers’ investigation of complaints and returns
Summary

- NFPA Standards are examples of well developed consensus standards for a wide range of fire and emergency service PPE
- NFPA standards are the most comprehensive for protective clothing for any occupational category
- Require 3rd party certification by an accredited independent certifying organization (e.g. UL or SEI)
- Require programs of quality assurance, investigation of complaints, safety alerts and product recall
Key Questions

- What can be learned from this model?
- Why was the process developed?
- What factors were considered in establishing a 3rd party process?
- What should be the role of government in the certification process?
- What are the timelines? Fee schedule?
- What are the challenges regarding innovation, interfaces between PPE components?
- What is the value of conformity assessment program?
- What production oversight procedure are in place?
- How does certification of PPE impact safety of fire fighters and emergency responders?
Session 1

• 8:40 – 8:50  Richard Duffy, International Association of Fire Fighters
• 8:50 – 9:00  Diane Haithcock, Underwriters Laboratories
• 9:00 – 9:10  Eric Beck, MSA
• 9:10 – 9:30  Discussion with the committee