



STATE FIRE PREVENTION COMMISSION

MINUTES June 23, 2026

APPROVED

Date: June 23, 2026

Time: 11:00 a.m.

Location: Ocean City Convention Center room M201

Roland E. Powell Convention Center
Room M201
4001 Coastal Highway
Ocean City, Maryland

Commission Members Present

- Caroll H. Spriggs, II, Chairman
- Mark Hopkins, Vice Chair (via Google Meet)
- Jerred A. Johnson, Commissioner
- Randy E. Sanger, II, Commissioner (via Google Meet)
- Eric L. Smothers, Commissioner
- Jamie L. McAllister, Commissioner (via Google Meet)

Also Present

- Mary Beth Collins, Counsel to the Commission (via Google Meet)
- Carl Witmer, Acting Deputy Chief State Fire Marshal
- Jason Mowbray, Acting State Fire Marshal
- Dexter Hodges, Acting Chief Deputy of Operations
- Ken Bush, Chief Fire Protection Engineer
- Edward Walters, Maryland State Police
- Retired Fire Marshal Barnard
- Captain Dennis Dawson, Baltimore City Fire Marshal's Office

Call to Order

Chairman Spriggs called the meeting to order at 11:05 a.m. Following the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance, the Chairman proceeded with the agenda.

Fire Marshal's Report

Acting State Fire Marshal Jason Mowbray introduced members of the Office of the State Fire Marshal staff in attendance and presented the agency report.

Fire Fatality Statistics

AFM Mowbray reported that, as of the meeting date, calendar year 2025 had recorded:

- 55 residential fire fatalities
- 7 vehicle fire fatalities
- 9 other fire-related fatalities
- Total: 71 confirmed fire deaths statewide

For calendar year 2026, the agency had recorded:

- 20 residential fire fatalities
- 1 vehicle fire fatality
- 2 other fire-related fatalities
- Total: 23 confirmed fire deaths statewide

Four additional cases remained pending review by the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner. AFM Mowbray noted that approximately half of the residential fire fatalities involved homes without working smoke alarms.

Agency Statistics

The Office of the State Fire Marshal reported:

- More than 450 investigations
- Approximately 2,700–2,800 inspections
- Approximately 550 plan reviews
- 77 community risk reduction and public education events

A new inspection tracking system had recently been implemented to improve data collection and workload analysis.

Legislative Update

AFM Mowbray reviewed recently enacted legislation, including:

- **House Bill 149** – Residential rental high-rise safety and fire alarm licensing provisions.
- **House Bill 833** – Continuation and expansion of the lithium-ion battery safety work group.
- **House Bill 848** – Valet trash legislation, which the agency opposed but was enacted as emergency legislation.
- **Senate Bill 624** – Short-term vacation rental legislation.

AFM Mowbray also reported that the agency remained actively involved in the House Bill 222 CSST Study and the Senate Bill 436 Single Stairwell Study.

Significant Incidents

AFM Mowbray summarized several notable incidents, including:

- An arson fire at the former Springfield Hospital Center in Carroll County.
- The Elkton Walmart arson and theft case, which resulted in the arrest of a suspect in New Jersey.
- Multiple lithium-ion battery fires, including incidents in Washington County and Harford County.

Personnel and Recognition

The Commission was advised of several personnel recognitions and changes, including:

- Recognition of employees honored at the Department of State Police awards ceremony.
- Promotion of Duane Svites and Joseph Walters to Section Chief positions.
- Retirement of Fire Protection Engineer Harry Bradley after 46 years of service.
- Appointment of Emma Walters as a contractual policy mitigation specialist.

AFM Mowbray presented a certificate recognizing Chief Fire Protection Engineer Ken Bush for 50 years of service to the State of Maryland, and the Commission offered its congratulations.

Community Risk Reduction and Outreach

The agency reported that its spring Community Risk Reduction initiative resulted in the installation of nearly 200 smoke alarms and 47 carbon monoxide alarms. The next statewide CRR weekend was scheduled for October 17–18, 2026.

Additional outreach initiatives included:

- The annual fireworks safety campaign scheduled for June 30, 2026.
- The Get Alarmed Maryland program.
- A new carbon monoxide boating safety partnership with the Maryland Natural Resources Police.

Website and Accessibility

AFM Mowbray advised that the Office of the State Fire Marshal had launched a new website and was reviewing all online forms for accessibility compliance with state requirements.

Recruitment and Staffing

The agency had recently completed recruitment for two Deputy State Fire Marshal positions and was continuing to address several civilian vacancies. Engineering Services was also revising job descriptions for plan review technician positions.

MFIRS and NERIS Update

AFM Mowbray reviewed ongoing efforts to complete outstanding MFIRS submissions and reported significant progress with the transition to NERIS, including improved reporting compliance in Frederick County and Prince George's County. Montgomery County was expected to begin submitting data through a compatible RMS system by July 1, 2026.

Commission Discussion

Commissioners discussed fireworks storage concerns related to America 250 events, participation in the single-stairwell study group, and NERIS reporting compliance, including Baltimore City's status. AFM Mowbray agreed to follow up with Baltimore City regarding its reporting progress.

Chief Fire Protection Engineer's Report

Chief Fire Protection Engineer Ken Bush thanked the Commission for recognizing his 50 years of service and provided an engineering services update.

Mr. Bush reported that:

- Fire Protection Engineer Harry Bradley would retire at the end of June 2026.
- Engineering Services had already coordinated transition plans with Harford County, Cecil County, and the Maryland Stadium Authority.

- Derek Murgatroyd would assume regional engineering responsibilities previously assigned to Mr. Bradley.

Mr. Bush also reported on his attendance at the NFPA Conference and meetings of the International Fire Marshals Association. Topics discussed nationally included lithium-ion battery safety, carbon monoxide code dilution concerns, and upcoming updates to NFPA 70 and NFPA 101 for the 2027 edition cycle.

Omega Sprinkler Head Discussion

AFM Mowbray and Chief Bush presented information regarding recalled Omega sprinkler heads manufactured by the former Central Sprinkler Company.

The discussion addressed:

- The 1997 cease-and-desist order prohibiting further sale and installation of the product.
- Recent contractor correspondence incorrectly implying that the State Fire Marshal had ordered mandatory replacement.
- CPSC recall information identifying known operational failures.
- NFPA 25 requirements regarding recalled components.
- Legal limitations on retroactive enforcement in existing buildings and single-family dwellings.

Commissioners discussed the life-safety implications, the need for public education, and the possibility of a harmful condition declaration.

Captain Dennis Dawson of the Baltimore City Fire Marshal's Office described Baltimore City's approach to identifying recalled sprinkler heads and recommended a statewide public awareness effort.

Motion

Motion by Vice Chair Hopkins, seconded by Commissioner Smothers, to establish a task group and hold a special meeting within one to two months to determine the appropriate path forward regarding Omega sprinkler heads and a potential harmful condition declaration.

Vote: Unanimously approved.

Chairman Spriggs and Acting State Fire Marshal Mowbray were directed to consult with the Office of the Attorney General regarding the legal process and potential Commission action.

National Fire Sprinkler Association Letter

Chairman Spriggs advised the Commission that a letter had been received from the National Fire Sprinkler Association requesting that un-sprinklered high-rise residential buildings be recognized as harmful conditions and that retrofit strategies be considered.

The Commission discussed the matter and agreed that no action would be taken until legal guidance was obtained from the Office of the Attorney General and consultation occurred with the Office of the State Fire Marshal and the Department of State Police.

Other Business

Commissioners offered additional comments regarding legislative planning, future agenda items, and recognition of retiring Commissioner Edward Tochtermann for his years of service.

No additional business was brought forward by guests in attendance.

Meeting Scheduling

The Commission discussed scheduling the next meeting to be earlier than usual to discuss the CSST work group report. By consensus, a meeting was scheduled for August 17, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. The report is due by September 1, 2026. The location was to be announced by the Chairman.

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

Chairman Spriggs entertained a motion to approve the minutes of the previous meeting.

Motion by Vice Chair Hopkins, seconded by Commissioners Smothers, Sanger, and McAllister, to approve the previous meeting minutes.

Vote: Approved unanimously.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Commissioner Johnson moved to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Smothers. The motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Spriggs adjourned the meeting at 12:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carl D. Witmer

Acting Deputy Chief Fire Marshal

Acting Secretary, State Fire Prevention Commission

APPROVED