

Minutes of the Heating Advisory Committee
September 18, 2008

Members present: Kevin Bayley, Omer Beaudoin, Jeffery Cyr, Steve Dumais, Al Little, Robert Lundergan

Interested members of the community present: Bruce Buttrick, Tedd Evans, Jim Fusco

Joe Rose had been invited to the meeting to present the committee with information on a NFPA 54 test. The idea under consideration is offering this test in lieu of the eight hour NFPA 54 class. The test would only be available to those who seek to be licensed by the experienced technician route.

Mr. Rose discussed the chain of custody for the exams. They are only sent to CETP certified proctors. (Note the process to become one is simple and open to everyone.) The proctor gets two pages of instructions that he must read to the students. Then the test takers break the seal and remove the answer sheet and the test booklet from its package. The test is an open book test, where each examinee must bring his/her own copy of NFPA 54. At the end of the test, the test booklets and the answer sheets are sealed in the envelope. All scrap paper must be turned in. All of the test packages must be returned, weather or not they have been used. The tests are then graded by a third party.

The committee and the interested community members viewed some sample test questions.

Mr. Rose said we could have as many questions as we wanted on the test. That we could have as many questions as we wanted taken from the various sections of the code. That there would be one test, however there could be several versions, where the order of the questions would be different from one version to the next version.

The committee members and the interested members of the community had a lengthy discussion about the test and its format. The minutes will reflect the sense of this discussion by topics, rather than chronologically, for the sake of clarity.

Sections of the code covered by the test.

One of the biggest questions to be solved is how much of the test to allot to the various sections of NFPA 54.

The committee asked those who have presented the 8 hour NFPA 54 class, how much time was spent of each topic. A summary follows.

Jim Fusco: Not a lot of time on Sect. 10, Annex 5%, piping 25 to 30%, venting 25%.

Joe Rose: piping 1 ½ hr., combustion air 1 ½ hr., venting 1 hr., 45 minutes practice using the code book.

Bruce Buttrick: two four hour sessions. Session 1: review code, definitions, system piping, pipe sizing, inspecting and testing piping, worksheets. Session 2: Review, appliance installation, venting, sizing category I vents, combustion air, and NFPA 211 chimneys.

Tedd Evans: The test is different from the classroom. The test should cover the entire code.

Amelia's Law (RSA 153:27 III) focuses on gas pipe sizing, venting, combustion air, and ventilation air. The committee agreed that this should be the heart of the test. Tedd Evans suggested that 15% of the test be allocated to each of these topics. That allows 40% of the test for the rest of the code. No decision was made.

Specific questions on the test.

Currently the test questions were made up by Dr. Lyons (who was responsible for developing the CETP training program in concert with NPGA). Tedd Evans commented that when the Plumbing Board was developing the voluntary certification exam for water treatment, they had a team of 7 people who vetted the questions. He suggested that the NFPA 54 questions be checked by experienced gas people. No decision was made.

Passing grade for the test.

Should the passing grade be 70% or 75%? CETP and NATE use a passing grade of 70%. Tedd Evans noted that when the Plumbing Board used 70% as the passing grade. They found that 65% to 75% of those who took the Journeyman's Test passed. They also found that 95% to 98% of those who took the Master's Test passed. They solved the problem with the Master's Test by raising the passing score to 75%.

It was also noted that NATE uses beta testing to determine the passing score and the validity of the questions on the test. No decision was made.

Test taking environment.

A NFPA 54 code book and a calculator should be allowed in the room. No calculators in any electronic devices, such as cell phones or blackberries. No decision was made.

Length and time of the test.

The sense of the committee is that 50 questions are not enough. The idea of more than 100 questions was discussed. Tedd Evans brought up that fact that the ICE tests allow 1 ½ to 2 minutes per question. They allow 2 hours for an 80 question test. No decision was made.

Test administration.

Who should administer the test?

How often should the test be offered?

How much will the test cost? (Joe Rose said the cost of the test would be about \$30 to \$35.) The test costs include proctor wages, room rental, publicity, etc.

No decision was made.

Jim Fusco inquired about tests he had submitted to the Fire Marshal's Office for Piping Installer, Installation Technician, Service Technician, and Hearth System Installation and Service. He was wondering why they hadn't been brought up to the committee. It seems they were following a different path for approval. The committee offered to look at the tests if they were submitted to us.

The next meeting of the committee was scheduled for October 23, at 4:00 PM. On our usual date October 16, all of the propane members would be at a meeting.