

NFPA®

1521

Standard for
Fire Department Safety Officer
Professional Qualifications

2020



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NFPA® 1521

Standard for

Fire Department Safety Officer Professional Qualifications

2020 Edition

This edition of NFPA 1521, *Standard for Fire Department Safety Officer Professional Qualifications*, was prepared by the Technical Committee on Fire Service Occupational Safety and Health and released by the Correlating Committee on Professional Qualifications. It was issued by the Standards Council on November 4, 2019, with an effective date of November 24, 2019, and supersedes all previous editions.

This edition of NFPA 1521 was approved as an American National Standard on November 24, 2019.

Origin and Development of NFPA 1521

The first edition of the *Standard for Fire Department Safety Officer* was issued in 1977 as NFPA 1501 and established a standard for a new role in the fire service. Very few fire departments had safety officers, and their role was not well defined. The second edition was issued in 1987 to coincide with and support a new document, NFPA 1500, *Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program*. The 1987 edition of NFPA 1501 provided more specific direction on the duties, responsibilities, and qualifications for the position based on the experience and insight gained since the first edition.

In 1992, the document was redesignated as NFPA 1521, and the concept of assistants serving as safety officers under a fire department safety officer was introduced, recognizing that the safety job requires many persons operating in the system. The text was revised in several areas to emphasize the role of the fire department safety officer as the program manager.

The 1997 edition focused on differentiating between the incident safety officer (ISO) and the health and safety officer (HSO) in response to questions concerning the roles, responsibilities, qualifications, and training required for each of these positions. That edition also showed how each position fit into a fire department's risk management plan, and it included sample forms for fire station inspections.

The 2002 edition was a reconfirmation of the standard with editorial changes to bring the document in line with the *Manual of Style for NFPA Technical Committee Documents*.

The 2008 edition updated the standard to reflect current practices in organizing and appointing an HSO within a fire department. The qualifications and functions of both an HSO and an ISO were updated to reflect both current requirements and best practices. A role was defined for a person with special technical expertise to serve as an assistant to the ISO when the technical complexities of the incident are beyond the expertise of an ISO.

In the 2008 edition, the requirement for the HSO to be a fire department officer was deleted, as this position is sometimes filled by a person who is not a uniformed member of the fire department. The requirement for the ISO to be a fire department officer was also changed to allow persons who have certain professional qualifications to fill that role even if they are not appointed as fire department officers.

Annex material was added to the 2008 edition to assist the ISO in writing a post-incident analysis (PIA) report, along with examples of forms that can be used to track the items the ISO is responsible for at the incident scene.

For the 2015 edition, the document was entirely rewritten to match the formatting of the job performance requirement (JPR) documents that reside within the Professional Qualifications project. Previous editions of NFPA 1521 were written in standard *Manual of Style for NFPA Technical Committee Documents* formatting. This marked change in the formatting of the document came after

several years of discussion, questions, and committee work within the Fire Service Occupational Safety and Health Technical Committee, the Professional Qualifications project, and the Correlating Committee for the Professional Qualifications.

The real impetus for this change came as an indirect result of the Professional Qualifications “Now and Beyond Workshop” that was held back in 2011. One item that was discussed at the workshop was how certifications were being provided by the Pro Board and International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC) on NFPA documents that were not in the JPR format. At the time, NFPA 472, *Standard for Competence of Responders to Hazardous Materials/Weapons of Mass Destruction Incidents*, and NFPA 1521 were two such documents. The work by the committee responsible for NFPA 472 was well underway; however, the recurring question was, “Should NFPA 1521 be rewritten into the JPR format at its next revision?” This was brought back to the committee by the committee chair at the time, Chairman Glenn Benarick, as he was in attendance at the workshop, to see if the committee was interested in following a similar approach that was being addressed by the committee responsible for NFPA 472.

Revising the 2015 edition of NFPA 1521 was a completely new process in which a committee that had never developed a JPR document was doing just that — developing a JPR document based on an existing document. Another interesting twist in this process was that this document now written in JPR format, was required be a part of the Professional Qualifications project, and thus report to the Professional Qualifications Correlating Committee. Also unique is that NFPA 1521 is the only document that the Fire Service Occupational Safety and Health Technical Committee is responsible for that reports through a correlating committee.

The 2015 edition revisions, both in reformatting and rewriting the document, and the fact that the document became part of the Professional Qualifications project and correlating committee, required the collaboration and hard work of many. While that revision cycle was a learning experience for all those involved in the process, the document became better at meeting the needs and demands of the end user and the responder community.

In the 2020 edition, NFPA 1521 includes additional detail, as it is the first revision cycle of the standard since it became a professional qualifications document in the JPR format. The technical committee has added knowledge points to the competencies for ISOs primarily in two areas: contamination control and traffic incident safety. Those sections have been updated to match the contamination control requirements in NFPA 1500. This includes critical knowledge points regarding the removal, care, and washing of personal protective equipment (PPE). For traffic incidents, vehicle location details and PPE knowledge points have been added. The department safety officer section also includes additional contamination control detail.

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Committee Scope: This Committee shall have primary responsibility for the management of the NFPA Professional Qualifications Project and documents related to professional qualifications for fire service, public safety, and related personnel.

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

Chapter 1 Administration

1.1 Scope. This standard identifies the minimum job performance requirements (JPRs) for health and safety officer (HSO) and incident safety officer (ISO) for a fire department.

1.2* Purpose. The purpose of this standard is to specify the minimum JPRs for service as a fire department HSO and ISO.

1.2.1 This standard shall define HSO and ISO for a fire department.

1.2.2 The intent of this standard shall be to ensure that personnel serving as HSOs and ISOs for a fire department are qualified.

1.2.3* This standard shall not address organization or management responsibility.

1.2.4 It is not the intent of this standard to restrict any jurisdiction from exceeding or combining these minimum requirements.

1.2.5 JPRs for each level or position are the tasks personnel shall be able to perform to carry out the job duties. (See Annex D.)

1.2.6* The HSO and ISO shall remain current with the general knowledge, skills, and JPRs for each qualification level.

△ 1.2.7 The JPRs shall be accomplished in accordance with the requirements of the authority having jurisdiction (AHJ), NFPA 1500, and NFPA 1561.

1.3 Application. The application of this standard is to specify which requirements within the document shall apply to an HSO and ISO for a fire department.

1.3.1 The requirements of this standard shall apply to members serving in organizations providing rescue, fire suppression, emergency medical services, hazardous materials mitigation, special operations, and other emergency services, including public, military, private, and industrial fire departments.

1.3.2 This standard shall not apply to members serving in facility fire brigades, which might also be known as emergency brigades, emergency response teams, fire teams, plant emergency organizations, or mine emergency response teams.

1.3.3 The JPRs shall be accomplished in accordance with the requirements of the AHJ and all applicable NFPA standards.

1.3.4 It shall not be required that the JPRs be mastered in the order in which they appear. The AHJ shall establish instructional priority and the training program content to prepare personnel to meet the JPRs of this standard. (See Annex D.)

1.3.5* Performance of each requirement of this standard shall be evaluated by personnel approved by the AHJ.

1.3.6 The JPRs for each level shall be completed in accordance with recognized practices and procedures or as defined by law or by the AHJ.

1.3.7 Personnel assigned the duties in Chapter 4 shall meet all the requirements defined in Chapter 4 prior to being qualified. Personnel assigned the duties in Chapter 5 shall meet all the requirements defined in Chapter 5 prior to being qualified.

1.3.8 The AHJ shall provide personal protective clothing and the equipment necessary to conduct assignments.

1.3.9 JPRs involving exposure to products of combustion shall be performed in approved PPE.

1.3.10 Prior to training to meet the requirements of the standard, personnel shall meet the following requirements:

- (1) Educational requirements established by the AHJ
- (2) Age requirements established by the AHJ
- (3)* Medical requirements as developed and validated by the AHJ and in compliance with applicable legal requirements
- (4) Job-related physical performance requirements as developed and validated by the AHJ

1.3.11 Wherever in this standard the terms *rules*, *regulations*, *policies*, *procedures*, *supplies*, *apparatus*, or *equipment* are referred to, it is implied that they are those of the AHJ.

1.4 Units. In this standard, values for measurement are followed by an equivalent in SI units, but only the first stated value shall be regarded as the requirement. Equivalent values in SI units shall not be considered as the requirement, as these values can be approximate. (See Table 1.4.)

Table 1.4 U.S.-to-SI Conversions

Quantity	U.S. Unit/ Symbol	SI Unit/ Symbol	Conversion Factor
Length	inch (in.)	millimeter (mm)	1 in. = 25.4 mm
	foot (ft)	meter (m)	1 ft = 0.305 m
Area	square foot (ft ²)	square meter (m ²)	1 ft ² = 0.0929 m ²

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 414, *Standard for Aircraft Rescue and Fire-Fighting Vehicles*, 2020 edition.

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

NFPA 1006, *Standard for Technical Rescue Professional Qualifications*, 2017 edition.

NFPA 1021, *Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications*, 2020 edition.

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