



ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL YEAR 2025
July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025

Commission No. SP-0156

The State Fire Prevention Commission was established in 1964 and consists of nine members appointed to a maximum of two five-year terms by the Secretary of the State Police, with the approval of the Governor in accordance with Public Safety Article Title 6-201. The Commission had one remaining vacancy at the end of Fiscal Year 2025. Appointments and reappointments are critical to ensure a quorum is met for each meeting in order to conduct official business. The following members served on the Commission in Fiscal Year 2025:

Edward S. Tochterman, Jr. Chairman 2nd Term Expires June 30, 2026 Not eligible for reappointment	At-Large Industry Representative
Caroll H. Spriggs, II Vice Chairman 1st Term Expires June 30, 2027 Eligible for reappointment	At-Large Career Fire Company
Mark Hopkins, PE 1st Term Expires June 30, 2027 Eligible for reappointment	Central Maryland Architect/Engineer
Jerred A. Johnson 1st Term Expires June 30, 2028 Eligible for reappointment	Eastern Shore Volunteer Fire Company
Randy E. Sanger, II 2nd Term Expires June 30, 2028 Not eligible for reappointment	At-Large Building Contractor
Ephraim R. Siff 1st Term Expires June 30, 2029 Eligible for reappointment	At-Large Member of Public
Eric L. Smothers 1st Term Expires June 30, 2029 Eligible for reappointment	Western Maryland Volunteer Fire Company
Daniel J. Stevens 1st Term Expired June 30, 2025 Not seeking reappointment	Southern Maryland Volunteer Fire Company
Vacancy	Washington-Metro Area Industry

The Fire Prevention Commission may be contacted as follows:

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Secretary: Heidi Ritchie

PUBLIC SAFETY ARTICLE TITLE 6-204:

The Commission is mandated to hold a minimum of six regular meetings every year. The August 15, 2024, meeting was cancelled due to a lack of quorum. The Commission held seven public meetings in Fiscal Year 2025 but no official business was conducted at the June 17, 2025, meeting due to a lack of quorum. The Commission also held two public hearings in Fiscal Year 2025 on the adoption of amendments to the State Fire Prevention Code.

FISCAL YEAR MEETINGS AND ATTENDANCE ROSTER								
MEETING DATES LOCATION & MEMBERS	9/27/24 Aberdeen (meeting)	10/17/24 Odenton (meeting)	12/19/24 Pikesville (meeting)	2/20/25 Annapolis (meeting & public hearing)	3/31/25 Laurel (public hearing)	4/17/25 Laurel (meeting)	6/4/25 Annapolis (special meeting)	6/17/25 Ocean City (meeting no quorum)
HOPKINS	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	A
JOHNSON	P	P	A	P	P	A	P	A
SANGER	P	P	A	P	A	P	A	P
SIFF	P	A	P	P	P	A	P	A
SMOTHERS	A	A	P	P	P	P	P	P
SPRIGGS	A	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
STEVENS	P	P	A	P	A	P	A	A
TOCHTERMAN	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P

P=Present A=Absent

PUBLIC SAFETY ARTICLE TITLE 6-501:

The Commission is empowered to hear appeals filed by a person who is aggrieved by an order or decision of the State Fire Marshal or his designee in the course of enforcing the State Fire Prevention Code.

One appeal was received in Fiscal Year 2025. The appellant, Kellner's Fireworks, appealed the State Fire Marshal's decision to require additional vent holes in a fireworks storage magazine. The issue was satisfactorily resolved and the appeal was withdrawn before being heard.

PUBLIC SAFETY ARTICLE TITLE 6-206:

The Commission is empowered to promulgate, amend, and repeal regulations for the safeguarding of life and property from the hazards of fire and explosion and to hold public hearings pertaining to such regulations. Code of Maryland Regulations as promulgated by the Commission may be viewed at the Commission's website.

COMAR 29.06.01 State Fire Prevention Code

In Fiscal Year 2024, on November 2023, the Commission began its review to adopt the 2024 editions of *NFPA (National Fire Protection Association) 1 Fire Code* and *NFPA 101 Life Safety Code* and amend the State Fire Prevention Code regulations accordingly. Chairman Edward Tochtermann and Commissioner Hopkins served on the Code Update Review Committee along with 33 other state and local building and fire code officials. Chaired by the Office of the State Fire Marshal Chief Fire Protection Engineer Kenneth Bush, six day-long meetings were held to review and discuss the codes and regulations. On behalf of the review committee, Chief Fire Protection Engineer Bush presented proposed recommendations to the Fire Prevention Commission members at its February 15, 2024, meeting. The Commission voted to table any motion to vote on the recommendations until such time a task group could meet with Maryland State Police Colonel Butler and his staff to discuss the code adoption process. At the Commission's June 18, 2024, meeting, Chief Fire Protection Engineer Bush presented three

additional review committee recommendations for proposed amendments. The Commission voted unanimously to accept these additional recommendations and the recommendations presented at its February 15, 2024, meeting. The proposed amendments were submitted to the Maryland State Police legislation coordinator on June 25, 2024, for processing.

In Fiscal Year 2025, the adoption process continued. The amendments as proposed by the Commission were modified by the Maryland State Police with the proposed action being published in the February 7, 2025, edition of the *Maryland Register*. Due to an error in the public comment period notice, an errata was published in the *February 21, 2025*, edition of the *Maryland Register* to extend the public comment period through March 10, 2025. Public hearings were held on February 20, 2025, and March 31, 2025. One public comment was received.

After considering the public comment and modifications made by the Maryland State Police pertaining to the retrofitting of existing residential high-rise buildings with fire sprinkler systems, the Commission unanimously voted at its April 17, 2025, to reject adoption.

The most recently adopted NFPA Codes at that time were the 2018 editions of NFPA 1 and NFPA 101 since the 2021 editions were never adopted. In the course of meetings with various local code enforcement officials and fire service organizations, not having more recent editions of the fire codes was presenting challenges due to conflicts with other more recently adopted codes and changes in various industries and technologies. On May 9, 2025, a meeting was held with representatives of various organizations, the State Fire Marshal's Office, and the Commission Chairman to discuss these concerns. Subsequently, the Commission held a special meeting on June 4, 2025, to reconsider the adoption of the 2024 fire codes with amendments as modified by the Maryland State Police. The Commission unanimously voted to proceed with adoption of the 2024 NFPA fire codes and the proposed amendments as modified by the Maryland State Police. The final notice of adoption was published in the *Maryland Register* on June 13, 2025, with final adoption effective June 23, 2025.

The Commission continues to believe that unsprinklered residential high-rise buildings are an inimical hazard to both occupants and firefighters and it will continue to pursue options to have fire sprinkler systems installed.

PUBLIC SAFETY ARTICLE TITLE 6-205:

The Commission is mandated to promote and conduct seminars, conferences, workshops and meetings at least once each year to inform the public and firefighting personnel of the latest techniques in fire prevention programs and procedures, life safety measures, changes in the State Fire Prevention Code, and developments in improved fire and life safety goals. The Commission co-sponsors the annual Mid-Atlantic Life Safety Conference along with several other organizations. This conference offers a variety of fire and life safety oriented workshops presented by some of the nation's leading fire and emergency services professionals. The 2025 conference had approximately 200 attendees, 22 presentations, and 18 sponsors and vendors.

PUBLIC SAFETY ARTICLE TITLE 6-302:

The Secretary of State Police appoints a State Fire Marshal from a list of three names submitted by the Commission. The former State Fire Marshal, Brian S. Geraci, was appointed in 2013 and retired December 31, 2023. The Commission diligently fulfilled its responsibility and interviewed perspective State Fire Marshal applicants in April 2024, submitting a list of three names to Secretary Butler for his consideration. As of June 30, 2025, the position remains unfilled.

MEMBER AFFILIATIONS:

Throughout the year, Commission members attend and participate in a variety of activities and serve on committees involving fire prevention education, fire and emergency services, fire and explosive investigation, and code enforcement. Networking with members of these organizations and associations provides Commission members a greater understanding of the needs of Maryland's code enforcement authorities and the emergency services community. Some of these organizations include the following:

Maryland Rehabilitation Code Advisory Council

Public Safety Article 12-1003 established this council that consists of 27 members, one of whom is a representative of the Fire Prevention Commission. The council encourages private investment in existing buildings by streamlining the code requirements for rehabilitation work in buildings older than one year. Commissioner Tochtermann represented the Commission on this council in Fiscal Year 2025.

Workgroup to Develop High-Rise Fire Safety Best Practices

During the Maryland 2024 legislative session, HB823/SB689 were passed and signed into law to establish a "Workgroup to Develop Fire Safety Best Practices for Pre-1974 High-Rise Apartment Buildings". Chairman Tochtermann represented the Commission on this workgroup. The Workgroup took effect June 1, 2024 and presented its final report to the Governor and legislature on June 30, 2025.

[https://dlslibrary.state.md.us/publications/Exec/MDSP/HB823Ch744\(2\)\(2024\)_2025.pdf](https://dlslibrary.state.md.us/publications/Exec/MDSP/HB823Ch744(2)(2024)_2025.pdf)

Workgroup on Single-Exit Stairways

During the Maryland 2025 legislative session, HB0489/SB0436 were passed and signed into law requiring the Maryland Department of Labor to study building code requirements for single-staircase buildings from four to six stories in height.. While the Commission does not have an official representative on this workgroup, Commissioner Hopkins has volunteered to participate. The building and fire codes are intertwined with requirements for exits and stairways.

Workgroup on Lithium-Ion Battery Safety

During the Maryland 2025 legislative session, HB0468/SB0532 was passed and signed into law to study and make recommendations regarding certain best practices, standards, and guidelines to further lithium-ion battery safety. While the Commission does not have a representative on this workgroup, NFPA 855 (Standard for the Installation of Stationary Energy Storage Systems) is adopted by reference as part of the State Fire Prevention Code.

Workgroup on Corrugated Stainless Steel Tubing for Fuel Gas Piping Systems

During the Maryland 2025 legislative session, HB0222/SB0175 were passed and signed into law to study and make recommendations to strengthen requirements of what products may be sold and used in Maryland. While the Commission does not have a representative on this workgroup, gas leaks involving corrugated stainless steel tubing (CSST) have been the cause of many fires and the Commission is interested in this topic. The failure of CSST gas piping in two fire incidents that were caused by lightning strikes in single-family dwellings contributed to the intensity of the fire at each incident. A firefighter death occurred during the fire suppression operations in each of these referenced fire incidents. NFPA 54 (National Fuel Gas Code) is adopted by reference as part of the State Fire Prevention Code.

Maryland State Firemen's Association

The association membership is comprised of volunteer departments from throughout the State whose mission is to serve, promote, advocate and represent the interests of the volunteer fire, rescue, and emergency medical services of Maryland. Several commissioners are members of this association.

Maryland Fire and Explosives Investigators Association

The association is a non-profit corporation that serves the fire and explosives investigation community across the Mid-Atlantic Region by providing training and educational opportunities and sharing information. Since the State Fire Prevention Code adopts regulations that deal with fireworks and explosive, networking with members of this association provides information on industry standards and practices.

Maryland Emergency Management Association

The association promotes and supports an all-hazards approach to emergency management in the State of Maryland to save lives and property during natural and manmade disasters. The legislative committee monitors legislation at the state and national levels to determine any potential impact on emergency management.

National Fire Protection Association

National Fire Protection Association codes are adopted by incorporation or by reference under the Maryland State Fire Prevention Code. This association is a U.S.-based international nonprofit organization devoted to eliminating death, injury, property, and economic loss due to fire and related hazards. Over 250 technical committees play a crucial role in developing the nationally and internationally recognized codes and standards. The association typically reviews and updates its codes on a three-year cycle or at other intervals as needed. Commissioner Hopkins serves on several National Fire Protection Association committees in a personal capacity.

National Fire Sprinkler Association

The National Fire Sprinkler Association advocates for a stronger industry and a safer world by promoting fire sprinklers in model codes and legislation. The regional chapter of the association provides its input and opinions during the Maryland State Fire Prevention Code adoption process and is active in attending the meetings of the State Fire Prevention Commission and offering various cost-free training seminars to building and fire code authorities throughout Maryland. Commissioner Hopkins serves on its Engineering & Standards Committee in a personal capacity.

MISCELLANEOUS:

Line-Item Budget Expenses

The Commission's expenses are reported to the Department of State Police on a quarterly basis. Expenses for Fiscal Year 2025 totaled \$5,075.43. This includes travel/meal expenses, court stenographer services/transcripts, postage, or other miscellaneous purchases.