



Standard for Commissioning of Fire Protection and Life Safety Systems

2021



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NFPA® 3

Standard for

Commissioning of Fire Protection and Life Safety Systems

2021 Edition

This edition of NFPA 3, *Standard for Commissioning of Fire Protection and Life Safety Systems*, was prepared by the Technical Committee on Commissioning and Integrated Testing. It was issued by the Standards Council on March 15, 2020, with an effective date of April 4, 2020, and supersedes all previous editions.

This edition of NFPA 3 was approved as an American National Standard on April 4, 2020.

Origin and Development of NFPA 3

The 2012 edition of NFPA 3, *Recommended Practice for Commissioning and Integrated Testing of Fire Protection and Life Safety Systems*, represented NFPA's first document outlining a systematic approach to provide documented confirmation that fire protection and life safety systems function as intended by the owner and the design team. The genesis of this document was a request from the National Institute of Building Sciences (NIBS) to provide a commissioning document for fire protection systems that would be part of a conglomeration of commissioning documents that could be used to create a total building commissioning program.

NFPA 3 addresses the administrative and procedural concepts of fire protection and life safety system commissioning and also provides direction on the integrated system tests.

This document is designed to identify the commissioning team members, their qualifications, and their roles and responsibilities throughout the commissioning process. Chapter 5 addresses the concept of commissioning from the incipient stages of a project through to the occupancy and operation of the facility. Throughout the commissioning process, there are several key documents that must be identified in the recommended practice, such as the Owner's Project Requirements (OPR) and the Basis of Design (BOD), which provide direction to the commissioning team members as they are executing the commissioning plan. These documents, which are generated during the design phase, are implemented during construction.

NFPA 3 also addresses retro-commissioning and re-commissioning of existing buildings. For existing buildings that have never been commissioned, a retro-commissioning plan can be developed and executed to establish a benchmark for the facility. Existing buildings that have been previously commissioned are periodically re-commissioned and compared to the compliance benchmarks established in the original commissioning plan.

NFPA 3 contains many forms that are available to assist in project documentation and the implementation of the commissioning program.

The largest modification to NFPA 3 for the 2015 edition was the removal of Chapter 7 from the 2012 edition. This chapter addressed integrated system testing as part of the overall fire protection and life safety system commissioning concept. The Technical Committee on Commissioning and Integrated Testing determined that while commissioning fire protection systems was not ready for standardization, there was an imminent need to create a standard for testing integrated fire protection and life safety systems. The technical committee requested to separate the concepts of commissioning; and the second, a new standard, NFPA 4, *Standard for Integrated Fire Protection and Life Safety System Testing*, addressing the integrated system testing portion. This restructuring and request for a new project was approved by the Standards Council in October 2011 and resulted in Chapter 7 of the 2012 edition of NFPA 3 being removed for the 2015 edition and using it as the basis for NFPA 4.

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In addition to the document split, the technical committee focused on updating the recommendations for existing building commissioning. Additional detail was added to the sections on re-commissioning and retro-commissioning to assist fire commissioning agents in carrying out commissioning projects on existing buildings.

The 2018 edition of NFPA 3 was changed from a recommended practice to a standard in order to be utilized by the commissioning industry and be referenced by other NFPA standards, as well as other commissioning standards. Many of the changes throughout the document were made to reflect the change from recommendations to mandatory requirements. In addition, many of the requirements were reorganized and moved into other chapters to make the standard more useable.

NFPA 3 was originally developed as a recommend practice; however, its ability to be utilized by the commissioning industry is limited as a recommended practice. The document became a standard in 2018 in order to easily be referenced by other NFPA standards, as well as be referenced by other commissioning standards.

The 2021 edition of NFPA 3 contains minor revisions throughout and new annex language to provide clarity on the differences between simple and complex commissioning projects.

Technical Committee on Commissioning and Integrated Testing Maurice M. Pilette, Chair

Mechanical Designs Ltd., MA [SE] Cecil Bilbo, Jr., Academy of Fire Sprinkler Technology, Inc., IL [SE] Art Black, Carmel Fire Protection Associates, CA [E] Bruce H. Clarke, American International Group, Inc. (AIG), SC [I] Shane M. Clary, Bay Alarm Company, CA [IM] Daniel P. Finnegan, Siemens Industry, Inc., IL [M] Rep. Automatic Fire Alarm Association, Inc. Douglas W. Fisher, Fisher Engineering, Inc., GA [SE] David W. Frable, US General Services Administration, IL [U] Kimberly A. Gruner, Fike Corporation, MO [M] Eli P. Howard, III, Sheet Metal & Air Conditioning Contractors Natl. Assn., VA [IM] Robert J. James, UL LLC, IL [RT] John E. Kampmeyer, Sr., John E. Kampmeyer, P.E., PA [SE] William E. Koffel, Koffel Associates, Inc., MD [SE] Russell B. Leavitt, Telgian Corporation, AZ [U] Rep. The Home Depot David J. LeBlanc, JENSEN HUGHES, MA [SE] Rep. JENSEN HUGHES Norbert W. Makowka, National Association of Fire Equipment Distributors, IL [IM] Joe W. Noble, Noble Consulting Services, LLC, NV [E] Rep. International Fire Marshals Association Warren E. Olsen, Fire Safety Consultants, Inc., IL [E] Rep. Illinois Fire Inspectors Association Alternates Jeffrey Allen Berthiaume, Department of State, MD [U] (Alt. to Christian Pierson) Nate Birmingham, Code Red Consultants LLC, MA [SE] (Alt. to Maurice M. Pilette) Marinus Both, API Group Inc., MA [IM] (Alt. to George W. Stanley) Bruce G. Campbell, JENSEN HUGHES, TX [SE] (Alt. to David J. LeBlanc) Bradford T. Cronin, Newport Fire Department, RI [E] (Alt. to Warren E. Olsen) Paul F. Dunphy, Jr., Hull, MA [SE] (Alt. to Robert P. Schifiliti) Brandon W. Frakes, AXA XL/Global Asset Protection Services, LLC, NC [I] (Alt. to Peter J. Willse) Coy Kevin Hill, Sprinkler Fitters LU 704 [ATC, MI [L] (Alt. to Kenneth R. Schneider) Jeremy W. John, Fisher Engineering, Inc., GA [SE] (Alt. to Douglas W. Fisher) Robert Kasiski, FM Global, MA [I] (Alt. to Michael J. Spaziani) Chad Kennedy, Schneider Electric, SC [M] (Alt. to Richard Jay Roberts) Edward F. Ledoux, Bard Rao + Athanas Consulting Engineers, LLC, MA [SE]

(Voting Alt.)

Pascal Pfeiffer, AXA XL Risk Consulting /AXA Matrix Risk Consultants, France [I] Rep. European Fire Sprinkler Network Christian Pierson, US Department of State, MD [U] Rodger Reiswig, Johnson Controls, FL [M] Richard Jay Roberts, Honeywell Fire Safety, IL [M] Rep. National Electrical Manufacturers Association Alan H. Sactor, University of Maryland, MD [U] Rep. Association of Higher Education Facilities Officers Robert P. Schifiliti, R. P. Schifiliti Associates, Inc., MA [SE] Kenneth R. Schneider, UA - ITF, MO [L] Rep. United Assn. of Journeymen & Apprentices of the Plumbing & Pipe Fitting Industry Michael J. Spaziani, FM Global, MA [I] George W. Stanley, Wiginton Fire Protection Engineering, Inc., FL [IM] Rep. National Fire Sprinkler Association Chris Towski, Cambridge Fire Department, MA [E] Frank L. Van Overmeiren, Fire Protection & Code Consultants, LLC, IN [SE] Peter J. Willse, AXA XL/Global Asset Protection Services, LLC, CT [I]David K. Young, Idaho National Laboratory, ID [RT]

David O. Lowrey, City of Boulder Fire Rescue, CO [E] (Alt. to Art Black) Kevin McSweeney, University of Delaware, DE [U] (Alt. to Alan H. Sactor) James M. Mundy, Jr., Asset Protection Associates, Ltd., NY [M] (Alt. to Daniel P. Finnegan) Thomas F. Norton, Norel Service Company, Inc., MA [IM] (Alt. to Shane M. Clary) Thomas J. Parrish, Telgian Corporation, MI [U] (Alt. to Russell B. Leavitt) Milosh T. Puchovsky, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, MA [SE] (Alt. to Cecil Bilbo, Jr.) Jeffrey A. Scott, FP&C Consultants, Inc., MO [SE] (Alt. to Frank L. Van Overmeiren) Lawrence J. Shudak, UL LLC, IL [RT] (Alt. to Robert J. James) Shawn W. Thompson, Fike Corporation, MO [M] (Alt. to Kimberly A. Gruner) Terry L. Victor, Johnson Controls, MD [M] (Alt. to Rodger Reiswig) Keith A. Willoughby, AXA Matrix Risk Consultants, OH [I] (Alt. to Pascal Pfeiffer)

Nonvoting

Bill Fremis, Defence Construction Canada, Canada [U]