

Virginia Fire Services Board

Live Fire Training Structure Committee

Wednesday, September 24, 2025

Hotel Madison

710 S. Main Street, Harrisonburg, VA 22801

10:45 AM

MINUTES

A meeting of the Live Fire Training Structure Committee was held at the Hotel Madison in Harrisonburg, Virginia. The meeting was called to order by Committee Chair James Calvert and a quorum was present.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

James Calvert, Committee Chair – Industry (SARA Title III/OSHA)

Billy Hanks – Local Fire Marshal

JM Snell II – Virginia Board of Housing and Community Development

Charles Sterne – General Public

Carla Keesee – Virginia Chapter, International Assoc. of Arson Investigators

Jerome Williams – Certified Fire Service Instructor

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT

Jess Rodzinka – Virginia Professional Fire Fighters

AGENCY MEMBERS PRESENT

Nicholas Nanna, Deputy Director

Theresa Hunter, Chief Administrative Officer

Michael Parris, Deputy Chief of Training and Operations

Zeina Altaha, Grants Manager

Spencer Willett, Government Affairs Manager

GUESTS PRESENT

Jason Johnson

Joe Kirchner

CHANGES IN THE AGENDA

No reported changes to the agenda.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No public comment provided.

Virginia Fire Services Board

Live Fire Training Structure Committee

Wednesday, September 24, 2025

Hotel Madison

710 S. Main Street, Harrisonburg, VA 22801

10:45 AM

CONSENT AGENDA

Clerk Spencer Willett mentioned an error in the March minutes and asked that the March minutes, as amended, be considered at the same time as the June minutes.

Motion: Approval of the minutes of the previous meeting (June 2025) and March 2025, as amended.

Motion: Hanks **Second:** Keesee

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Minutes approved.

COMMENTS FROM THE COMMITTEE CHAIR

Committee Chair Calvert mentioned the committee has been hard at work and it's the committee's responsibility to ensure good governance of funds.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a. Building Design Related to Cancer Prevention

No action taken or discussed.

b. Thermal Linings Workgroup Report

Chair Calvert mentioned that a workgroup for thermal linings had provided a report and done great work. Workgroup members included JM Snell, Steve Sites, David Haynes of Chilhowie, Billy Hux and Spencer Willett. Theresa Hunter with the Department of Fire Programs (VD FP) and Mike Matthews of The Structures Group were interviewed as well. Snell mentioned that the workgroup identified that National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1402 had a retroactive component and that, ultimately, what mattered when VD FP funds a structure is its longevity and that it be accredited for Firefighter I and II. Snell noted that the report was well-written and has some action suggestions for the committee to consider.

Sites mentioned a board action from several years ago that related to thermal linings in burn buildings.

Virginia Fire Services Board

Live Fire Training Structure Committee

Wednesday, September 24, 2025

Hotel Madison

710 S. Main Street, Harrisonburg, VA 22801

10:45 AM

Willett stated that, in October of 2020, the board funded the partial amount to thermally line buildings. Sites stated that if a locality wants to have a live fire training structure, this committee and the board decides who qualifies, and refers to 1402 to achieve that.

Board Chair Keith Johnson stated that Loudoun County had received funds to build a burn building, performed a 5-year inspection, and that inspection indicated a need to line the burn buildings with a thermal lining which would cost over \$1 million dollars. Loudoun took this finding back to the design company, and the company stated they would not do it because they disagreed with the policy. Ultimately the board and the committee will need to address retroactive requirements and the funds used.

Calvert mentioned the recommendations for thermal lining and whether a load bearing structure needs to have the thermal lining to be compliant.

Snell said the letter received from SRG contains difficult language and the issue is not resolved. Willett mentioned that no one on the committee is an engineer.

Calvert mentioned that a potential 3rd contractor would make the recommendation when the engineers disagree, although this would cost money.

Sites stated that when structures are built, and go through a design professional and contractors, the drawing shows what is load bearing and what elements carry that load. He does not believe there is a need for another engineer coming out and disagreeing with the original design.

Calvert suggested that a policy could indicate a contracted engineer or any professional engineer and asked if the committee wanted to go in that direction.

Willett suggested that the recommendations were all linked together. Johnson felt that VDFP should cease doing inspections through The Structures Group (TSG), but the buildings should be inspected annually by a certified engineer.

Calvert mentioned the policy would need to be changed and that 1403 talks about annual inspections and that a further evaluation would need to be conducted by another professional if defects are found in the initial inspection.

Virginia Fire Services Board

Live Fire Training Structure Committee

Wednesday, September 24, 2025

Hotel Madison

710 S. Main Street, Harrisonburg, VA 22801

10:45 AM

Sites mentioned this board is responsible for funding and approving buildings and after that, the committee needs to separate itself and then the structure would fall under VDFP's training facility requirements to stay in compliance with training.

Willett noted that policy states the localities must maintain their structures for live fire training but asked what outside of the 1403 document will govern requirements.

Hunter mentioned that localities are required to do annual inspections, but the majority are not. She expressed concern about taking away the 5-year inspection.

Calvert mentioned that the inspection will be required and, if departments are not submitting their inspections, they should not get future funding.

Willett mentioned that training should not be occurring at any facility that has not been inspected or submitted their reports.

Calvert suggested a 90-day action plan.

Michael Parris said that burn buildings are being utilized all the time, as training is occurring in localities year-round.

Johnson raised concerns and suggested that the work group finish their work and that a standard operating procedure (SOP) be developed. If taking away a 5-year inspection, something else should take its place to keep firefighters safe.

Hunter stated that there are almost 50 burn buildings.

Carla Keesee, from an insurance standpoint, was concerned that many burn buildings are not being inspected.

Calvert asked the committee if any action needed to happen today on the 90-day action plan.

Keesee suggested the committee start with the annual inspections that are not being completed, and address that as a top priority.

Virginia Fire Services Board

Live Fire Training Structure Committee

Wednesday, September 24, 2025

Hotel Madison

710 S. Main Street, Harrisonburg, VA 22801

10:45 AM

Calvert suggested a letter going out to all building owners.

Hunter mentioned that those in their 5th year are not required for their own annual inspection.

Billy Hanks asked if VDFP had the timelines of every building.

Calvert said if a locality does not comply within 90 days if Training and Operations will be notified. Snell asked for clarification about annual inspections versus 5 years.

Hunter said the remaining 4 years are required annually, just not the 5th year when The Structures Group performs the inspection.

Snell stated that, just because the board doesn't fund the 5-year inspection, it doesn't relieve the jurisdiction of having a 5-year inspection.

Motion: To adopt recommendation 1 of the Thermal Linings Work Group Report.

Motion: Snell **Second:** Johnson

Discussion on the Motion:

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Approved for Board

Calvert brought up creating a subcommittee to work on a new policy.

Willett mentioned that only the Board Chair can create a subcommittee, but the Live Fire Training Structures Committee can put in a request with the Chair.

Motion: To request the Chairman form a subcommittee to work on a live fire training policy.

Motion: Snell **Second:** Hanks

Discussion on the Motion: The subcommittee would still look at the other suggestions, including specifically recommendations 2, 3 and 4 from the Thermal Linings Work Group Report and develop the policies from there.

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Approved for Board

Virginia Fire Services Board

Live Fire Training Structure Committee

Wednesday, September 24, 2025

Hotel Madison

710 S. Main Street, Harrisonburg, VA 22801

10:45 AM

Calvert asked if 90 days was enough time for an inspection.

Johnson stated that it was not enough time to get a professional engineer.

Snell brought up concern that it would take time to create the SOP.

Sites stated that all defects should be considered, not just thermal linings.

Snell mentioned the extension should be only for the linings, not other critical issues.

Willett suggested that if a letter is to go out by VDFP staff, there needs to be more clarity.

Additional discussion covered what the letter should contain, and the timeline localities would have to respond.

Hunter suggested a letter not be sent out until the subcommittee works out extension deadlines and instead delays any action.

Motion: To delay action on live fire training structures for localities that received notice of a lack of compliance for thermal lining issues as a component of their 5-year inspection. Such localities should report their plan of action on other life safety issues within 90 days from the action of the board to the Va Department of Fire Programs. Each locality shall have 90 days to submit a letter outlining compliance after the final action of the board to adopt a recommended policy concerning thermal linings and live fire training structures.

Motion: Snell **Second:** Keesee

Discussion on the Motion:

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Approved for Board

Virginia Fire Services Board

Live Fire Training Structure Committee

Wednesday, September 24, 2025

Hotel Madison

710 S. Main Street, Harrisonburg, VA 22801

10:45 AM

NEW BUSINESS

a. Halifax County Burn Building Extension Request

Jason Johnson, Emergency Services Coordinator for Halifax County, spoke on behalf of Halifax and asked for an extension.

Motion: To grant Halifax County a year and a half (1.5 year) extension.

Motion: Snell **Second:** Hanks

Discussion on the Motion:

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Approved for Board

ADJOURNMENT

Clerk of the Committee
Spencer Willett

Minutes completed by Tracey Frame

Documents related to this meeting of the Virginia Fire Services Board may be requested by contacting the Government Affairs Division by emailing PolicyOffice@vdfp.virginia.gov