

What are NFPA codes and standards?

According to NFPA's [Regulations Governing Committee Projects](#):

- **Code** – A standard that is an extensive compilation of provisions covering broad subject matter or that is suitable for adoption into law independently of other codes and standards.
- **Standard** – A document, the main text of which contains only mandatory provisions using the word "shall" to indicate requirements and which is in a form generally suitable for mandatory reference by another standard or code or for adoption into law. Nonmandatory provisions shall be located in an appendix, footnote, or fine-printnote and are not to be considered a part of the requirements of a standard.

The Making of an NFPA Code or Standard

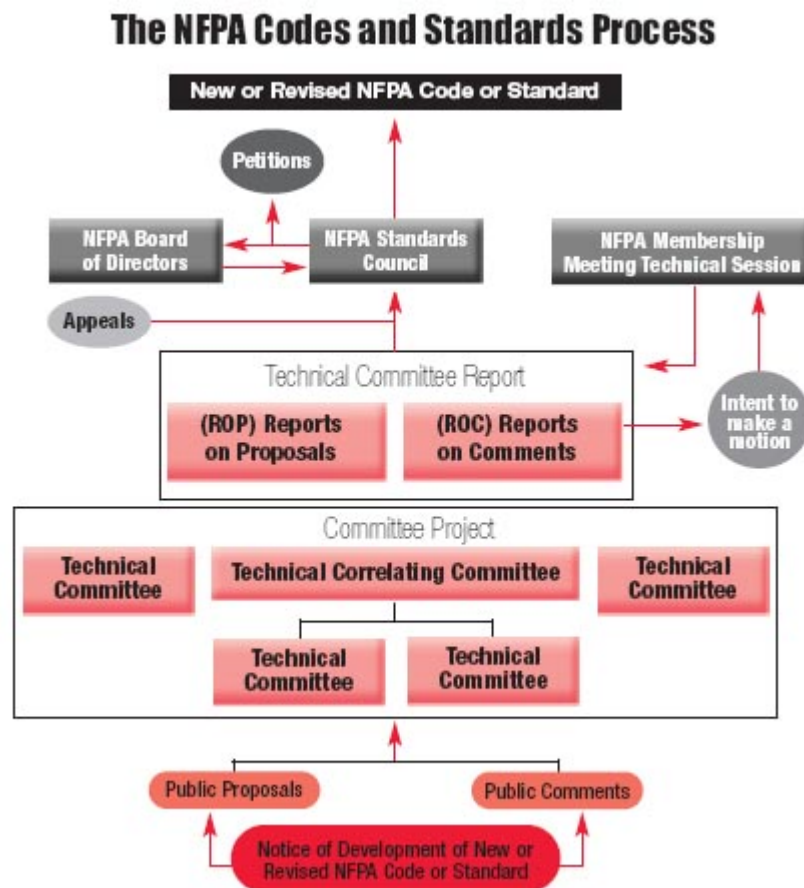
The [NFPA Board of Directors](#) has general charge of all of the activities of the NFPA. The Board of Directors issues all of the rules and regulations that govern the development of NFPA codes and standards. The Board also appoints a 13-person [Standards Council](#) to oversee the Association's codes and standards development activities, administer the rules and regulations and act as an appeals body. Members of the Standards Council are thoroughly familiar with the codes and standards development functions of the Association and are selected from a broad range of appropriate interests. Appointed by and reporting to the Standards Council are the more than 225 [Technical Committees](#) that serve as the primary consensus bodies responsible for developing and revising NFPA codes and standards.

To conduct their work, Technical Committees are organized into projects with an assigned scope of activities. Depending on its scope, a project may develop one code or standard or a group of related codes and standards, and the project may consist of a single Technical Committee or multiple Committees coordinated by a Technical Correlating Committee that oversees the project to resolve conflicts and ensure consistency among the Technical Committees.

Starting a New Project

Anyone can submit a request for a project to develop a new code or standard. The Standards Council reviews all requests and, if appropriate, the Council directs that a notice be published in a variety of publications, including NFPA's membership newsletter, [NFPA News](#). This notice asks for:

- comments on the proposed project
- information on organizations that may be involved in the subject matter



- a listing of available resource material
- an indication of who is willing to participate in the project if it is approved.

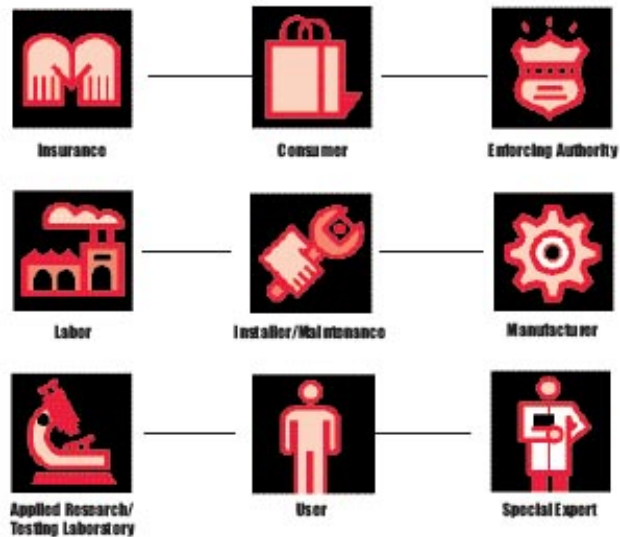
The Standards Council then reviews all comments and information it receives about the proposed project and, if the Standards Council determines the proposed project should proceed, it either assigns the project to an existing Technical Committee or establishes a new committee. Establishing the Consensus Body In the NFPA codes and standards development process, NFPA Technical Committees serve as the principal consensus bodies responsible for developing and regularly updating all NFPA codes and standards. Technical Committees are appointed by the Standards Council and consist of up to thirty voting members representing a balance of interests. NFPA membership is not required in order to participate on an NFPA Technical Committee, and appointment is based on such factors as technical expertise, professional standing, commitment to public safety and the ability to bring to the table the point of view of a category of interested people or groups. Each Technical Committee is constituted so as to contain a balance of affected interests, with no more than one-third of the Committee from the same interest category. The Committee must reach a consensus by at least a two-thirds vote of the voting members in order to take action.

The categories generally used by the Standards Council to classify Committee members are summarized in the illustration to the right.

The Codes and Standards Development Process

The NFPA process is exceptional in the opportunities it affords for public participation in the development of its codes and standards. All NFPA codes and standards (also referred to here as NFPA “Documents”) are revised and updated every three to five years in Revision Cycles that begin twice each year and that takes approximately two years to complete. Each Revision Cycle proceeds according to a published schedule that includes final dates for all major events in the process. The process contains five basic steps that are followed both for developing new Documents as well as new editions of existing Documents.

Classification of Committee Members



These steps are:

- [The Call for Proposals](#)
- [Report on Proposals](#) (ROP)
- [Report on Comments](#) (ROC)
- [The Technical Report Session of the NFPA Annual Meeting](#)
- [Standards Council Consideration and Issuance](#)

Notes:

1. Time periods are approximate; refer to published schedules for actual dates
2. It takes approximately 104 weeks for Annual revision cycle documents and Fall revision cycle consent documents
3. It takes approximately 141 weeks for Fall revision cycle documents receiving certified motions

Step1 - The Call for Proposals

When a Technical Committee begins the development of a new or revised NFPA code or standard, it enters one of two Revision Cycles available each year. The Revision Cycle begins with the Call for Proposals; that is, a public notice asking for any interested persons to submit specific written proposals for developing or revising the Document. The Call for Proposals is published in *NFPA News*, the *U.S. Federal Register*, the American

National Standards Institute's *Standards Action*, and other publications as appropriate. Interested parties have approximately twenty weeks to respond to this Call for Proposals.

Step2 - The Report on Proposals

Following the Call for Proposals period, the Technical Committee holds a meeting to consider and accept, reject or revise, in whole or in part, all the submitted Proposals. The committee may also develop its own Proposals. A document known as the Report on Proposals, or ROP, is prepared containing all the Public Proposals, the Technical Committees' action on each Proposal, as well as all Committee-generated Proposals. The ROP is then submitted for the approval of the Technical Committee by a formal written ballot. If the ROP does not receive approval by a two-thirds vote calculated in accordance with NFPA rules, the Report is returned to the committee for further consideration and is not published. If the necessary approval is received, the ROP is published in a compilation of Reports on Proposals issued by NFPA twice yearly for public review and comment, and the process continues to the next step. The Reports on Proposals are sent automatically free of charge to all who submitted proposals and each respective committee member, as well as anyone else who requests a copy. All ROP's are also available for free downloading at www.nfpa.org.

Step3 - Report on Comments

Once the ROP becomes available, there is a 60-day comment period during which anyone may submit a Public Comment on the proposed changes in the ROP. The committee then reconvenes at the end of the comment period and acts on all Comments. As before, a two-thirds approval vote by written ballot of the eligible members of the committee is required for approval of actions on the Comments. All of this information is compiled into a second Report, called the Report on Comments (ROC), which, like the ROP, is published and made available for public review for a seven-week period.

Step4 - The Technical Report Session of the NFPA Annual Meeting

The process of public input and review does not end with the publication of the ROP and ROC. Following the completion of the Proposal and Comment periods, there is yet a further opportunity for debate and discussion through the Technical Report Sessions that take place at the NFPA Annual Meeting. The Technical Report Session provides an opportunity for the final Technical Committee Report (i.e., the ROP and ROC) on each proposed new or revised code or standard to be presented to the NFPA membership for the debate and consideration of motions to amend the Report. The specific rules for the types of motions that can be made and who can make them are set forth in NFPA's rules which should always be consulted by those wishing to bring an issue before the membership at a Technical Report Session. The following presents some of the main features of how a Report is handled.

What Amending Motions are Allowed. The Technical Committee Reports contain many Proposals and Comments that the Technical Committee has rejected or revised in whole or in part. Actions of the Technical Committee published in the ROP may also eventually be rejected or revised by the Technical Committee during the development of its ROC. The motions allowed by NFPA rules provide the opportunity to propose amendments to the text of a proposed code or standard based on these published Proposals, Comments and Committee actions. Thus, the list of allowable motions include motions to accept Proposals and Comments in whole or in part as submitted or as modified by a Technical Committee action. Motions are also available to reject an accepted Comment in whole or part. In addition, Motions can be made to return an entire Technical Committee Report or a portion of the Report to the Technical Committee for further study.

Who Can Make Amending Motions. Those authorized to make these motions is also regulated by NFPA rules. In many cases, the maker of the motion is limited by NFPA rules to the original submitter of the Proposal or Comment or his or her duly authorized representative. In other cases, such as a Motion to Reject an accepted Comment, or to Return a Technical Committee Report or a portion of a Technical Committee Report for Further Study, anyone can make these motions. For a complete explanation, NFPA rules should be consulted.

The filing of a Notice of Intent to Make a Motion. Before making an allowable motion at a Technical Report Session, the intended maker of the motion must file, in advance of the session, and within the published deadline, a Notice of Intent to Make a Motion. A Motions Committee appointed by the Standards Council then reviews all notices and certifies all amending motions that are proper. The Motions Committee can also, in

consultation with the makers of the motions, clarify the intent of the motions and, in certain circumstances, combine motions that are dependent on each other together so that they can be made in one single motion. A Motions Committee report is then made available in advance of the meeting listing all certified motions. Only these Certified Amending Motions, together with certain allowable Follow-Up Motions (that is, motions that have become necessary as a result of previous successful amending motions) will be allowed at the Technical Report Session.

Consent Documents. Often there are codes and standards up for consideration by the membership that will be non-controversial and no proper Notices of Intent to Make a Motion will be filed. These “Consent Documents” will bypass the Technical Report Session and head straight to the Standards Council for issuance. The remaining Documents are then forwarded to the Technical Report Session for consideration of the NFPA membership.

Action on Motions at the Technical Report Session. In order to actually make a Certified Amending Motion at the Technical Report Session, the maker of the motion must sign in at least an hour before the session begins. In this way a final list of motions can be set in advance of the session. At the session, each proposed Document up for consideration is presented by a motion to adopt the Technical Committee Report on the Document. Following each such motion, the presiding officer in charge of the session opens the floor to motions on the Document from the final list of Certified Amending Motions followed by any permissible Follow-Up Motions. Debate and voting on each motion proceeds in accordance with NFPA rules. NFPA membership is not required in order to make or speak to a motion, but voting is limited to NFPA members who have joined at least 180 days prior to the session and have registered for the meeting. At the close of debate on each motion, voting takes place, and the motion requires a majority vote to carry. In order to amend a Technical Committee Report, successful amending motions must be confirmed by the responsible Technical Committee, which conducts a written ballot on all successful amending motions following the meeting and prior to the Document being forwarded to the Standards Council for issuance.

Step5 - Standards Council Issuance

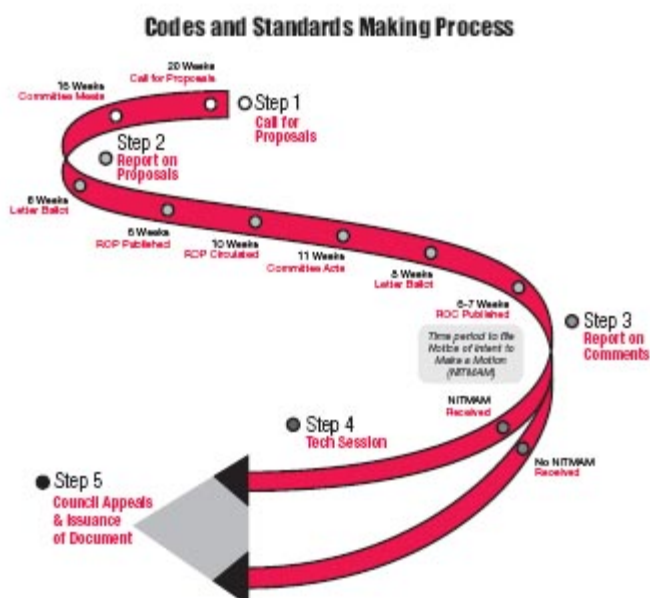
One of the primary responsibilities of the NFPA Standards Council, as the overseer of the NFPA codes and standards development process, is to act as the official issuer of all NFPA codes and standards. When it convenes to issue NFPA documents it also hears any appeals related to the Document. Appeals are an important part of assuring that all NFPA rules have been followed and that due process and fairness have been upheld throughout the codes and standards development process. The Council considers appeals both in writing and through the conduct of hearings at which all interested parties can participate. It decides appeals based on the entire record of the process as well as all submissions on the appeal. After deciding all appeals related to a Document before it, the Council, if appropriate, proceeds to issue the Document as an official NFPA code or standard. Subject only to limited review by the NFPA Board of Directors, the Decision of the Standards Council is final, and the new NFPA c Council issuance.

The illustration (right) provides an overview of the entire process, which takes approximately two full years to complete.

[Top of page](#)

Want to read more information on the NFPA Codes and Standards-making process?

- Download a [detailed history of NFPA's code and standard-making process](#)
- Download our brochure: "[Codes and](#)



Standards for a Safer World"

>

Background

For more than 100 years, NFPA has been developing and updating codes and standards concerning all areas of fire safety