

Standard Operating Procedures For the Technical and Scientific Working Group for Fire and Explosions Investigations

1. SCOPE: The procedures and rules described herein shall give operational parameters and guidance for the organization. These operational parameters are those which do not require an amendment to the By-Laws of the Technical and Scientific Working Group for fire and Explosions Investigations (“T/SWGFEX”). These procedures and rules shall not conflict with the By-Laws of T/SWGFEXT/SWGFEX nor any Statute. Standing and Ad Hoc Committees of T/SWGFEX shall be permitted to adopt their particular operational rules provided they do not conflict with the By-Laws of T/SWGFEX, these Standard Operating Procedures, or Statute.

2. MEMBERSHIP:
 - 2.1 All prospective members shall complete a membership application and the application must be signed as an indication of support by two existing members in good standing of T/SWGFEX.

 - 2.2 Applicants are encouraged to present T/SWGFEX with a letter from one’s organization’s appropriate administrative authority acknowledging its approval for the member’s participation.

 - 2.3 All candidates for membership shall be subject to review by the Membership Committee.

 - 2.4 The Membership Committee will consider representative criteria such as: agency type (federal, state, local, private), geographical area, prior committee service, etc., in the approval of membership applications so as to achieve a broad representation. Serious or repeated infractions of the T/SWGFEX Code of Ethics, or of the professional code of ethics or code of conduct governing the prospective member of his or her profession may be inconsistent with membership in T/SWGFEX, as determined at the discretion of the Membership Committee or Executive Board. After a prospective member’s application is approved by the Membership Committee, but prior to final acceptance to membership and assignment to one or more committees, the name of the applicant will be published for review and comment by members in good standing of T/SWGFEX.

 - 2.5 Individuals accepted for membership should have a minimum of three (3) years professional work experience in their discipline; however it is within the discretion of the membership committee to make exceptions.

 - 2.6 In the event any external funding agency or organization so requires, and insofar as practicable, approval by prospective members of T/SWGFEX shall also be subject to additional review by a designee of that funding agency. The purpose of this review is to designate those T/SWGFEX members, from state or local jurisdictions who will receive financial support for meeting attendance by this agency or organization separate from any support provided by NCFE.

2.7 Every member of T/SWGFEX should have a completed application held on file by the Membership Committee.

2.8 The Membership Committee shall design, revise, disseminate and maintain Membership Applications.

3. TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP:

3.1. VOLUNTARY:

3.1.1 Voluntary termination of a person's membership may be initiated by that person at any time by providing a written resignation to the Chair of T/SWGFEX.

3.1.2 The Chair shall inform T/SWGFEX of such termination at the next regular meeting or by electronic communication.

3.2. INVOLUNTARY:

3.2.1. Members may also be involuntarily terminated for cause.

3.2.1.1 Cause is defined as: unethical conduct, violation of the Code of Ethics, conduct detrimental to the welfare of T/SWGFEX, nonparticipation, or a change in principal occupation which is outside of the scope of interest of T/SWGFEX.

3.2.1.2 Charges of unethical conduct, conduct in violation to the Code of Ethics, or conduct detrimental to the welfare of T/SWGFEX must be in writing and must contain documented reason(s) justifying the charge.

3.2.1.3 Such complaint shall be signed by no fewer than five members in good standing of T/SWGFEX.

3.2.1.4 The signed complaint shall be presented to the Executive Committee.

3.2.1.5 Should the subject of such a charge be a member of the Executive Committee, the charges are to be presented to the Director of NCFS.

3.2.2. The Chair of T/SWGFEX shall appoint a panel of three members to conduct an investigation of any charges of unethical conduct, violation of the Code of Ethics, or conduct detrimental to the welfare of T/SWGFEX.

3.2.2.1 Should the subject of the investigation be a member of the Executive Committee, the Director of the NCFS shall appoint a

committee of three T/SWGFEX members to conduct an investigation.

3.2.3. Persons charged shall be allowed forty-five (45) days after receiving written notification of charges to prepare a written appeal to the Executive Committee.

3.2.4. Membership may be terminated involuntarily by a simple majority vote of the T/SWGFEX Executive Committee after a thorough review of the written report of investigation of the charges being submitted.

3.2.4.1 Should a member of the Executive Committee be the subject of investigation, they may be terminated involuntarily by a simple majority vote of T/SWGFEX membership after a thorough review of the written report of investigation of the charges being submitted.

3.2.5. Non-participation as a cause of involuntary termination shall be determined by the Chair of the individual committees and must include documented absences from no fewer than three consecutive meetings or electronic communication forums (conference call, email round table, net meeting, or other forms of committee collaborations)

3.2.6. Notification for Involuntary Terminations shall be sent under the signature of the Chair of T/SWGFEX to the last known address of the member. It is the obligation of members to promptly notify the Chair of the Membership Committee, or any Officer or Director of T/SWGFEX of any changes in one's contact information including e-mail address, street address, phone number(s).

4. COMMITTEES:

4.1. All members of T/SWGFEX shall be assigned to one or more of the standing or ad hoc committees of T/SWGFEX.

4.1.1. T/SWGFEX committees should not have more than 25% of its members from any single agency.

4.1.2. The number of individuals who may be assigned to an ad hoc committee may be limited to the maximum number(s) of members for which the sponsor (NCFS or other financial sponsors) is capable of assuming the responsibility for travel reimbursements.

4.1.3. NCFS or other agency or organization who is funding a T/SWGFEX meeting shall have the final decision on the funding of any T/SWGFEX meeting and any restrictions as to travel arrangements or lodging by participants.

4.1.3.1 This does not limit the size or membership of committees to a maximum number.

4.1.3.2 It limits the number of members for which the sponsor (NCFS) is responsible for funding.

4.1.4 A member's employing agency may assume part or all of the travel, lodging, and board accommodations for their employees so as to ensure their participation within the organization.

4.1.5 If permitted by the T/SWGFEX Chair as stated under By-Laws 4.5, the ad hoc committee members may elect their co-chairs by a simple majority.

4.2. SWGFEX:

4.2.1. The members of the laboratory specific ad hoc committees of T/SWGFEX shall be referred to as the Scientific Working Group for Fire and Explosions (SWGFEX) so as to conform to the existing concept of Scientific Working Groups.

4.2.2. They shall be considered as the general laboratory subcommittee of T/SWGFEX.

4.3. STANDING COMMITTEES: Standing Committees are listed under section 4.2.1 of the T/SWGFEX By-Laws. This section will briefly describe the participants assigned to a committee and the committees' general duties.

4.3.1. The Executive Committee: The individuals who constitute the Executive Committee are described under T/SWGFEX By-Laws section 5.1.4.1.

4.3.1.1 The nomination and election of the five elected Executive Committee members is described under T/SWGFEX By-Laws section 5.

4.3.1.2 The Executive Committee shall sit as an executive advisory panel and shall complete the tasks assigned to it in the various sections of the By-Laws, specifically section 6.4.

4.3.2. The Research Committee: The Chair of T/SWGFEX shall elicit nominations to the Research committee from the T/SWGFEX membership following his or her election as Chair of T/SWGFEX.

4.3.1.2 The Executive Committee shall make the final selection and appointment from this pool of nominations.

4.3.1.3 The Research Committee shall consist of a maximum of five T/SWGFEX members (at large or officers).

4.3.1.4 The tasks of the Research Committee are to: coordinate recommendations for research proposals, to assist worthy proposals with the preparation of grant applications, to report on the status of research projects to T/SWGFEX membership.

4.3.3. Communications: The Chair of T/SWGFEX shall elicit nominations to the Communications committee from the T/SWGFEX membership following his or her election as Chair of T/SWGFEX.

4.3.3.1 The Executive Committee shall make the final selection and appointment from this pool of nominations.

4.3.3.2 The Communications Committee shall consist of a maximum of five T/SWGFEX members (at large or officers).

4.3.3.3 The tasks of the Communications Committee are to: Examine and recommend changes to the design of T/SWGFEX portion of the NCFS Website, facilitate the increased use of the website and secure communications, and encourage communication between members and chairs.

4.3.4. Membership: The Chair of T/SWGFEX will appoint the members of the Membership Committee.

4.3.4.1 The Membership Committee will have five members; the T/SWGFEX Vice Chair who serves as Chair of the Membership Committee as well as four other members.

4.3.4.2 It is suggested that two of those members be Chairs or Co-Chairs existing ad hoc committees.

4.3.4.3 The Membership Committee shall review and approve/disapprove all candidates to be recommended to the existing members of T/SWGFEX for review and comment on acceptance of their membership.

4.3.5. By-Laws: The Chair of T/SWGFEX will appoint a minimum of five members of T/SWGFEX to serve as members of the By-Laws Committee.

4.3.5.1 It is recommended that two of those members be the immediate past Chair and Vice-Chair of T/SWGFEX.

4.3.5.2 One member is to be a designee of the Director of NCFS.

The duties of the By-Laws Committee are to make a continual review of the existing By-Laws, Code of Ethics, Standard Operating Procedures, other appropriate procedures, and guides in order to formulate recommendations for changes to revise these documents.

4.3.5.3 The committee shall also act as the primary reviewer of proposed changes to any of these documents submitted by any T/SWGFEX member.

4.3.5.4 Their review shall determine if the proposal can be incorporated into a format consistent with the existing documents.

4.3.5.5 Their review shall evaluate how the proposed change will affect the organization.

4.3.5.6 Once complete, their recommendation shall be submitted to the Executive Committee per the provisions of section 9 of the By-laws.

5. OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS:

5.1 All official T/SWGFEX communications, oral and written, to entities other than the sponsor (NCFS) or to entities outside of T/SWGFEX must be approved by the Chair or Vice Chair of T/SWGFEX and should include consultation with the Director of NCFS (or the Director's designee or the Director of any alternate sponsoring organization).

5.2 Communications include, but are not limited to, speeches, letters, reports, records, surveys, protocols, guidelines, posters, etc. Such communications shall be considered the intellectual property of T/SWGFEX.

6. ACTION ITEMS: An action item is defined as the professional work product of T/SWGFEX.

6.1 Action items would include such work products as protocols, training guidelines and position requirements.

6.2. Action items will generally be ratified in a two-stage process.

6.2.1 First, the action item must be approved by simple majority vote of the sponsoring committee.

6.2.2 The sponsoring committee chair will convey the item to Chair of T/SWGFEX for review and presentation to the membership of T/SWGFEX.

6.2.3 Following a review period of no fewer than 45 days appropriate action items shall be voted on by the members of T/SWGFEX per the provisions of By-Laws sections 9 and 10.

6.3. Action items shall be characterized as either:

6.3.1 An Article – This is a document prepared by a committee to (1) advertise the work of the committee or (2) elicit input from individuals outside the committee. It is intended for publication in an appropriate venue (Journal of Forensic Science, Fire and Arson Investigator, Regional Newsletters, or other print or electronic publications).

6.3.2 A Position – This is a document prepared by a committee that proposes that T/SWGFEX support and endorse a particular point of view on a subject germane to the purpose of T/SWGFEX. It may be used to submit T/SWGFEX endorsed changes or additions to other standards/guide making organizations such as ASTM and NFPA.

6.3.3 A Guide – A document that outlines a series of options or instructions. It does not recommend a specific course of action. The Guide suggests an approach that may allow the user to achieve their goal.

6.3.4 A Standard – A document that outlines a series of actions and instructions. It recommends a specific course of action. A Standard fully defines procedures that will allow a user to achieve their goal.

6.3.5 A Product – Material(s), to be produced by NCFS or a NCFS selected contractor, which are either designed, developed, or reviewed by T/SWGFEX committees (*e. g.* Ignitable Liquids Database, Ignitable Liquids Repository, Seminars, Symposia, and Surveys.)

6.4. Committee approved versions of Articles, Positions, and Products do not require the 45 day period of public review prior to dissemination provided they have been passed by a majority of the relevant committee and approved by the Executive Committee without comment.

6.4.1 Products will either stand or fall based on their perceived value to their customer base.

6.4.2 The very nature of Articles and Positions will be to elicit the comments of the affected communities. However they are to be reviewed by the Executive Committee before dissemination.

6.4.3 Initial versions of products may be sent to select focus groups prior to any general release of the product in order to obtain feedback for developing the final product version.

6.5. Guides and Standards prepared by T/SWGFEX Committees require a 45 day period of review before any vote of acceptance by the membership of T/SWGFEX.

6.5.1. Committee approved Guides and Standards may be presented to the Chair of T/SWGFEX at any time by its sponsoring committee.

6.5.2. The T/SWGFEX Chair will request the webmaster of NCFS to post the item to the NCFS website for a period of no less than forty-five (45) days for public and member review.

6.5.3. A notice shall be emailed to all T/SWGFEX members stating where the item may be found on the T/SWGFEX website.

6.5.4. Comments received on the item are to be directed to the chair of the sponsoring committee.

6.5.5. Based on the comments received, the sponsoring committee must either

6.5.5.1 Abandon the Guide or Standard

6.5.5.2 Modify and submit a new version for public posting

6.5.5.3 Re-affirm the posted version of the Guide or Standard without changes.

6.5.6. After the appropriate review period, the Guides or Standards are to be taken to the members of T/SWGFEX for a vote to accept or reject.

6.5.7. For the final vote, it is the discretion of the Chair to take the vote by remote communication or at a general meeting.

6.5.8. If in general session, the Chair of the sponsoring committee or their designee shall be available for a short discussion period prior to a vote by the general body.

6.5.9 FINAL DRAFT Guides or Standards shall be transmitted (either electronically or by mail) to T/SWGFEX members. A two-thirds majority vote as defined under section 10 of the By-Laws is required to pass any Guide or Standard.

These Revised Standard Operating Procedures were passed by the Executive Committee of T/SWGFEX on Sunday, 08/18/2013.