



Coffee Break Training - Fire Protection Series

Administration: Emergency Communications Centers

No. FP-2015-2 January 13, 2015

Learning Objective: The student will be able to identify the three major categories creditable by the Insurance Services Office in the Emergency Communications section under the Fire Suppression Rating Schedule (FSRS).

Getting word of a structure fire to emergency responders in a timely manner is essential to saving lives and reducing property loss caused by fire. This is where seconds really count, and it explains why emphasis on the communication facilities has been in the FSRS since its inception. There have been a lot of changes in technology recently. The new schedule identifies some of today's most relevant components of the receipt and dispatch of an alarm.

Application of the 2012 FSRS developed by the Insurance Services Office produces a score from zero to 105.5. Of those points, 10 are available under the Emergency Communications section of the schedule. Those 10 points are broken down into three major categories: Credit for Emergency Reporting, Credit for Telecommunicators, and Credit for Dispatch Circuits.

As always, if a community cannot make arrangements to provide for the receipt of alarms and dispatch of firefighters and apparatus with no delay, that community will not meet the minimum requirements of the FSRS. A vast majority of communities meet the minimum requirements for the dispatch of firefighters and apparatus with no delay.

Credit for Emergency Reporting

Credit for Telephone Service in the 1980 edition of the schedule was replaced by Credit for Emergency Reporting in the new schedule. The Insurance Services Office no longer looks for published emergency numbers in the telephone directory, a center's ability to record incoming calls, or the number of phone lines coming into a Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) under the FSRS.

The Insurance Services Office now looks at the technology used in the receipt and dispatch of emergency calls. A communications center receives partial credit if it can only receive emergency calls over a 10-digit number, but the credit for the center is much greater if it is using Enhanced 911 services. The credit varies depending on the level of technology. The FSRS considers if a PSAP is capable of handling Enhanced 911 wireless service, Enhanced 911 Voice over Internet Protocol, or computer-aided dispatch and Geographic Information Systems. The more enhanced the services, the better the credit. The total possible Credit for Emergency Reporting within the Emergency Communications section is 3 points.

Credit for Telecommunicators

No matter how good technology is, it's the people who make the difference. The handling of fire calls is measured using the general criteria of the 2013 edition of National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1221, *Standard for the Installation, Maintenance, and Use of Emergency Services Communications Systems*. In accordance with NFPA 1221, all communications centers should maintain a call detail report.

Having good operating procedures for dispatching the fire service helps to facilitate and expedite the call. Those procedures — known as "emergency dispatch protocols" — along with the initial and ongoing training of telecommunicators are important factors for accurate and timely processing of the emergency call and are creditable in the FSRS. Credit is also available for a quality assurance program. The total telecommunicator credit possible within the Emergency Communications section is 4 points.

Credit for Dispatch Circuits

The final components evaluated under the Emergency Communications section are the dispatch circuits used to notify personnel of structure fires. The number and type of dispatch circuits needed to attain full credit in the schedule are based upon information found in NFPA 1221. The FSRS evaluates the type of emergency power provided for the dispatch circuits (automatic generator, manual generator in combination with uninterruptible power supply, central battery system). In addition, the Insurance Services Office evaluates the monitoring of integrity maintained on the primary dispatch circuit. The total dispatch circuit credit possible within the Emergency Communications section is 3 points.

In the next series of Coffee Break Training sessions, we will learn more about the Fire Department section of the FSRS.