

Standard Operating Procedures For the Technical 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 TWGFEX. These procedures and rules shall not conflict with the By-Laws of TWGFEX nor any Statute. Standing and Ad Hoc Committees of TWGFEX shall be permitted to adopt their particular operational rules provided they do not conflict with the By-Laws of TWGFEX, these Standard Operating Procedures, or Statute.

2. MEMBERSHIP:
 - 2.1. It is the desire of TWGFEX that all prospective members shall complete a membership application and the application must be signed as an indication of support by two existing members of TWGFEX.
 - 2.2. Applicants should be encouraged to present TWGFEX with a letter from their organization's appropriate administrative authority acknowledging their 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.
 - 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. Every member of TWGFEX should have a completed application held on file by the Membership Committee.
 - 2.7. 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 TWGFEX.

3.1.2. The Chair shall inform TWGFEX of such termination at the next regular meeting.

3.2. INVOLUNTARY:

3.2.1. Members may also be involuntarily terminated for cause.

3.2.1.1. Cause is defined as: unethical conduct, conduct detrimental to the welfare of TWGFEX, nonparticipation, or a change in principal occupation which is outside of the scope of interest of TWGFEX.

3.2.1.2. Charges of unethical conduct or conduct detrimental to the welfare of TWGFEX 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 TWGFEX.

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 TWGFEX shall appoint a panel of three members to conduct an investigation of any charges of unethical conduct or conduct detrimental to the welfare of TWGFEX.

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 TWGFEX 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 TWGFEX 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 TWGFEX membership after a thorough review of the written report of investigation of the charges being submitted.
- 3.2.5. Non-participation 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, etc...)
- 3.2.6. Notification for Involuntary Terminations shall be sent under the signature of the Chair of TWGFEX to the last known address of the member.

4. COMMITTEES:

- 4.1. All members of TWGFEX shall be assigned to one of the standing or ad hoc committees of TWGFEX.
 - 4.1.1. TWGFEX committees should not have more than 30% of its members from any single agency.
 - 4.1.2. The number of individuals who may be assigned to an ad hoc committee shall be limited to the maximum number(s) of members for which the sponsor (NCFS) is capable of assuming the responsibility for travel reimbursements.
 - 4.1.3. NCFS shall have the final decision on the funding of any TWGFEX 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 TWGFEX 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 TWGFEX 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 laboratory subcommittee of TWGFEX.
 - 4.2.3. SWGFEX membership shall be subject to additional review by a designee of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATFE).
 - 4.2.3.1. The purpose of this review is to designate those SWGFEX members, from state or local jurisdictions who will receive financial support for meeting attendance by ATFE separate from any support provided by NCFS.
 - 4.2.3.2. ATFE shall not support more than thirty-five (35) persons within the SWGFEX sub-committee.
- 4.3. STANDING COMMITTEES: Standing Committees are listed under section 4.2.1 of the TWGFEX 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 TWGFEX By-Laws section 5.1.3.1.
 - 4.3.1.1. The nomination and election of the five elected Executive Committee members is described under TWGFEX 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 6.3.

- 4.3.2. The Research Committee: The Chair of TWGFEX shall elicit nominations to the Research committee from the TWGFEX membership following his or her election as Chair of TWGFEX.
- 4.3.2.1. The Executive Committee shall make the final selection and appointment from this pool of nominations.
- 4.3.2.2. The Research Committee shall consist of a maximum of five TWGFEX members (at large or officers).
- 4.3.2.3. 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 TWGFEX membership.
- 4.3.3. Communications: The Chair of TWGFEX shall elicit nominations to the Communications committee from the TWGFEX membership following his or her election as Chair of TWGFEX.
- 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 TWGFEX 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 TWGFEX 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 TWGFEX will appoint the members of the Membership Committee.
- 4.3.4.1. The Membership Committee will have five members; the TWGFEX Vice Chair 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 for membership.

- 4.3.5. By-Laws: The Chair of TWGFEX will appoint a minimum of five members of TWGFEX 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 TWGFEX.
 - 4.3.5.2. One member is to be a designee of the Director of NCFS.
 - 4.3.5.3. The duties of the By-Laws Committee are to make a continual review of the existing By-Laws in order to formulate recommendations for changes to improve the By-Laws.
 - 4.3.5.4. The committee shall also act as the primary reviewer of proposed changes to the By-Laws submitted by any TWGFEX member.
 - 4.3.5.5. Their review shall determine if the proposal can be incorporated into a format consistent with the existing By-Laws.
 - 4.3.5.6. Their review shall evaluate how the proposed change will affect the organization.
 - 4.3.5.7. 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 TWGFEX communications, oral and written, to entities other than the sponsor (NCFS) or to entities outside of TWGFEX must be approved by the Chair or Vice Chair of TWGFEX as well as the Director of NCFS (or the Director's designee).

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 TWGFEX.

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

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 TWGFEX for review and presentation to the membership of TWGFEX.
 - 6.2.3. Following a review period of no fewer than 45 days the action item shall be voted on by the members of TWGFEX 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, etc...).
 - 6.3.2. A Position – This is a document prepared by a committee that proposes that TWGFEX support and endorse a particular point of view on a subject germane to the purpose of TWGFEX. It may be used to submit TWGFEX endorsed changes or additions to other standards/guide making organizations (ASTM, NFPA, etc...).
 - 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 TWGFEX committees (e. g. Ignitable Liquids Database, Ignitable Liquids Repository, Certified Forensic Fire Investigator Program, Seminars, Symposia, Surveys, etc...)
- 6.4. Committee approved versions of Articles, Positions, and Products do not require a period of public review prior to dissemination.

- 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 should 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 TWGFEX Committees require a period of review before any vote of acceptance by the membership of TWGFEX.
 - 6.5.1. Committee approved Guides and Standards may be presented to the Chair of TWGFEX at any time by its sponsoring committee.
 - 6.5.2. The TWGFEX 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 TWGFEX members stating where the item may be found on the TWGFEX 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 TWGFEX 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 for 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 mailed to TWGFEX members. A two-thirds majority vote as defined under section 10 of the By-Laws is required to pass any Guide or Standard.