Suggested NFIRS 5.0 Implementation Policies and Procedures

<table>
<tr><th>Policy or Procedure</th><th>Content</th></tr>
<tr><td>System policies and procedures</td><td>Determine the hardware and software to be used and how the system will function. Write policies and procedures to document the system and to establish procedures for the use of the system.

Policies and procedures may be needed to cover the following situations:
Hardware and software installation and configuration procedures.
Reporting hardware problems.
Reporting software bugs.
Distribution of software upgrades.
Duties and responsibilities of hardware and software support personnel at each level in the system.
NOTE: Policies and procedures may be needed for each level in the system because hardware and software implementation may be different at each level.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Data flow policies and procedures</td><td>Determine how data will flow within the State, county, and department and write policies and procedures at each level specifying the following data flow elements:
Where data are input:
- Into a database located on PCs.
- Into a database on a network server.
- Into the national database via the Internet.
How corrections should be made. NOTE: The individual who filed the original report should make incident report corrections.
How often incident reports should be reviewed for completeness and correctness at the firehouse and who should perform the review.
How data should be validated and the procedure to be followed if validation fails and the file must be returned to the originator for correction.
How frequently transaction files should be generated at the county, department, and firehouse level to be forwarded through the levels of the system.
How the transaction files should be forwarded through the levels of the system – via email, diskette, or tape.
How transaction files will be filed, stored, and tracked upon receipt and how electronic receipts will be used to acknowledge receipt.
NOTE: Policies and procedures may be needed for each level in the system.</td></tr>
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<tr><td>File naming convention</td><td>Define the convention for naming files used to pass data through the system from firehouse to fire department to county to State. Recommendation: Use a format that will allow you to see at a glance the fire department, station, date, and NFIRS version.

Suggestion: Using typical 8 + 3 character file-naming format:

• First 5 characters: Fire Department ID Number (FDID)
• Next 3 characters: Time covered by file (e.g., JAN, QT1)
• First 2 characters after dot: Year (e.g., 00, 01)
• Third character after dot: NFIRS version (e.g., 4 or 5)

Sample: 76000JAN.005

NOTE: Some third-party software packages use a default file-naming convention (e.g., JAN.txt, JAN2001.txt) for report generation. Establish policies and procedures that direct the person generating the report to rename the file to comply with the established standard.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Specify additional critical fields</td><td>If additional fields need to be completed (e.g., beyond the core required fields identified by NFIRS 5.0) to generate reports, they should be identified prior to implementation, a policy requiring their completion should be written, and the software should be configured to make them required. They would then show up as incomplete during the validation process if the user had not entered all required data.

Suggestion: To better track the cause of Fire Service Casualties within a local fire department, the Cause of Firefighter Injury data field is a critical piece of information. Develop a policy and procedure to make this field required.

Sample: Cause of Firefighter Injuries (a required data field)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Use of Plus-one codes</td><td>NFIRS 5.0 has the capability to break down the standard codes provided in the base software into more specific subcodes by adding another digit to the code numbers. These are referred to as Plus-one codes. The addition of the Plus-one code capability is an option requested by many fire administration organizations. Plus-one codes are available in both the Data Entry ToolData Entry Tool and in NFIRS 5.0 certified third-party software tools. The codes can be used for local, state, or national reporting.

The State data manager should determine if Plus-one codes are going to be used in their state.. If so, they should be coordinated by the state data managers to ensure code use standardization for report generation. Polices and procedures relating to the use of Plus-one codes should be written and distributed to all NFIRS 5.0 users when the system is implemented in a State.

Suggestion: To determine the denomination type for fires in places of worship, develop Plus-one codes for Property Type Code 131.</td></tr>
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Policy or Procedure	Content
	Sample: Religious Denominations 131a Adventist, Seventh Day 131b Assembly of God 131c Baptist 131d Catholic 131e Episcopal 131f Greek Orthodox 131g Lutheran 131h Unitarian 131o Other 131p Undetermined denomination
Training policies and procedures	Training policies and procedures will be determined after the software is selected to implement NFIRS 5.0. Training situations that may require a policy or procedure include: • Who will pay for training courses – State, county, department, local. • Who will conduct training courses – third-party vendor, county or department trainers, State trainers. • How training will be conducted – at firehouses, central county or department location, central State location, etc. • How travel for training courses will be paid (if applicable). • How frequently training will be provided. • How large classes will be. • How long classes will be. • What will be covered in the classes. Possibilities range from an overview of NFIRS 5.0 to hands-on step-by-step use of the software. Refer to the Training section of the Toolkit for details.
Support policies and procedures	Support policies and procedures will be determined after the software is selected to implement NFIRS 5.0. Support situations that may require a policy or procedure include: • How the software will be supported: - Third-party vendor supplies phone Help desk. Billed on per-call basis to individual firehouse, county, department, or State. Covered under support agreement negotiated by individual firehouse, county, department, or State. - State provides phone Help desk to support Data Entry ToolData Entry Tool. Billed on per-call basis to individual firehouse, county, or department. Provided at no cost to individual firehouse, county, or department. - County or department provides Help desk to support Data Entry ToolData Entry Tool. Handles routine problems.

Policy or Procedure	Content
	Passes difficult problems through the levels of the system to the State Help desk. • How the hardware will be supported: - State provides phone Help desk. - Counties or departments provide Help desk. - Hardware is not supported. • Hours that Help desk is available. • Help desk calls are toll-free (e.g., 800 numbers) or long-distance calls. • How Help desk calls are recorded, tracked, responded to, and closed. Refer to the Support section of the Toolkit for details.
Communication policies and procedures	Write policies and procedures to specify communication methods and practices in the following areas: • Electronic receipts for transaction reports received. • Electronic reminders that transaction reports have not been received. • Notification that data could not be validated and must be corrected. • Notification that data have been corrected with attached corrected file. • Newsletters or other communication medium reporting: - Software bugs and fixes - Software upgrades - Policy changes - Procedural changes - Suggestions for use of NFIRS data - Useful shortcuts when using the system - Reports using collected NFIRS data Sample: Refer to the sample newsletters in the Samples section of the Toolkit.