



MODEL REGULATORY & LEGISLATIVE LANGUAGE



HEARTH SYSTEMS SPECIALTY LICENSE

2018

ABOUT HPBA

The **Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Association® (HPBA)**, a 501(c)(6) not-for-profit organization, is the North American industry association for manufacturers, retailers, distributors, representatives, service firms, and allied associates for all types of barbecue, patio and hearth appliances, fuels, and accessories. The association provides professional member services and industry support in education, statistics, government relations, marketing, advertising, and consumer education. HPBA serves the public by providing consumer safety information and educational materials for hearth and barbecue products.

ABOUT HPBEF

The **Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Education Foundation® (HPBEF)** is an independent, non-profit education foundation that serves as the education “arm” of HPBA which supports industry by providing technical training and educational products/programs that capture best industry practices and encourage professional achievement, certification (through the National Fireplace Institute) and continuing education.

ABOUT NFI

The **National Fireplace Institute® (NFI)** is the professional certification division of the Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Education Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit educational organization for the hearth industry. NFI’s objective is to increase public safety by establishing meaningful credentials for professionals involved in planning and installing residential hearth appliance and venting systems. NFI, established in 2002, certifies planners and installers in three hearth product categories based upon fuel type:

- NFI Gas Specialist
- NFI Woodburning Specialist
- NFI Pellet Specialist

2018 Model Regulatory and Legislative Language, Hearth Systems Specialty License
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WHY A HEARTH SPECIALTY LICENSE

Fireplaces, hearth products, and systems are unique products that bring fire into the living area of the home. Problems related to improper installation may be concealed and may not manifest themselves for a considerable time after installation. There is a wide variety of fuels, appliances, venting systems, installation instructions, codes and standards that require specialized knowledge. Credentials establish a bar for qualifications and thereby helps prevent potentially dangerous practices.

Appropriate and effective credentials should be specific to the product. Competence cannot be reliably predicted by general qualifications that include dissimilar products and that do not adequately cover knowledge of fireplace products installation. Exclusion of demonstrably appropriate fireplace-specific qualifications unfairly prevents highly-qualified professionals from practicing their trade, earning a livelihood, and contributing to the economic welfare of the region/state.

The National Fireplace Institute (NFI) exams are singularly focused on fireplace products. The exams are developed and maintained in accordance with national testing standards, including a job analysis basis.

Public safety and confidence are best served by well-developed installer qualifications and requirements. Using an existing program eliminates considerable expense and effort for state and local agencies to develop defensible exams. Appropriate, meaningful qualifications lead to a reduction in errors in installation and

thereby reduce difficulty and time spent on inspections. With continuing education courses widely available for NFI-certified specialists, policymakers and the public may rest assured knowing that their NFI-certified installer or servicer are receiving the most up-to-date technical information.

INTRODUCTION

The below model language is a proposal for establishing a hearth specialty license for inclusion in a state or local jurisdiction's HVAC-R, mechanical, or other code. The proposal consists of:

- a. Definition of a "hearth systems specialty license;"
- b. Requirements for licensure; and
- c. Scope of work permitted under the license

LANGUAGE ORIGINS

Section 1 is adapted with very few edits (noted) from the Iowa Plumbing & Mechanical Systems Board's sublicense, under HVAC, for a "hearth systems specialty license."¹

Section 2 is adapted with very few edits (noted) from the Iowa Plumbing & Mechanical Systems Board Hearth Systems Specialty License.

Section 3 is adapted from the Connecticut Department of Consumer Protection's Occupational Licensing sublicense for "Hearth Product Work."²

EFFECTIVE DATE

The effective date should be fixed and in the future to allow for compliance time and adjustments. Notice should also be given to all Authorities Having Jurisdiction (AHJs).

¹ See Iowa Department of Public Health; Iowa Plumbing & Mechanical Systems Board; Hearth Systems Specialty License; Accessed Sept. 26, 2016, at <http://idph.iowa.gov/pmsb/licensure/hearth-systems>

² See Connecticut Department of Consumer Protection; Hearth Product Work – License Types and Scope of Work. Accessed Sept. 26, 2016 at <http://www.ct.gov/dcp/cwp/view.asp?a=1624&q=461590>

MODEL LANGUAGE

SECTION 1. DEFINITIONS

“Hearth systems specialty license” means a sublicense under an HVAC license to perform work in the installation of gas burning and solid fuel appliances that offer an aesthetic view of the flames, from the connector pipe to the shutoff valve located within 3 feet of the appliance. A holder of this sublicense is further allowed to perform work in the venting systems, log lighters, gas log sets, fireplace inserts, and freestanding stoves.³

SECTION 2. REQUIREMENTS

Hearth systems specialty license. An applicant for a hearth systems specialty license shall provide the board with evidence that the applicant:

- a. Is at least 18 years old;
- b. Possesses a valid certification issued by
 - i. the National Fireplace Institute;
 - ii. Equivalent authority approved by the board;⁴ and
- c. Files an application and submits appropriate fees

SECTION 3. SCOPE OF WORK PERMITTED

The holder of this license may perform all work defined by "Hearth product work." "Hearth product work" means the installation, service or repair of a biomass-fueled or propane or natural gas-fired fireplace, fireplace insert, stove or log set and associated venting and piping that fuels or simulates a flame of a solid fuel fire.⁵

"Gas hearth product work" does not include (A) fuel piping work, (B) the servicing of fuel piping, or (C) work associated with pressure regulating devices, except for appliances gas valves. And "Gas hearth product work" shall include accessories for use with LP gas supplied by gas containers and/or natural gas.

³ Lines 2-6 are excerpted from the Iowa Plumbing & Mechanical Systems Board Hearth Systems Specialty License. The word "aesthetic" is different than the word used by Iowa ("decorative"). The word "aesthetic" covers both decorative and heater-rated products. The words "A holder of this" differs from the Iowa license language ("This") in order to make it more specific about the application of the license.

⁴ Line 14 added to allow for flexibility in adoption of this language by jurisdictions.

⁵ In line 16, Connecticut's original language ("The holder of this license may perform only work limited to "Hearth product work.") could restrict work, even if an individual with a hearth specialty license holds other licenses. In line 17, "biomass-fueled" was added to original Connecticut language to include work on biomass appliances. In line 19, "fuels" was added to include biomass appliances.

APPENDIX A: ABOUT NFI

The National Fireplace Institute® (NFI) is the professional certification division of the Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Education Foundation, a 501(c)3 non-profit educational organization for the hearth industry. NFI's objective is to increase public safety by establishing meaningful credentials for professionals involved in planning and installing residential hearth appliance and venting systems. NFI, established in 2002, certifies planners and installers in three hearth product categories based upon fuel type:

- NFI Gas Specialist
- NFI Woodburning Specialist
- NFI Pellet Specialist.

Since 1981, the Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Education Foundation® has conducted certification programs for the industry. In 2001, the move was made to update the certification program into one that meets the stringent national standards for certifying agencies. Doing so was a challenging and expensive process that included job analysis, exam blueprint and validation, and scoring methodology. The result however, has been a program that serves to greatly advance the credibility of the hearth industry and offer a basis for states and jurisdictions where licensing may be considered. NFI was assisted in the process by a nationally-recognized testing psychometrician, and in March 2002 the first NFI exams were administered.

NFI recognizes individuals who have successfully gained all three NFI Certifications as **Master Hearth Professionals (MHP)**.

Since its inception, and to this day, NFI retains the services of a psychometrician. Every trade, every industry has a list of best-practices. A psychometrician is the guide that makes sure the NFI certification follows the best-practices of the certification industry. Every question on every exam is monitored to separate those individuals that know the material from those that simply do well on exams. The goal is to uphold the program's credibility to ensure that certified individuals have the knowledge necessary for a proper installation.

Another safeguard necessary for a credible certification program is to make sure the training material doesn't just teach what is on the exam. The Job Analysis is an industry-wide survey that spells out what knowledge you need and what tasks you need to do in order to properly plan and install hearth appliances. The Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Education Foundation uses that information as the basis for all the training classes and materials. The National Fireplace Institute is only responsible the actual exam. The division between the two helps maintain the separation between the training and the exam.

How is the program governed?

NFI is ultimately governed by the 10-member Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Education Foundation (HPBEF) Board of Governors. However, numerous committees fulfill the crucial tasks of the ongoing development and maintenance requirements for each of the three NFI certifications:

- NFI Certification Committee: Oversees and directs the various NFI sub-committees and reports directly to the HPBEF Board
- Job Analysis Committee: Composed of Subject Matter Experts (SMEs), this group surveys and identifies specific job tasks and required knowledge necessary for safe and correct installations
- Manual Review Committee: Using Job Analysis survey information, this group contributes, reviews, and edits the HEARTH Reference Manuals, the official study guides for the NFI exams
- Exam Writing Committee: Also using the data gathered by the Job Analysis survey process, they prepare exam questions under the guidance of a professional consultant

- Cut-score Committee: Using the Modified Angoff Procedure, this group reviews each exam question performance from a pilot over length exam to ultimately determine the passing score and eliminate poorly performing exam questions
- CEU Committee: The Continuing Education Unit (CEU) Committee is responsible for reviewing and accrediting educational sessions across the industry and makes policy recommendations on certification renewal to the Board

What is the value of having the credential?

The value of certification in any industry is well documented with positive implications in consumer satisfaction, employee retention, defined career paths, and job performance. NFI Certification provides value specific to the hearth industry in numerous ways, such as:

- NFI Certification increases public safety through the proper training and qualification of planners and installers
- Hearth manufacturers experience reduced callbacks and customer complaints due to faulty installations
- Hearth retail owners and managers can increase public awareness and consumers' confidence in their products and services
- Hearth professionals have a credible, nationally-recognized credentialing program through which they can validate their knowledge and advance in a career path

Thanks to these efforts, NFI is now recognized as the basis for licensure in the states of Iowa, Idaho, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and Connecticut; the counties of New Castle, DE and Pitkin, CO; and the municipalities of Lawrence, KS; Salina, KS; and Lincoln, NE.

Who is eligible for the credential?

Anyone seeking a career path in the hearth industry is eligible and welcome to take an NFI exam. While there is no experience requirement for testing, NFI does recommend that anyone testing have at least two years of experience in the industry. NFI exams are offered by Hearth Patio & Barbecue Association (HPBA) regional affiliates, National Chimney Sweep Guild (NCSG) chapters, industry manufacturers and distributors, and specialty trainers.

How is the credential earned and renewed?

NFI Certification is based upon the successful completion of one of the three NFI exams. Each NFI exam is a 100-question, closed-book, multiple-choice exam based on the recognized knowledge for planning and installing appliances in that fuel category. To prepare, applicants must study the current edition of the Hearth Systems Reference manual(s). Due to the constant changes in the industry, the manuals and the exams are updated on a regular basis.

Each certification is valid for three years. A certification may be renewed by re-testing or by accumulating the appropriate number and category of continuing education units (CEUs), and paying a renewal fee. The requirements to renew a single certification by CEUs are 12 Technical CEUs, 4 Safety, Health & Liability (SHL) CEUs, and 8 Elective CEUs for a total of 24 CEUs. If a Specialist has two or three certifications, they are required to earn 16 Technical, 4 SHL, and 12 Elective CEUs for a total of 32 CEUs.

TECHNICAL - 12 Credits

Product Knowledge
Codes and Standards
Venting Principles and Design
Ventilation (House Pressure)

Fuel Knowledge
Installation Planning
Installation Guidelines and Techniques
Tools and Gauges
Troubleshooting and Repair

SAFETY, HEALTH & LIABILITY - 4 Credits

Workplace Safety
Consumer Health and Safety (Hearth Product Issues)
Liability

ELECTIVES - 8 Credits

Additional Technical or Safety, Health & Liability sessions OR
Business Management
Sales & Marketing
Service Department Organization and Management
Communication Skills

TOTAL = 24 Credits

If a person holds 2 or 3 certifications, a total of 32 credits of continuing education will be required:

TECHNICAL – WOOD/GAS/PELLET - 16 Credits
SAFETY, HEALTH & LIABILITY - 4 Credits
ELECTIVE - 12 Credits
TOTAL = 32 Credits

NFI EXAM DEVELOPMENT- Validity & Reliability

The National Fireplace Institute® (NFI) certification exams were and continue to be developed through a process based on national testing standards that include a job analysis, exam blueprint, exam validation, and scoring methodology.

Job Analysis Study

The role of a hearth planner/installer in residential hearth product installations was carefully analyzed by Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) and hearth industry professionals who identified specific job tasks and areas of required knowledge necessary for safe and correct installations. Following the identification of job tasks and knowledge by SMEs, validation surveys based on the study were created and sent to over 8,000 hearth practitioners. The survey provided data that prioritized knowledge areas based on their relative importance to hearth products installation.

Development of a Exam Blueprints

The results of the industry survey provided a guide for determining exam content and appropriate percentages of questions in specific categories of job knowledge. An exam blueprint was developed for each category of hearth products, based on the fuel for the products: Gas, Woodburning, and Pellet.

Content and Exam Production

Specific questions relating to areas of performance, outlined in the job analysis study, were developed and written by industry subject matter experts who were trained by a consultant in exam question writing. Questions were then reviewed by the testing consultant for clarity and format and also by industry experts for technical accuracy. Pilot exams with extra questions are administered. These over length exams allowed a final opportunity for review of every question.

Passing Score

Passing scores are determined through the modified Angoff Procedure, a nationally recognized method to set the score that distinguishes performance that indicates possession of knowledge needed for minimum competence. The process involves subject matter experts reviewing the relative difficulty of each question and the performance statistics from the pilot over length exam. The psychometrician then processes a statistical calculation to determine the passing score.

Credentialing and Recognition

Each certified hearth professional passing their respective NFI exam is acknowledged by a certificate, a photo I.D., and a listing on the NFI website, www.nficertified.org. The NFI website is used by consumers, builders, and building officials to identify certified hearth installers nationwide.

Summary

The need for a credible certification program can be summed up in two words: public safety. Hearth products, because they involve flame, heat and venting of combustion products, require specialized knowledge for planning and installing. The NFI exams are the only exams that test the knowledge needed to properly plan and install hearth products and their venting systems.

The importance placed upon NFI by the hearth industry has been the key to its success. With the implementation of the NFI Advocate program in 2003, about 50 of the industry's largest manufacturers now recommend in their product operational manuals that their products be installed by NFI Certified Specialists. These credible, comprehensive certifications have successfully gained the recognition of building officials, legislative and regulatory agencies, and the general public.

APPENDIX B: NFI EXAM DEVELOPMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

