SOFTWARE & TECH

Version Of Nfpa 1407

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Understanding the Evolution of the NFPA 1407 Standard: A Look at Each Version

For fire service professionals, the ability to perform a rapid intervention—rescuing a downed firefighter in an immediately dangerous environment—is not just a skill; it is a life-or-death capability. The standard that governs the training for these critical operations is **NFPA 1407**, officially titled *Standard for Training Fire Service Rapid Intervention Crews*. Since its inception, this standard has undergone several revisions and updates. Understanding each version of NFPA 1407 is essential for fire training officers, chiefs, and firefighters who must ensure their crews are trained to the most current requirements. This article provides a deep dive into the history, key changes, and importance of each edition of NFPA 1407.

The standard was created to provide a baseline for training personnel to operate as a Rapid Intervention Crew (RIC) or Rapid Intervention Team (RIT). Before NFPA 1407, training was inconsistent across departments. The evolution of each version reflects lessons learned from actual firefighter line-of-duty deaths (LODDs), advances in equipment, and a better understanding of the physics and physiology of fireground operations. Let's explore the development of this vital standard from its first release to the present day.

The First Edition: NFPA 1407 – 2009 Version

The initial version of NFPA 1407 was published in 2009. Prior to this, guidance for rapid intervention training existed in other NFPA documents like NFPA 1500 (Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program) and NFPA 1404 (Fire Service Respiratory Protection Training), but there was no stand-alone, comprehensive training standard. The **2009 version of NFPA 1407**set the foundation by defining the minimum requirements for a training program that would prepare firefighters to function as members of a rapid intervention crew.

Key elements introduced in this first edition included:

- Definition of a Rapid Intervention Crew (RIC): A crew of two or more firefighters specifically designated and trained for the rapid rescue of trapped or lost firefighters.
- Core Competencies: The standard outlined the basic knowledge and skills required, such as air management, search techniques, breaching walls, removing downed firefighters, and managing entanglement.
- Initial Training Hours: The 2009 version recommended a minimum number of training hours, though it allowed flexibility based on local needs.
- Scenario-Based Training: Emphasis was placed on realistic, hands-on evolutions that simulated fireground conditions, including low visibility, confined spaces, and high heat.

This initial version was a landmark achievement. For the first time, the fire service had a dedicated standard that specifically addressed the unique and demanding task of rescuing one of their own. However, as the fire service gained experience and data, it became clear that the standard needed refinement.

The 2015 Version of NFPA 1407

2015 version of NFPA 1407: This edition was not a complete overhaul but rather a significant update that incorporated feedback from the field and lessons learned from several high-profile firefighter fatality investigations. The NFPA technical committee on Fire Service Training reviewed incident reports and research studies to strengthen the standard.

1. Expanded Air Management Requirements: The 2015 version placed a much stronger emphasis on air management. It required training that specifically addressed the need for RIC members to monitor their own air consumption as well as the air supply of the downed firefighter. The concept of "personal safety vs. rescue" became more pronounced.
2. Introduction of the “Mayday” Training Component: While the earlier version mentioned communications, the 2015 edition explicitly required training on how a trapped firefighter should transmit a Mayday and how the RIC should respond to a Mayday call. This included radio procedures, emergency signaling devices (like PASS alarms), and voice commands.
3. Breaching and Wall Penetration Techniques: The 2015 version added more specific guidance on breaching techniques, including the use of various tools (axes, saws, Halligan bars) and the importance of creating an opening large enough to extract a firefighter with a self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) on.
4. Updated Instructor Requirements: Training officers and instructors were now required to have more documented experience. The standard began to differentiate between the qualifications of a "RIC trainer" and a "RIC training program manager."

The 2015 version of NFPA 1407 also began to align more closely with other NFPA standards, such as NFPA 1001 (Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications) and NFPA 1500. This harmonization ensured that a firefighter who completed basic firefighting training could build upon that knowledge for RIC-specific training.

The 2020 Version of NFPA 1407: The Current Standard

The **2020 version of NFPA 1407**is the most recent edition and is currently the standard against which departments are benchmarked. This version represents the most comprehensive and detailed update to date. The NFPA committee incorporated feedback from a larger survey of fire departments, as well as data from simulation studies and actual RIC deployments.

- Mandatory Minimum Training Hours: Unlike previous versions that provided suggestions, the 2020 edition sets specific mandatory minimum training hours for initial certification and annual refresher training. For example, initial RIC training must include a minimum of 16 hours of hands-on practical evolutions, with an additional 4 hours of classroom instruction. Annual refreshers require at least 8 hours of practical training.
- Rigorous Skill Testing: The 2020 version introduced a formal skill-testing component. Trainees must pass a series of standardized, timed evolutions that simulate real-world rescue scenarios. The standard includes minimum performance metrics, such as removing a "downed" firefighter (weighing at least 200 pounds) through a simulated window breach within a specific time limit.
- Integration of New Technologies: The 2020 edition recognizes the increasing use of thermal imaging cameras (TICs) by RIC teams. Training now must include using TICs to locate a downed firefighter under zero-visibility conditions. Additionally, the standard addresses the use of two-way radios with emergency traffic override features.
- Emphasis on Physical Fitness: While NFPA 1407 does not prescribe specific physical fitness standards, the 2020 version strongly recommends that RIC candidates meet certain physical conditioning criteria. This includes cardiovascular endurance, muscular strength, and flexibility. The standard references the NFPA 1582 standard for comprehensive occupational medical programs for fire departments.
- Scenario Diversity: The 2020 version requires training to cover a wider variety of building types and rescue situations: residential, commercial, high-rise, and even wildland-urban interface scenarios where RIC operations might be needed.
- Updated Instructor Qualifications: Instructors must now complete a formal RIC instructor course and have a minimum of three years of active fire service experience. They must also maintain their certification through continuing education.

How Each Version of NFPA 1407 Has Impacted Fire Service Training

Each version of NFPA 1407 has driven significant changes in how fire departments approach RIC training. The **2009 version** created the structure. The **2015 version** made it more realistic and integrated it with Mayday procedures. But the **2020 version**transformed it into a high-stakes, performance-based standard. Departments that once offered a single day of "RIC awareness" now have to provide dedicated, ongoing training programs with verifiable outcomes.

One of the most notable shifts has been the move from "training to a standard" to "training to a performance." The 2020 version of NFPA 1407 demands that firefighters demonstrate proficiency under timed, stressful conditions. This mirrors real fireground conditions much more closely. The inclusion of physical fitness recommendations also underscores that RIC is not a job for every firefighter; it requires a higher level of readiness.

Another impact is on budgetary allocation. Fire departments must now budget for specialized props, training facilities, and time away from emergency response. The standard also drives equipment purchases, such as extra SCBA cylinders, RIC-specific tools (like the pack-on bag, RIC harness, and rapid intervention rope systems), and advanced communication gear.

Comparing the Versions: A Quick Reference

Version	Focus	Key Addition
2009	Establish foundational training requirements	First-ever dedicated RIC training standard
2015	Operator safety and Mayday integration	Air management, breaching techniques, instructor experience
2020	Performance-based proficiency and technology	Mandatory hours, timed evolutions, TIC training, physical fitness

It is important for fire service professionals to note that while each version supersedes the previous, some departments may still be operating under an older version if their authority having jurisdiction (AHJ) has not adopted the latest edition. However, for liability and best practice reasons, adherence to the most current version of NFPA 1407 is strongly recommended.

Why Staying Updated with the Latest Version of NFPA 1407 Matters

Firefighter rescue is the most technically demanding and emotionally charged operation any firefighter can face. The difference between a successful rescue and a tragic line-of-duty death often hinges on training. An outdated training program that follows the **2009 version of NFPA 1407**may miss critical elements that have been proven to save lives. For instance, the 2020 version's emphasis on realistic timed drills ensures that RIC members can perform under pressure, not just in a leisurely training environment.

Furthermore, insurance carriers and legal experts often look to the most recent version of applicable NFPA standards when evaluating fire department practices. A department that fails to train to the 2020 version may face increased liability in the event of a rescue attempt that goes wrong. The standard is considered the industry benchmark for reasonable care.

Preparing for the Next Version of NFPA 1407

The NFPA standard development process is continuous. The technical committee for NFPA 1407 is always reviewing input. Anticipated future versions may include:

- Greater integration with real-time fireground data, such as building information modeling (BIM) and incident command software.
- Virtual and augmented reality training modules for cost-effective, repeatable scenario practice.
- More specific medical training for RIC members, including advanced airway management and hemorrhage control.
- Enhanced emphasis on mental health and stress inoculation, recognizing the psychological trauma of searching for a fellow firefighter.

Fire departments should already be planning how they will transition to any future version. This includes building relationships with training academies, investing in modular training props, and developing a culture of continuous improvement rather than once-and-done certification.

Conclusion

The journey of NFPA 1407 from its initial 2009 release to the current 2020 edition is a story of the fire service learning from its most painful moments and elevating training to a science-driven, performance-focused discipline. Each version of NFPA 1407 has built upon the last, adding layers of specificity, safety, and accountability. For fire officers and training personnel, understanding the nuances of each edition is not just an academic exercise—it is a critical part of ensuring your RIC members are prepared to save a life when every

second counts. Whether your department is still catching up to the 2020 version or already looking ahead, the ultimate goal remains unchanged: to bring every firefighter home.

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