Identifying and Evaluating Program Content

Purpose:

It is the policy of the Society of Fire Protection Engineers (SFPE) to establish criteria to evaluate ongoing continuing professional development programs created for fire protection engineers and other professionals who seek professional development hours needed for continued professional licensure.

Scope:

This policy outline the processes that should be maintained when developing a professional development program. Continuing Professional Development Programs should contain the following elements

- Clearly defined rationale for the program
- Clearly identified target audience
- Clearly identified instructional level
    - Basic- assumes the participant has little information within the areas to be covered so that the focus on the activity is a general orientation and increased awareness
    - Intermediate- assumes the participant has a general familiarity with the content, so it focuses on increased understanding and application
    - Advanced- assumes through familiarity with the content and focuses on advanced techniques, recent advances and future directions.
- Clearly stated learning objectives
- Clearly defined objectives, based on the length of the program
- Clearly delineated program description or outline
- Content is described based on best available evidence in practice
- Specified limit to the maximum number of participants per event
- Clearly defined instructor qualifications
- Clearly identified instructional methods that are appropriate to the content
- Clearly identified source and number of PDHs
- Reasonable fee compared with similar programs
- Continuing education provider's address and telephone number
- Clearly identified statement about the provider's fees and cancellation policy
- Course title that adequately represents the program content
- Clearly identified endorsements of the program

During the professional development program, the components of a high-quality program:

Handout Materials:

- Handout materials that were comprehensive and up-to-date
- Contained bibliographic references and technical specifications and original peer reviewed research appropriate to the program content

Instructor(s)

- Established rapport with the audience
- Reviewed the program objectives
- Were knowledgeable and provided up-to-date content, including citing technical specifications and discussed the strengths and weaknesses of such technical data relevant to the topic
- Used appropriate teaching methods for the stated learning outcomes
- Were open to questions and discussion
- Expressed genuine interest in the needs and concerns of the participants
- Showed enthusiasm and generated interest and curiosity of the content
- Used teaching strategies that engaged the participants in active learning
- Used a variety of teaching methods
- Instructed at a pace that allowed participant to process the content
- Maintained a teaching pace that was appropriate for the majority of the audience
- Occasionally summarized the content, reemphasizing key points
- Provided feedback to participants and appropriately responded to questions from the audience

Course Assessment Tools

- Were available for use by participants to evaluate the program
- Assessed the achievement of the learning outcomes

The Environment

- Was conducive to learning and met the physical needs of the participants
- Allowed for participant participation
- Provided accommodations to individuals with special needs