



SFPE Committee Operations Manual
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF PURPOSE	1
2. STATEMENT OF GENERAL PRINCIPLES	1
3. COMMITTEE ORGANIZATION	1
3.1. Standing Committees — General Requirements	2
3.1.1 Membership.....	2
3.1.2 Meetings	2
3.1.3 Work Product Development, Voting and Appeals.....	2
3.2. Standing Committees — Specific Requirements	2
3.2.1. Continuing Professional Development (CPD)	2
3.2.1.1. Scope of Work.....	2
3.2.1.2. Subcommittees	3
3.2.2. Membership and Chapter Relations (CMC)	3
3.2.2.1. Scope of Work.....	3
3.2.2.2. Subcommittees	3
3.2.3. Community Outreach and Advocacy (COA).....	3
3.2.3.1. Scope of Work.....	3
3.2.3.2. Subcommittees	3
3.2.4. Professional Qualifications (CPQ)	3
3.2.4.1. Scope of Work.....	3
3.2.4.2. Subcommittees	4
3.2.5. Research, Tools and Methods (RTM)	4
3.2.5.1. Scope of Work.....	4
3.2.5.2. Subcommittees	4
3.3. Nominating Committee.....	4
4. CONDUCT GUIDELINES FOR COMMITTEE MEMBERS	4
4.1. Guidelines Applicable to All Participants	5
4.2. Guidelines Applicable to Standing Committee Chairs	6
4.2.1. Interaction with the Board of Directors.....	6
4.2.2. Interaction with Subcommittee Chairs and Membership	6
4.3. Guidelines Applicable to Subcommittee Chairs	7
5. CONDUCT GUIDELINES FOR SFPE STAFF LIAISONS	8
6. LIABILITY CONSIDERATIONS	9
References	10

1. INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Society of Fire Protection Engineers (SFPE), established in 1950 and incorporated as an independent organization in 1971, is the professional society representing those practicing the field of fire protection engineering. The SFPE strives to advance the science and practice of fire protection engineering and its allied fields, to maintain a high ethical standard among its members, and to foster fire protection engineering education.

The basic mission of the SFPE is “to define, develop and advance the use of engineering best practices; expand the scientific and technical knowledge base; and educate the global fire safety community, to reduce fire risk.” The SFPE Standing Rules¹ establishes a committee structure consisting of five Standing Committees, which, through an open, inclusive, broad-based and fair process, develop and deliver timely and targeted initiatives, carry on the work of the society, and further the goals of the strategic plan.

The primary goal of all participants on SFPE Committees, as well as the SFPE staff who serve as liaisons to these Committees, should be the achievement of this purpose. This manual is intended to assist committee participants and staff in that endeavor. It is divided into six sections: Introduction and Statement of Purpose; Statement of General Principles, which should be the basis for all conduct; Committee Organization, which establishes the procedure for maintaining and operating Standing Committees, Subcommittees and the Nominating Committee; Conduct Guidelines for Committee Members; Conduct Guidelines for SFPE Staff Liaisons; and Liability Considerations (Indemnification of Officers and Participants).

Exceptions to these guidelines may apply to some Standing Committee activities. For SFPE Technical Document Committees and Task Groups (Engineering Standards-Making Committees and Engineering Guide Task Groups), the requirements in this manual shall, where they conflict, be superseded by the SFPE Technical Document Development Procedures² and American National Standards Institute (ANSI) Approved Standards Development Procedures.³

2. STATEMENT OF GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The basic structure and operating procedures of the SFPE Committees have been set forth by the SFPE Board of Directors in the SFPE Constitution & Bylaws,⁴ the SFPE Standing Rules,¹ and other policies and procedures established from time to time by the board. In fulfilling the general roles and obligations set forth under these regulations, policies and procedures, all committee participants should adhere to the following general principles:

- a) Promote and support the overall mission of the SFPE.
- b) Maintain a process that is open, honest, fair and inclusive for all participants.⁵⁻⁷
- c) Promote the development of technical bodies of knowledge that are scientifically and technically sound; promote creativity and innovation in the development of new methods and technologies; and set reasonable standards intended to minimize the possibility and effects of fire and related hazards, and uphold the highest level of integrity.
- d) Promote the development of consensus through broad participation and full airing and discussion of all points of view.⁶⁻⁷
- e) Adhere, both in letter and in spirit, to all duly established rules, regulations and policies governing SFPE Committees.

3. COMMITTEE ORGANIZATION

The SFPE Standing Rules (Section F)¹ establish five Standing Committees, made up of both SFPE members and non-members, to assist the staff in the delivery of SFPE programs and furtherance of the SFPE mission. The SFPE Standing Rules (Section F.1)¹ provide broad guidelines for the focus area of each Standing Committee, and empower the Standing Committee chairs, working with staff liaisons and through the Office of the CEO, to make recommendations to the board of directors for necessary Subcommittees, Task Groups, Working Groups and focus areas of each Standing Committee.

3.1. Standing Committees — General Requirements

3.1.2. Membership: Standing Committee members shall be members of the society, except for special circumstances where approved by the board of directors. There shall be no limit to the number of members participating on Standing Committees. Criteria considered for initial committee appointment include, but are not limited to, competency and experience in the area of committee responsibility and demonstrable commitment and ability to actively participate in the activities of the committee. As described in the SFPE Diversity & Inclusion Policy,⁶ geographic, gender, ethnic, socio-economic, experience, education, language, age and market sector diversity are sought in all of the society's membership and activities, and will be considered in appointment decisions.

All committee appointments, including the chair(s) and committee members, shall be for three-year terms beginning January 1 each year. A member shall be eligible to apply for reappointment for two additional three-year terms to the same Standing Committee for a total of nine years of eligibility on any one Standing Committee. Standing Committee appointments for more than nine total years of service on any single Standing Committee may be allowed by special petition to and approval by the board of directors.

3.1.2. Meetings: Standing Committee, Subcommittee, Task Force and Working Group meetings shall be conducted in any suitable meeting format (e.g., face-to-face meetings, tele- or web conferences, and video conferencing) that fosters participant interaction. Meeting frequency shall be based on current activities or projects, operating needs, and budget.

3.1.3. Work Product Development, Voting, and Appeals Process: All Standing Committee and Subcommittee Chairs and members shall work collaboratively and inclusively during the execution of their responsibilities and the development of any work product that is to be recommended for use among the SFPE membership or outside of the SFPE. Guides and other technical documents, with the exception of Standards, shall be developed in accordance with the SFPE Technical Document Development Procedures.² Standard produced by SFPE shall follow the ANSI Accredited Standards Development Procedures.³ Public comment solicitation, comment adjudication, appeals and appeal adjudication shall be in accordance with the appropriate procedures.²⁻³

3.2. Standing Committees — Specific Requirements

3.2.1. Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

3.2.1.1. Scope of Work: The Standing Committee on Continuing Professional Development is charged with developing and maintaining a strategic continuing education plan for the society; developing core educational content; providing guidance on topics and content for workshops, symposia and conferences that meet the body of knowledge transfer and continuing education needs of members

worldwide; providing guidance on the delivery formats and methods to facilitate global delivery of core educational content; implementing the instructor review and approval process as defined in the standing rules; and providing guidance on the use of relevant education from other allied organizations.

3.2.1.2. Subcommittees: The Standing Committee on Continuing Professional Development includes the following subcommittees:

- a. Course Content and Delivery
- b. Conferences, Workshops and Symposia
- c. Emerging Professionals (EPs) of SFPE
- d. PE Exam Preparation

3.2.2. Membership and Chapter Relations (CMC)

3.2.2.1. Scope of Work: The Standing Committee on Membership and Chapter Relations is responsible for the recruitment and retention of members, as well as recognizing member achievements. Standing Committee members receive recommendations of fire protection engineers or related professionals to consider for recognition of their stature or significant, noteworthy accomplishments. The committee fosters communication among chapters, HQ and the board of directors. The committee is also responsible for helping in the formation of new chapters, creating stronger ties between the chapter and SFPE, and identifying opportunities for the chapters to help in disseminating SFPE news and information that is relevant to their constituencies.

3.2.2.2. Subcommittees: The Standing Committee on Members and Chapters includes the following subcommittees:

- a. Awards
- b. Chapter Relations
- c. Membership Growth and Engagement
- d. Qualifications

3.2.3. Community Outreach and Advocacy (COA)

3.2.3.1. Scope of Work: The Committee on Community Outreach and Advocacy is responsible for advancing the recognition of the profession; increasing the public's awareness of the profession and the services provided; and guiding the society and its chapters in reaching out to the public, allied professionals, industry members and to the code enforcement community to increase the stature of fire protection engineering and fire safety engineering. This committee also recommends and monitors positions taken by the society on emerging technical, legislative and regulatory issues, and provides support for marketing and public relations initiatives implemented by, and on behalf of, the society.

3.2.3.2. Subcommittees: The Standing Committee on Community Outreach and Advocacy includes the following subcommittees:

- a. Fire Service
- b. Student Outreach

3.2.4. Professional Qualifications (CPQ)

3.2.4.1. Scope of Work: The Standing Committee on Professional Qualifications is charged with developing, disseminating and maintaining an occupational competency standard for the fire protection

engineering profession, to include minimum criteria for professional licensing and credentialing; sustaining an engineering licensure examination within the standards (e.g., item quality and quantity, testing format, test specification refresh frequency, clean audit statement, etc.) established by the United States National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying (NCEES); establishing and promoting the profession's Code of Ethics,⁸ and providing impartial evaluations of questions of ethics within the profession; facilitating the development of new fire protection engineering programs and courses; promoting new and existing courses in fire protection engineering; and assisting in new and continuing accreditation of fire protection engineering and technology programs.

3.2.4.2. Subcommittees: The Standing Committee on Professional Qualifications includes the following Subcommittees:

- a. Higher Education
- b. P.E. Exam Development
- c. Professional Ethics and Standards of Conduct
- d. Professional Competency and Credentialing

3.2.5. Research, Tools and Methods (RTM)

3.2.5.1. Scope of Work: The Standing Committee on Research, Tools and Methods identifies, develops and oversees SFPE's technical products and research work, reviews new innovations, and helps to establish the research agenda for the fire safety engineering profession. Technical document committees and task groups fall under the jurisdiction of the Subcommittee for Standards Oversight.

3.2.5.2. Subcommittees: The Standing Committee on Research, Tools and Methods includes the following Subcommittees:

- a. Codes and Standards Liaison
- b. Handbook Development
- c. Research and Innovation
- d. Standards Oversight

3.3. Nominating Committee: The Nominating Committee consists of six members. Three members shall be elected by the society in accordance with election procedures and three shall be appointed by the board of directors within 60 days after the Annual Business Meeting. The chair of the Nominating Committee shall be appointed by the board of directors from among members of the Nominating Committee. The Nominating Committee shall verify that the applicants for the position of officer or director of the society are members in good standing and are eligible to serve; publish a list of eligible applicants and the office for which they applied; and nominate at least one eligible candidate for each vacant position for election as officer or director according to procedures established by the board of directors.

4. CONDUCT GUIDELINES FOR COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Although all participants in SFPE Standing Committees serve the same overall SFPE mission and are expected to promote the purposes and goals stated in the Statement of Purpose and the Statement of General Principles, different roles within the Standing Committees may carry differing responsibilities and obligations. Roles within the SFPE Standing Committees include: Standing Committee chair(s), Subcommittee chair(s) and Standing/Subcommittee members. Note that members apply to the board of directors and are initially appointed to Standing Committees. Standing Committee and Subcommittee

chairs determine member competency and expertise, as well as overall needs of the society, when making subcommittee appointments.

The following guidelines for conduct are intended to provide an extension to the Statement of General Principles to assist participants in the SFPE Standing Committees in carrying out their respective roles and responsibilities. Because no single set of rules and guidelines can be all inclusive of every possible situation, members should attempt, even when the guidelines do not specifically address a situation, to act in a manner that is consistent with the Statement of Purpose and Statement of General Principles, and the spirit of these guidelines.

4.1. Guidelines Applicable to All Participants: All participants have the following responsibilities:

- a) Read and become familiar with the SFPE Constitution & Bylaws; SFPE Standing Rules; SFPE Strategic Plan, including Goals, and Key Performance Indicators; and charter of the Standing Committee and Subcommittee in which they are participating.
- b) Act honestly and in good faith with a view to serving the best interests of SFPE. Although it is recognized that legitimate differences of opinion can exist about individual issues, participants should support and promote the defined broad objectives of the society.
- c) Stay current with the SFPE strategic goals and objectives that influence the activities in which they are directly or indirectly involved.
- d) Fully prepare for and consistently attend all scheduled meetings; read and become familiar with all issues related to the upcoming tasks of the Standing Committee or Subcommittee; and promptly and thoroughly take all actions necessary to complete the processing of documents within their committees.
- e) Encourage full participation by all interested people, and encourage and facilitate the full and open dissemination of all information necessary to enable full and fair consideration of all points of view.
- f) Avoid withholding or prohibiting information or points of view from being disseminated, particularly on the grounds that the participant is in disagreement with the information or points of view. Disagreements should be addressed and resolved through full presentation and discussion of all information and points of view, not through withholding information or preventing points of view from being expressed.
- g) Confine comments during all discussion, debate and deliberation to the merits of the scientific, technical and procedural issues under review. Although participants may advocate their views or positions, they should be candid and forthcoming about any weaknesses in their positions, and they should refrain from debate and discussion that is disrespectful or unprofessional in tone or that is unduly personalized or damaging to the overall process of achieving consensus.
- h) Avoid sharing or discussing competitively sensitive information, nor invite or reach an agreement on means of competing, including price-fixing, bid-rigging, dividing markets or collectively refusing to do business with third parties. In addition, participants shall not seek to exploit their position within SFPE to gain a market advantage over a competitor.⁹
- i) Take appropriate steps to ensure that any public statements, either written or oral, that are not official statements of SFPE are properly portrayed as the opinion or position of that individual.
- j) Respect and observe the confidentiality of discussions in circumstances where duly established policies and procedures related to SFPE business require deliberations to take place.
- k) Conduct themselves at all times in a professional and respectful manner, and respect all rulings of the chair(s). Participants should express their views by making appropriate motions and through participation in the formal debate on motions.

- l) Apart from declared sources of funding, such as those provided by their employer, organization or other sources for their participation in SFPE committee work, participants should not solicit or accept gifts, hospitality or transfers of economic benefit, other than incidental gifts or other benefits of nominal value, from persons, groups or organizations having dealings with their committees or under any circumstances in which the benefit would be or would appear to be bestowed or accepted for the purposes of influencing the members' activities in the Standing Committees or Subcommittees. Participants have an affirmative and continuing obligation to declare funding sources other than their full-time employers to the SFPE.

4.2. Guidelines Applicable to Standing Committee Chairs

4.2.1. Interaction with the Board of Directors: In addition to the guidelines that apply to all committee participants, Standing Committee chairs have the following responsibilities to the board of directors through the office of the CEO:

- a) Regularly report operations of the Standing Committee to the board of directors. The chair is expected to attend two face-to-face meetings with the board of directors, one of which coincides with the strategic focus of a particular board meeting and one that coincides with the annual conference or either the European conference or PBD conference. [**Note:** In support of in-person participation, chairs or approved non-staff alternates may be reimbursed up to \$400 for intracontinental travel and up to \$1,000 for intercontinental travel.]
 - i. The CEO is expected to review all matters going before the board of directors, before a meeting. In particular, any sensitive or potentially controversial issues should be shared with the CEO at least 10 days before the board meeting.
 - ii. Following consultation with the president, the CEO must approve, in advance, any deviation from face-to-face attendance (e.g., teleconference, representation by Standing Committee member or staff liaison). Any alternate representative must be able to speak to the entire spectrum of a Standing Committee's activities.
- b) Identify participating Standing Committee and Subcommittee membership (i.e., number of members) when presenting Standing Committee reports to the board of directors for review and action.
- c) Before the conclusion of member terms, and in collaboration with staff liaisons, provide recommendations to the board for reappointment of Standing Committee members, including Standing Committee and Subcommittee chairs. All materials going before the board of directors must be submitted to the staff liaison 10 business days before the board meeting. Materials should be separated by "informational" and "actionable" items, since they will be addressed separately by the board of directors. Materials, including committee reports that are not submitted 10 business days prior, will not go before the board until the next scheduled meeting.
- d) Present and receive quarterly scope, timeline and resource approval of all Standing Committee activities in regularly scheduled reports to the board of directors. Standing and Subcommittee activity proposals shall be adequately developed in terms of scope, schedule, and budget to enable the board of directors to accurately evaluate and vote upon the Standing Committee proposals.
- e) Prepare, with the support of the SFPE staff liaison, and submit for approval any proposed expenses, including meeting expenses, travel and other related costs required for Standing Committee and Subcommittee operations.

4.2.2. Interaction with Subcommittee Chairs and Membership: In addition to the guidelines that apply to all committee participants, Standing Committee chairs have the following responsibilities to the Subcommittee chairs and membership:

- a) Act in an impartial manner in the performance of their duties,
- b) Recommend to the board of directors for approval to appoint Subcommittee chairs,
- c) Collaborate with Subcommittee chairs to appoint Subcommittee members from among Standing Committee membership.
- d) Disclose to all members of their Standing Committees all known or potential conflicts of interest or other circumstances that could influence their impartiality on a particular matter. The chair must also recuse themselves from the Standing Committee's consideration (i.e., discussion, deliberation or voting) of any matter in which they have an actual or perceived conflict of interest. A conflict of interest is defined as any situation in which the Standing Committee or a Subcommittee decision could substantially and directly affect the Standing Committee chair's financial or business interest.
- e) Avoid potential conflicts of interest in the appointment of all Subcommittee chairs. If, in the opinion of the Standing Committee chair, an individual has a known or potential conflict of interest, or other circumstances that could influence the individual's impartiality, that individual should not be appointed to chair the Subcommittee.
- f) Exercise care and diligence in the appointment of Subcommittee membership. Although Subcommittees need not be fully balanced, Standing Committee chairs should attempt to include, to the extent practicable, any interested committee member or others who could usefully contribute to the work of the Subcommittee. Standing Committee chairs should avoid constituting a subcommittee in such a way as to unfairly exclude participation of anyone interested in or desiring and qualified to participate.
- g) Ensure that the body of work prepared and presented by the Subcommittee is thoroughly reviewed and considered by the full Subcommittee membership.
- h) Share personal technical positions to facilitate or add clarity to discussions, but refrain from dominating discussions or excluding other reasonable perspectives and input.
- i) Be consistent in the conduct of meetings.
- j) Arbitrate any Subcommittee disagreements, impasses, split votes or contentious discussions that cannot be resolved by the Subcommittee chair.
- k) Endeavor to stimulate participation from all Standing Committee members.
- l) Develop consensus among all stakeholders and advocate board-approved policies globally.

4.3. Guidelines Applicable to Subcommittee Chairs: In addition to the guidelines that apply to all Committee participants, Subcommittee chairs have the following responsibilities:

- a) Act in an impartial manner in the performance of their duties
- b) Disclose to all members of their Subcommittees all known or potential conflicts of interest or other circumstances that could influence their impartiality on a particular matter. The chair must also recuse themselves from the Subcommittee's consideration (i.e., discussion, deliberation or voting) of any matter in which they have an actual or perceived conflict of interest. A conflict of interest is defined as any situation in which the Subcommittee's decision could substantially and directly affect the chair's financial or business interest.
- c) Exercise care and diligence in the recommendation and appointment of Subcommittee membership. Although subcommittees need not be fully balanced, Subcommittee chairs should attempt to include, to the extent practicable, any interested committee member or others who could usefully contribute to the work of the Subcommittee. Subcommittee chairs should avoid

constituting a subcommittee in such a way as to unfairly exclude participation of anyone interested in or desiring and qualified to participate.

- d) Identify participating subcommittee members when presenting subcommittee reports to the full Standing Committee or board of directors for review and action. Ensure that the work of subcommittees is thoroughly reviewed and considered by the full Subcommittee.
- e) Share personal technical positions to facilitate or add clarity to discussions, but refrain from dominating discussions or excluding other reasonable perspectives and input.
- f) Refer for arbitration to the Standing Committee chair any Subcommittee disagreements, impasses, split votes or contentious discussions that cannot be resolved among the Subcommittee membership
- g) Be consistent in the conduct of meetings.
- h) Endeavor to stimulate participation from all committee members.
- i) Develop consensus among all stakeholders and advocate board-approved policies globally.
- j) Upon request, be responsible for preparing and submitting to the Standing Committee chair proposed budgets for subcommittee operations, including meeting expenses, travel and other related costs.
- k) Identify criteria for Subcommittee membership, where specific prerequisites, demographics and qualifications exist for the Subcommittee's Scope of Work.
- l) Determine and recommend to the Standing Committee Chair any Subcommittee minimum or maximum quantities of membership to ensure efficient operation of the Subcommittee.
- m) Guide the Subcommittee in its work as outlined by the Subcommittee Scope of Work and charge from the board of directors through the office of the CEO.
- n) Call meetings at a time and place deemed suitable to execute the activities of the Subcommittee. A minimum of a simple majority of the Subcommittee membership shall be present to proceed with a meeting.

5. CONDUCT GUIDELINES FOR SFPE STAFF LIAISONS

Staff liaisons serve as non-voting, informed resources and facilitators to the chairs and members of the Standing Committees and Subcommittees. The staff liaisons assist the chairs in facilitating committee and subcommittee discussions and activities that address the committee's charge and work with the chairs to ensure that all committee work is consistent with the society's goals and objectives. Staff liaison roles are vital to the fair, open and efficient operation of the committees, and should promote the purposes and goals in the "Statement of Purpose" (see Section 1) and "Statement of General Principles" (see Section 2). In addition, staff liaisons have the following responsibilities:

- a) Promptly and diligently perform all of the advisory, organizational, clerical and other duties assigned to them by the Committee chairs and by all other duly established policies and procedures related to the operations of the Standing Committees and Subcommittees.
- b) Encourage and facilitate full and effective participation, and encourage and facilitate the full, fair and accurate presentation of all relevant information and viewpoints.
- c) Share their personal technical positions to facilitate or add clarity to discussions, but refrain from dominating discussions or excluding other reasonable perspectives and input.
- d) Strive to ensure that all the work of the Standing Committees and Subcommittees to which they are assigned is carried out in accordance with the SFPE Constitution & Bylaws, SFPE Standing Rules, and any other duly established policies and procedures related to the SFPE Standing Committees.
- e) Conduct themselves in a manner that reflects their nonpartisan, facilitative and advisory role. Maintain a demeanor that is fair and dispassionate. Take care that they neither act nor could be perceived to be acting on behalf of or to further the interests of any group or individual.

- f) Refrain from acting as the representative of the Standing Committees for the purposes of arguing a Standing Committee's position at any hearing, petition or presentation. However, the staff liaison may provide information as requested by the board of directors or other external stakeholders.
- g) Inform the Standing Committee of the potential effect of its activities on the other Standing Committees of the society.
- h) Maintain current committee rosters and distribution lists and notify the chair(s) of approved changes in Standing Committee membership.
 - i. Assist chair(s) with scheduling meeting dates and places.

6. LIABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

As volunteers, participants on SFPE Committees who perform their obligations in good faith, focus on furthering the mission of SFPE and adhere to the requirements of this manual are unlikely to incur liability. Participants should nevertheless be vigilant in avoiding conduct that involves risk, such as disparaging persons, products or companies, or engaging in anti-competitive behavior in violation of antitrust laws.

References

¹SFPE Standing Rules

Link:

https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.sfpe.org/resource/resmgr/docs/policies_and_procedures/18_oct_28_Standing_Rules_AME.pdf

²SFPE Technical Document Development Procedures

Link:

https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.sfpe.org/resource/resmgr/Procedure_-_TECHNICAL_DEVELO.pdf

³American National Standards Institute (ANSI) Approved Standards Development Procedures

Link:

https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.sfpe.org/resource/resmgr/Procedures_-_ANSI_STANDARDS_.pdf

⁴Constitution and Bylaws of the Society of Fire Protection Engineers

Link:

https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.sfpe.org/resource/resmgr/docs/policies_and_procedures/SFPE_CONSTITUTION_AND_BYLAWS.pdf

⁵SFPE Anti-Harassment Policy

Link:

https://cdn.ymaws.com/sfpe.site-ym.com/resource/resmgr/docs/Policies_and_Procedures/06-Anti_Harassment_Policy.pdf

⁶SFPE Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Link:

https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.sfpe.org/resource/resmgr/docs/policies_and_procedures/diversityandinclusionpolicy.pdf

⁷SFPE Non-Discrimination Policy

Link:

https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.sfpe.org/resource/resmgr/docs/Policies_and_Procedures/SFPE_Non_Discrimination_Poli.pdf

⁸SFPE Code of Ethics

Link:

<https://www.sfpe.org/page/CodeofEthics>

⁹SFPE Antitrust Policy

Link:

https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.sfpe.org/resource/resmgr/docs/policies_and_procedures/SFPE_Antitrust_Policy.pdf