

# INTERNATIONAL FIRE SERVICE ACCREDITATION CONGRESS

Oklahoma State University  
1700 West Tyler  
Stillwater, OK 74078-8075  
Phone (405) 744-8303  
FAX (405) 744-8802



## MEMORANDUM

**Date:** December 21, 2010

**To:** Members of the IFSAC Certificate Assembly

**From:** Clayton Moorman, Manager

**RE:** Reciprocity and Equivalency

During the 2010 Fall Certificate Assembly Board of Governors (CABOG) meeting in Nova Scotia the CABOG was asked to review and interpret the intent of reciprocity and in turn equivalency as part of their charge to "Clarify policy established by the Certificate Assembly" per the CA bylaws 10.5.1 (c). The citation for interpretation from the *Certificate Assembly Criteria for Certificate Accreditation with Basis for Judgment Statements* was as follows:

Page 7 Paragraph 16: An accredited entity shall agree to review the certification credentials of individuals certified by other IFSAC accredited entities to determine which level of certification, if any, is applicable (Reciprocity). Describe the conditions under which certification would be granted to individuals certified by other IFSAC accredited entities. **BASIS FOR JUDGMENT:** Published and publicly available policy addressing this criterion.

The CABOG's charge was to deliberate reciprocity between entities and if equivalency can exist between accrediting bodies. The issue specifically was: Can an individual present a certificate issued by non-IFSAC accredited entity and receive an IFSAC certificate in return from an accredited entity? Or, if an individual presents and IFSAC accredited entity with a "ProBoard only, French Army, CalFire, IFE or other" certificate can an IFSAC seal be issued with no additional testing or confirmation (referred to as flipping of seals by members of the CABOG)?

In the deliberation it was identified that there are actually two issues. The first is equivalency between accrediting entities. IFSAC bylaws make no mention of equivalency between accrediting entities, therefore since no reference is made, it cannot exist within IFSAC at this point. An example that has been given is the difference between United Laboratories (UL) and Factory Mutual (FM). Both are in a sense accrediting organizations. Some equipment has one stamp or the other and in some cases both. Although, they both have similar objectives, they are not interchangeable, thus the reason for one stamp or the other, or in some cases both. IFSAC and other accrediting organizations are in the same situation, in that the IFSAC process is similar to other process, but is different enough that they are not regarded as interchangeable.

The second issue was reciprocity as defined by the IFSAC bylaws and is directly related to equivalency. With regard to reciprocity, per the citation above, reciprocity is to occur between IFSAC entities. It is still not the intent to limit the policies of an entity, although equivalency between other accredited bodies is not recognized by IFSAC. An accredited entity can recognize another accredited body within their jurisdiction and issue their own certifications as such. This has always been the policy of IFSAC to allow the entity to do what is necessary within their jurisdiction, but with regard to IFSAC seals, trading or flipping certificates is outside of the scope of IFSAC. As such it is recognized by the CABOG that entities can accept other accredited bodies certificates within their jurisdiction, but cannot issue IFSAC seals for testing that has not occurred under a process that has not been reviewed and accredited by IFSAC.

Administration has been asked to poll the constituency to find out how certificates are being issued and report back to the CABOG. Reciprocity and equivalency will be on the agenda for the Spring Meetings in Newfoundland. Please let me know how certificates are issued in your jurisdiction.