PPA members and higher education leaders should be aware of two NFPA (National Fire Protection Association) documents regarding campus security: one is a “guide” and the other is a “standard.” For the education facilities industry, the differences are important. The standard, NFPA 731, is written in code language, and may be adopted by states and local jurisdictions as such. It is also prescriptive and is essentially a “how to” document. However, the guide, NFPA 730, may be the more important of the two because it may affect campus construction details, management planning, and campus liability if it becomes the de-facto leading practice document for campus security. It is the document that explains the scope of security planning, or the “what to” do. Together they are important for the following reasons:

• They may become enforceable law if they are adopted by state and local government.
• States may reference them in school design guidelines.
• They may be adopted by insurance companies or risk managers as property loss prevention programs.
• They may be used by plaintiff’s counsel as a standard of care, thereby establishing a duty owed by colleges and university to victims of crime in actions by the victims against the university or college.

As a guide, NFPA 730 is advisory or informative in nature and contains only non-mandatory provisions. Although a guide may contain mandatory provisions—not the least of which deal with when and where it applies—the document is not suitable for adoption in its present form by reference in a public statute.
Another document, *Risk Analysis Standard for Natural and Man-Made Hazards to Higher Education Institutions* developed by the American Society for Mechanical Engineering (ASME), issued in 2010, is a relatively new document in the campus security space that will be examined by the CATF for applicability to our industry and likelihood of adoption by relevant agencies. Until that time, the documents APPA members need to be watching regarding security are NFPA 730 and 731. Additional information on the work of the Code Advocacy Task Force can be found on the APPA website.

**SUMMARY**

Writers of model law documents must always steer their thinking between two extremes: making a consensus document a commercial prospect by creating a general document that can be used and adopted by everyone; versus incorporating extremely specific provisions that may become obsolete quickly and may not be suitable for broad adoption.

The outcome can be the document is so general that it is useless in guiding an industry toward practical solutions. NFPA 730 and 731 are not perfect documents. However, they have been developed by the NFPA’s procedures conforming to the American National Standards Institute’s process for consensus documents and are on solid ground. They can be improved and form a suitable platform for that work. For colleges and universities, the existing structure is useful and worth building upon.

**REFERENCES:**


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**NFPA 731 - Standard for the Installation of Electronic Premises Security Systems.** This standard covers the application, location, installation, performance, testing, and maintenance of electronic premises security systems and their components.

By comparison, NFPA 731, a standard, is a document that contains only mandatory provisions, using the word “shall” to indicate requirements, and which is in a form generally suitable for mandatory reference by another standard or code. It may be adopted into law. Non-mandatory provisions are located in an appendix or annex, footnote, or advisory note and are not considered a part of the requirements of the standard.

Even though NFPA 730 was not written to be enforceable and is crafted in non-mandatory language, it may have the practical effect of increasing APPA member liability exposure because it is the only document developed according to a true ANSI process that contains a dedicated chapter on security in educational facilities.