**Section 176.550 Authority of Hearing Officer**

The Hearing Officer shall have all powers necessary to conduct a hearing, avoid delay, maintain order, and insure the development of a clear and complete record, including the power to:

a) Administer oaths and affirmations;

b) Preside over the hearings, regulate the course of hearings, set the time for filing documents, and provide for the taking of testimony by deposition, when necessary;

c) Set the time and place for the continuance of a hearing once the hearing has commenced (Section 176.520 governs the continuance of a hearing prior to its commencement);

d) Examine witnesses and direct witnesses to testify, limit the number of times any witness may testify, limit repetitious or cumulative testimony, and set reasonable limits on the amount of time each witness may testify and be cross-examined;

e) Receive evidence, rule upon objections to admissibility of evidence, and rule upon offers of proof;

f) Issue subpoenas that require attendance, testimony or the production of papers, books, documentary evidence or other tangible things;

g) Dispose of procedural requests or similar matters;

h) Require prior submission of testimony and exhibits in writing and set any deadlines for the filing of documents;

i) Direct parties to appear and confer for the settlement or simplification of issues, and to otherwise conduct prehearing conferences;

j) Reprimand or exclude from the hearing any person for indecorous or improper conduct committed in the presence of the Hearing Officer;

k) Order the parties to submit briefs on issues of first impression. These briefs shall be limited to 15 pages, including proposed findings of fact and conclusions of law, and shall be submitted after the close of evidence and proofs pursuant to the procedures of Section 176.560;

l) Render findings of fact, conclusions of law, opinions and recommendations for an Order of the State Fire Marshal;

m) Enter any Order that expedites the purpose of this Part; and

n) Generally conduct the hearing and all pre-hearing and post-hearing matters according to this Subpart.