INTRODUCTION

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Connecticut State Police
Fire & Explosion Investigation Unit
Critical Investigation Steps

• Receiving the Call
• Arrival at the Scene
• LEGAL ENTRY
• Assessing the Incident
• Consider Available Resources
• Interviews
• Documentation
• Processing the Scene
• Evidence Collection
• Concluding the Report
INCENDIARY v. ARSON

INCENDIARY
An incendiary fire is a fire that has been deliberately ignited under circumstances in which the person knows the fire should not be ignited.

Incendiary is a fire cause classification

ARSON
Arson is the crime of maliciously and intentionally, or recklessly, starting a fire or causing an explosion

Arson is a legal charge and should not be used by fire investigators to classify the cause of a fire
WHO CALLED IN THE FIRE?

What kind of information did they give?

Was it overly detailed?

Was there information that the average caller wouldn’t have known?
Was there any incident of any kind that delayed you from getting to the fire scene as quickly as you normally would?

**Barriers such as locked gates?**

**Obstacles?**

**Other incidents?**
Did you notice any vehicles leaving the scene?

What was the description of the vehicle?

Any license plate state or numbers?
When you first arrived, what color of smoke did you observe?
Where did you see open flame?
What color and size was the flame?
Were there any explosions?
WITNESS OBSERVATIONS

Did you see any familiar faces in the crowd?

Was anyone being overly helpful to you?

Did anyone look odd, or simply not fit the time and place of the fire?

Was anyone wearing unusual clothing?
Was there anyone taking photographs or video of the fire?

Did you identify who it was?

Firefighters?

Fixed & Mobile Surveillance Cameras
Were any doors or windows open or ajar?

Did you note whether any doors or windows or any other building openings had signs of forced entry?

Did you note the quality and condition of locking mechanisms?

Broken locks?

Broken Glass?

Locked with no damage?
ENTRY

How did you gain entry into the building?

If entry was forced, what kind of tool was used?

Who forced entry?

SPECIFIC DETAILS ARE EXTREMELY IMPORTANT
Upon entry into the building what did you first observe?

Were there any sprinkler systems that were operating?

Were there any obstacles that you encountered that seemed out of the ordinary?
ALARM OBSERVATIONS

• Burglar alarms?
• Fire/Smoke/Sprinkler Alarms?
• Tampered with?
• Disabled?
Were there unusual covers over windows or doors such as blankets, sheets or plywood to conceal the fire from the exterior?

Did contents appear to be in place for the type of occupancy or did it seem as though there was a break-in or other circumstance?
SUPPRESSION

OBSERVATIONS

What was the method of attack used to extinguish the fire?

How much water was used to extinguish the fire?

How did the fire react when water was applied?

How long did it take to get the fire under control?
Where was the seat of the fire?

Did you observe multiple areas of fire origin?

Did you notice anything unusual about the spread of the fire?

How quickly did the fire spread?
UNUSUAL BURN OR POUR PATTERNS

Burn through holes Trailers
BUILDING CONDITIONS

Doors and windows propped open?

Holes cut in floors and walls?
MULTIPLE POINTS OF ORIGIN

Two or more NON COMMUNICATING points of fire origin
WAS THE AREA OF ORIGIN IN AN UNUSUAL LOCATION?

Exterior of the building?

No obvious accidental or natural ignition sources?
Did you detect any unusual odors, such as gasoline, chemicals or propane in the building?

Did you observe any flammable liquid containers in the building?

Were the containers located in appropriate locations?

Did you observe any incendiary devices?
BUILDING CONTENTS

Presence/Absence of furnishings

Personal belongings

Clothing

Pets
PROPERTY STATUS & CONDITION

Maintenance
For Sale
Foreclosure
Did the owner or occupant arrive at the scene while you were there?
Did you get their identity?
What was their overall appearance?
Can you remember exactly what clothing they were wearing?
Did you detect any unusual odors on them?
Was their clothing appropriate for the time of day, weather conditions, etc?
Did you speak to the owner or occupant?

What was their reaction to the fire?

Can you remember details about what they told you?

Did you observe them speaking to anyone else at the scene; neighbors or bystanders?
OWNER/OCCUPANT ACTIONS

Did they act unusually nervous?
Did they ask about anything particular regarding the fire or contents of the building?
Did they enter the building at anytime after the fire?
Did they remove anything from the building?
NEIGHBORS & WITNESSES

What did they see?

What did they hear?

Previous history?
Is there a history of previous fires at this location?

Is there a history of previous fires with the same owner or occupant?
What steps were taken to secure the building?

Was a fire or police watch posted and who was the scene turned over to when you left?
Goals of the Accelerant Detection K9

• Address high volume of arsons
• Assist investigators
• Utilize diverse talents of K-9’s
• Reduce work at lab
• A dog trained to discriminate flammable and combustible liquid odors from normal pyrolysis odors
Benefits

- Greater Sensitivity
- Greater Selectivity
- Speed
- Survey Large Areas
- Deterrent

Accelerant Detection K9
Additional Benefits

- Determine M.O.
- Layout Trailers
- Pinpoint BEST Sample
Accelerant Detection K9

Considerations

• Area of Search
• Potential Contamination
Accelerant Detection K9

CLOTHING LINE-UPS
ORIGIN & CAUSE REPORT

Fire investigations require complete, accurate written reports concluding the origin and cause of the fire
ORIGIN & CAUSE REPORT

Based on the scene processing, identify the first fuel ignited, the ignition source capable of lighting that fuel, and how the fuel and the ignition source came together
THE CONCLUSION

Based on the fire scene examination and witness statements, it is the combined conclusion of the fire investigators that the fire originated... *(describe location in detail)* and was caused by the *(describe ignition scenario)*.

*(an open flame consistent with a match or a lighter)*

The fire is ruled as *INCENDIARY*
REMEMBER

There are occasions when there is no physical evidence of the ignition source, but an ignition sequence can be hypothesized based on other data.
GIRL SCOUTS

Because next time, you'll just buy the damn cookies
State Police Message Center
24 hr Callout #
800.842.0200
Or
860.685.8190

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