



THE FIRE SCENE MAGAZINE

NEW YORK STATE CHAPTER OF THE IAAI

FALL 2023





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President's Message

by M. Dixon Robin, IAAI-CFI

That our profession has its challenges is an understatement. The chaos and destruction of a fire, the mandates of a truly forensic investigation, dealing with victims, enduring weather, testifying – the list goes on and on.

In a positive string of recent developments, our parent organization (IAAI) has focused even more on health and safety with the debut of the Fire Investigation Safety Officer course. NYS OFPC is currently exploring peer support programs for fire investigators. CFITrainer.net is putting out new modules on safety. NFPA 1033 now requires site safety assessments. The buy-in on safety is almost complete.

But maybe what is most challenging is the long ball game. When we talk about chronic illnesses and the likelihood of developing cancer, the profession nods its head. We know that the health risks are significant. But what are we doing to realize, understand, and combat this deadly by-product of your service? How do we, as a profession, provide training and education? And are we committed – in the way that requires active participation – to making positive changes in our laws and regulations?

Several states have adopted a cancer presumption for fire investigators – Maine, Florida, Arizona, and Virginia, to name a few. In New York, where regulation runs in the government's blood, how have we not had a serious effort to legislate this? It is encouraging that volunteer firefighters recently received this coverage, but we need to extend this to all of our local, county, and state fire investigators.

I have recently contacted my Assemblywoman about this issue and started a discussion. It is not enough. We all need to engage with our elected officials to urge them to do the right thing. We cannot wait until many of you are stricken. And we need to leave this thing – fire investigation - better than we found it.

I am asking for volunteers from our membership to help with this effort. I am standing up a working group to pursue this goal of legislation recognizing a fire investigator cancer presumption. We can make inroads by coordinating a campaign to provide research, sample legislation (as passed by other states), and support from brother and sister organizations. It will have been worth it if it saves a life or three down the road. As an organization, NYS IAAI is committed to prioritizing our membership's health. I personally ask you to join this effort by donating your time and talent.

I always sign off this column with a "stay safe out there" one-liner. Short and sweet, and it is sincere. This time, I ask you to stay safe out there AND help us make it safer for everyone else in the decades to come!

On The Cover



This fire originated inside the kitchen area of a townhouse. The occupant placed a metal frying pan on the electric stove and left his ground-floor apartment to work on a car with a friend. He forgot about the pan on the stove until he noticed smoke and flames began billowing from his apartment. This fire happened in June 2023 in Norwalk, Ct.



Photo Credits:
Fire Investigator Ira Trow
T.J. Russo Consultants



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Post-Fire Scenes and PPE

Jeff Pauley MS, IAAI-CFI, IAAI-CI, MIFireE
Chairman, IAAI Health and Safety Committee

To properly discuss or refer to a post-fire scene, it is necessary to understand its design and configuration. The diagram below shows that a post-fire scene comprises time-based categories and distance-based zones (see Figure 1). Every investigative scene includes these two parts, regardless of the size or type of the fire or how long ago it happened.

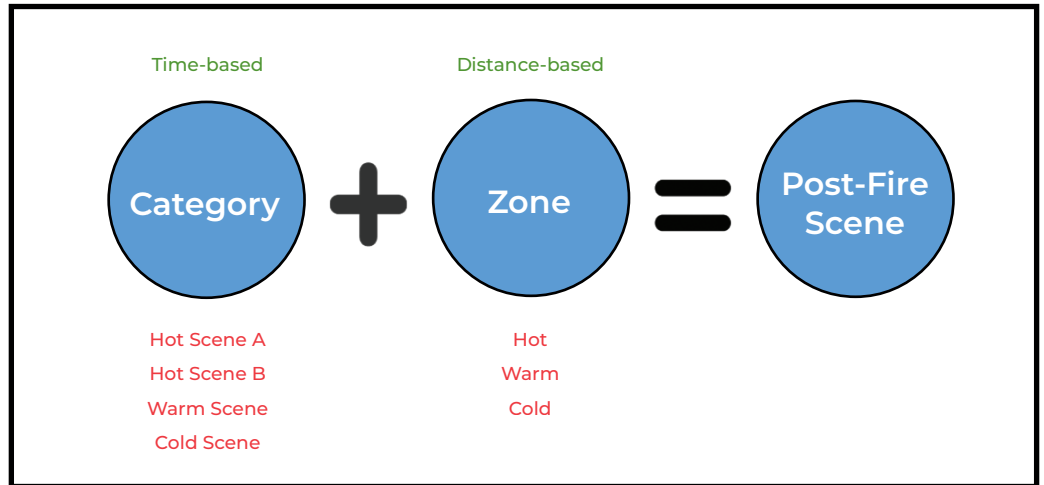


Figure 1 The post-fire scene

In a previous issue of this publication, we touched on the four time-based categories, but we did not address the recommended PPE for each, and we will here!

Here are the definitions again for reference (IAAI Health & Safety Committee, 2022).

Hot Scene A – the fire has been largely extinguished, and overhaul hasn’t yet started or is in progress.

Hot Scene B – overhaul has been completed for less than two hours.

Warm Scene – a fire that has been fully extinguished at least two hours but less than seventy-two hours. This 72-hour mark is significant because a study by the UL’s Fire Safety Research Institute found that the hazardous gases have dissipated within about two hours in most cases. However, in some instances, formaldehyde can persist in a post-fire scene for as long as three days (Horn, Madryzkowski, Neumann, Mayer, & Fent, 2021).

Cold Scene – a fire scene that has been fully extinguished for at least seventy-two hours and is not generating detectable or visible dust, fumes, mists, particulates, gases, vapors, or aerosols.

The three distance-based zones physically define the post-fire scene (see Figure 2), and they apply to every scene type, whether a structure, a vehicle, a boat, etc. Typically, these are not physically marked but can be, if necessary. The lead investigator should understand these zone definitions and visually determine, note, and communicate to others working the scene where they are. As an aside, it is also important for the suppression folks to understand that these zones exist at the fire scene with the same definitions, importance, and hazards.

The **hot zone** consists of whatever has burned and its debris field and collapse zone (if applicable). The field decontamination area is typically located at the outer edge of the hot zone. The **warm zone** is outside the hot zone, defined by the wind speed and direction, where the smoke¹ has cooled, and the particulates have fallen, or are falling, to the ground. More on this in a moment. The **cold zone** is everything else. The cold zone is where non-investigative activities and rehab should be.

The defined warm zone area is important because when smoke cools, the particulates, including the nanoparticles, which are too small to see, fall to the ground. This is called

¹ “The airborne solid and liquid particulates and gases evolved when a material undergoes pyrolysis or combustion, together with the quantity of air that is entrained or otherwise mixed into the mass.” (NFPA 921 Guide for Fire and Explosion Investigations, 2021)

the fire's **sootprint**. Understanding this concept and identifying the general area of the warm zone is important for fire investigators because when people walk through this area, it stirs up the particulates and the nanoparticulates and suspends them in the air, but you cannot see them. So, when you conduct your exterior 360, which will most likely be in this warm zone, and you are not wearing the appropriate PPE, including respiratory protection, you are exposing yourself to these toxins, which can be very harmful to your health.

In most instances, everyone in the warm zone for any reason should be wearing appropriate PPE that includes respiratory protection. There can be instances where this hazard has been reduced or even eliminated. If it has rained or snowed to the extent that these particulates have been washed away or into the ground, the warm zone could be small. However in most cases, the warm zone is present during our investigation, and its

ing through the scene. If others are in the scene before you, the air is likely already saturated with these. If you can see them in the air, understand that there are MANY more you cannot see.

In a previous article, I talked about the size of particulates that are most harmful to us. The results of post-fire scene tests conducted by UL's Fire Safety Research Institute found:

“The most important findings of this study are that 1) elevated and hazardous levels of airborne particulate may be encountered during all phases of the post-fire investigation depending on the activities of the fire investigator and 2) airborne formaldehyde concentrations could exceed recommended exposure limits in extended phases of the post-fire investigation.” (Horn, Madryzkowski, Neumann, Mayer, & Fent, 2021)

While there has not been a lot of post-fire scene research, this alone tells us that PPE is necessary in the post-fire environment. You need to cover as much of your body as possible to reduce the absorption of toxins through your skin, and you need appropriate respiratory protection to keep the toxins out of your lungs, where they can be absorbed into your bloodstream.

The category of post-fire scene you are presented with determines the types of PPE needed. Obviously, many factors can affect every scene. Here are the four categories identified in the IAAI's current **Fire Investigator**

Health and Safety Best Practices edition. See Part II, starting on page 32, for additional information. This is available to everyone at

www.iaaiwhitepaper.com



Figure 2 Post-fire zones

health hazards must be recognized. **Remember, a cold scene is not a safe scene where no PPE is needed!**

This scene and zone information comes together when we look at PPE because the post-fire scene we encounter on arrival defines what is appropriate PPE.

Let's start with the zones. Fire investigators should wear appropriate PPE, including respiratory protection, in the hot and warm zones at every post-fire scene. Why? Because we know there could be hazardous gases/vapors, but there ARE nanoparticulates you cannot see. These can be suspended in the air and stirred up by walk-



Hot Scene A and B

- Structural firefighter turnout gear, including bunker pants and coat, helmet with chin strap, particulate-blocking hood, boots, and gloves over nitrile gloves.
- SCBA
 - In some Hot Scene B cases, you may be able to move to an air-purifying respirator that has a P100 filter and an OV/AG/FM cartridge. This is more fully discussed in Appendix B of ***Fire Investigator Health and Safety Best Practices***.

Warm and Cold Scenes – Again, a cold scene is NOT a safe scene!

- Coveralls (preferably disposable with hood) that completely cover the torso, arms, and legs
- Helmet with chin strap
- Boots with steel or composite toe and puncture-resistant sole
- Proper respiratory protection equipment, as identified in Appendix B of ***Fire Investigator Health and Safety Best Practices***
- Disposable leather gloves or similar, with nitrile gloves underneath

Wearing PPE can be challenging, but it is essential for all of us who work post-fire scenes to protect ourselves now from health issues that could arise in the future.

Be Safe Out There!

Article References

- Horn, G., Madryzkowski, D., Neumann, D. L., Mayer, A. C., & Fent, K. W. (2021). *Airborne Contamination During Post-Fire Investigations: Hot, Warm and Cold Scenes*. Journal of Occupational and Environmental Hygiene.
- IAAI Health & Safety Committee. (2022). *Fire Investigator Health and Safety Best Practices, Third Edition*. Crofton, MD: International Association of Arson Investigators, Inc. Retrieved from www.iaaiwhitepaper.com

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Training Announcements

Effective January 2024, the Fire Investigator Health and Safety training offered by the IAAI's Health & Safety Committee is being updated and expanded. There will now be three separate courses available.

- Fire Investigator Health and Wellness – 4 hours
- Post-fire Scene Safety – 2 hours
- Field Decontamination – 2 hours

If you are interested in scheduling any of these classes, please email iaai-safety@firearson.com

The IAAI is now offering our new Fire Investigation Safety Officer course several times yearly. This 3 ½ day advanced training course will prepare experienced fire investigators to serve as a safety officer/manager/supervisor at a large or complex fire investigation. The course has been adapted from the ATF Safety Officer course with their approval and cooperation. The course material includes the latest safety information from a wide variety of sources and incorporates relevant FEMA ICS Safety Officer information. This is not an IAAI certification course or the NFPA Incident Safety Officer course, it is unique to and focuses specifically on the post-fire scene. For more information on this course, go to www.iaaitraining.com



Eastern Zone

by Vice President William McGovern

There are many clichés regarding the fire service or emergency services personnel in general. One I've heard for years and mentioned often lately deals with change.

“Two things the fire service doesn't like... change and the way things are.”

As I've been pondering the content of this column (pushing deadlines and the patience of Mr. Giampaolo), many ideas came and went until it finally dawned on me: they all focused on change, and not simply change for the sake of it but change which improved things, processes, productivity, and people in general. We must work toward changing for the better and focus on the positive that comes with change. A social media meme that caught my attention recently said,

“If you cannot accept changes, you cannot expect growth.”

The saying grabbed my attention because I find myself and others often grumbling about, or even outright trying to derail, people's ideas, initiatives, work, and sometimes hopes toward making positive change. We find it very easy to stick with what's comfortable and even easier to identify reasons the growth and change wouldn't work or shouldn't be tried. Many things have changed during my tenure in emergency services and fire investigations. Had things not changed, we might still find ourselves putting out fire with buckets of water (I'm not THAT old – you get the point) or making fact-less determinations that led to wrongful death sentences.

I know that I, and believe each of you, want to do your best in every way. We all strive to be the best and often work for the recognition and internal satisfaction that comes from knowing we did it right. As our world changes, we must change with it to ensure we're doing things the proper way, to ensure we maintain that satisfaction, and to ensure we grow. Embrace changes as we face them;

ultimately, they will make us grow and be better.

As we stare down the proverbial barrel of 2024, there are significant changes expected to the infrastructure at the Academy of Fire Science. The changes will undoubtedly provide short-term challenges to course offerings while much of the work is being accomplished. Staff throughout the Office of Fire Prevention and Control are working together daily on plans to maintain some semblance of normality, but there will certainly be concessions to course deliveries. Please watch for informational briefings as the Office implements growth and improvement to the facilities. I know you'll benefit from the result.

As I wrap this up, I wish to extend condolences for recent losses in the fire investigation community, first to the family of former Saratoga County Fire Investigator Albin “Bud” Pendrak. Bud retired from their team in 2002 and passed away in early August 2023. Secondly, to current Saratoga County Fire Investigator Les Bonesteel and his family. Les lost his wife, Georgia, at the end of July. Please keep these families in your thoughts!

Finally, recognition to a few friends. Well-deserved congratulations and best wishes to the Office of Fire Prevention and Control's Investigator Richard T. Daus and Albany Fire Department's Executive Deputy Chief Joseph J. Toomey. Rich and Joe both retired with over three decades of service each in public service, Rich on June 20, and Joe on July 28. May you both have a long, healthy, and prosperous retirement. Sláinte gentlemen!



Proposed Amendments to the NYS IAAI Chapter 23 Constitution and By-laws

In 2023, your NYS IAAI Board of Directors approved proposing two Constitutional language changes to the membership. The first proposal allows active members who retire in good standing to remain active. The second proposal relates to running our elections more efficiently and allowing for electronic balloting. Our parent organization, the International Association of Arson Investigators (IAAI), reviewed and approved both proposed changes. To realize these changes, the membership will vote on the proposed language at the NYS IAAI General Membership Meeting, 7 pm November 14th, 2023, at the Watkins Glen Harbor Hotel, 16 N Franklin St, Watkins Glen, NY.

#1 *Current By-law: Article II, Section 1*

Section 1 - Active Membership

Any representative of government, or of a government agency, and any representative of a business or industrial concern who is engaged in the control of the crime of arson and is a resident of, or employed in, the State of New York shall be eligible for active membership upon application, provided such person possesses the other qualifications for membership at the discretion of the Membership Committee and provided such person at least eighteen (18) years of age at the time of application.

Proposed By-law: Section 1 Letter A. (new section)

Applications to renew an Active Membership can be made by any current member who is a representative of government, or of a government agency (paid or volunteer), and any representative of a business or industrial concern who is engaged in the control of the crime of arson, provided such person possesses the other qualifications for membership at the discretion of the Membership Committee. This renewal eligibility shall extend to active members who, while an active member in good standing for at least five consecutive years up to and including their retirement, retired or resigned in good standing from their government agency or business or industrial concern.



#2 *Current By-law: Article III*

Section 7 - Election

Election of Officers shall be conducted in accordance with procedures developed and published by the NOMINATING COMMITTEE.

Proposed By-law: Article III (Proposed changes underlined)

Section 7 - Election

Election of Officers shall be conducted in accordance with procedures developed and published by the Nominating Committee and Election Committee.

#3 *Current By-law: Article VI, Section 1, Subsection B*

B. Constitution, By-Laws, Standard Operating Procedures:

The committee shall advise the officers, directors, and members of the Chapter on matters pertaining to the Constitution and By-Laws. The committee shall review and prepare proposed changes to the Constitution and By-laws in a suitable format

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for presentation to the officers, directors, and members of the Chapter. Additionally, the committee shall serve to review Standard Operating Procedures developed by other committees.

Proposed By-law: Article VI, Section 1, Subsection B (Proposed changes underlined)

B. Constitution, By-Laws, Standard Operating Guidelines:

The committee shall advise the officers, directors, and members of the Chapter on matters pertaining to the Constitution and By-Laws. The committee shall review and prepare proposed changes to the Constitution and By-laws in a suitable format for presentation to the officers, directors, and members of the Chapter. Additionally, the committee shall serve to review Standard Operating Guidelines developed by other committees.

#4 Current By-law: Article VI, Section 1, Subsection D

D. Nominating

The committee shall be to encourage, solicit, receive, and screen all nominations for the various officer and director positions of the Chapter. The committee shall present all qualified nominees to the membership on opening day of a general meeting. The committee shall establish procedures for and conduct any necessary election for those positions.

Proposed By-law: Article VI, Section 1, Subsection D (Proposed changes underlined)

D. Nominating

The committee shall be to encourage, solicit, receive, and determine the eligibility of all nominations for the various officer and director positions of the Chapter. The committee shall present all qualified nominees to the Board by October 1st of each year and to the membership at least one week prior to the annual general membership meeting. The committee shall interface with the Election Committee as necessary for any election voting. The committee shall maintain and recommend updates to the committee Standard Operating Guidelines as necessary.

#5 Proposed Addition to the By-laws: Article VI, Section 1, Subsection M (All new)

M. Election

The committee, under the direction and guidance of the Board, shall establish a method and process for voting on candidates for elected office, Constitution and By-Law amendments, or any other matter deemed necessary by the Board. The committee shall utilize and prepare electronic ballots, whenever practicable, for various votes and employ ballots in the manner chosen for a specific vote. The committee shall maintain and recommend updates to the committee Standard Operating Guidelines as necessary.

#6 Current By-law: Article VI, Section 2

Section 2 - Additional Duties

In addition to the duties described, each committee shall perform additional duties as described in the Standard Operation Procedures for that committee, and the Association may delegate other duties as may be delegated by the Association. Each Regional Vice President has been assigned oversight responsibilities for various committees. All committees, both standing and non-standing, will be chaired by the oversight Vice President for that committee or his or her designee.

Proposed By-law: Article VI, Section 2 (Proposed changes underlined)

Section 2 - Additional Duties

In addition to the duties described, each committee shall perform additional duties as described in the Standard Operating Guidelines for that committee, and the Association may delegate other duties as may be delegated by the Association. Each Regional Vice President has been assigned oversight responsibilities for various committees. All committees, both standing and non-standing, will be chaired by the oversight Vice President for that committee or his or her designee.



#7 Current By-law: Article VI, Section 3

Section 3 - Standard Operating Procedures

The standard operating procedures for each standing committee shall be subject to review and recertification every two years or as necessary upon substantive change.

Proposed By-law: Article VI, Section 3 (Proposed changes underlined)

Section 3 - Standard Operating Guidelines

The standard operating guidelines for each standing committee shall be subject to review and recertification every two years or as necessary upon substantive change.



#8 Current By-law: Article VII, Section 1

Section 1 - Requirements

This constitution may be amended at any regular or special meeting of the Chapter by a vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the membership present, provided thirty (30) days written notification of proposed amendments has been sent to all members.

Proposed By-law: Article VII, Section 1 (proposed changes underlined)

Section 1 - Requirements

This Constitution and By-Laws may be amended by a two-thirds (2/3) affirmative majority of the total electronic vote for the amendment to pass, providing:

A. The proposed amendment is presented in a form consistent with and without conflict with the remainder of the existing constitution of the Association and shall be submitted by October 1st, prior to the next Annual General Meeting, in a manner prescribed by the Constitution and By-Laws Committee as approved by the Board.

B. Proposed amendments to this Constitution and By-Laws must be disseminated to all members by written notification or on the NYS IAAI Chapter 23 website for review at least thirty (30) days preceding the opening of the electronic voting.

C. The Constitution and By-Laws Committee shall review and automatically amend, as necessary, those portions of the Constitution and By-Laws that conflict with existing Federal rules, regulations, or laws pertaining to gender/sex discrimination.

Proposed By-law: Article VII, Section 2 (new section)

Section 2. Voting.

Amendments to the Constitution and By-Laws shall be voted upon by electronic ballot in a manner prescribed by the Board of Directors.



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Central Zone

by Vice President
Joseph Galloway

I hope this issue finds everyone doing well. As fall begins, now is a great time to review your CV, where you stand with educational topics you may not have looked at in a while, and whether you've completed 12 hours of tested training for the year. It's scary to say, but there isn't much time left in this year.

Speaking about tested training, November is just around the corner. Remember that the NYS Office of Fire Prevention and Control annual Arson Seminar takes place on November 14th, 15th, and 16th. If you are attending the seminar, please also attend the NYS IAAI President's Reception, annual general membership meeting, and awards ceremony on Tuesday, November 14th, 1700 hours at the Harbor Hotel. Gather together for some networking, food and drink, and information on what we have accomplished this year and what we are working on for the future. This is your organization, and we value your input.

If you haven't already, please read, review, and become familiar with the second draft of NFPA 1321 Standard for Fire Investigation Units, a new standard. It covers the minimum requirements relating to the establishment, structure, operation, and management of fire investigation units and is currently available for public comment. The committee will meet again in October to finalize the document, which is scheduled for release in early 2024.

A new edition of NFPA 921, the Guide for Fire and Explosion Investigations, is also scheduled to be released in early 2024. 921 is in a custom cycle due to the Emergency Response and Responder Safety Document Consolidation Plan, as approved by the NFPA Standards Council. The expected print date is January 2024, according to the NFPA.

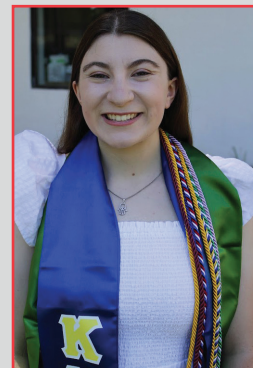
As a reminder, I am always available to come to any county or team meeting in the Central Zone to discuss the chapter, answer any questions, review CV development, or present the Perils and Pitfalls of an Investigation program. Please feel free to reach out to me anytime at centralvice@nyfireinvestigators.org.

I hope to see you at the November Arson Seminar and the President's Reception.

May 2023 NYS IAAI Student Scholarship Winner

In May 2023, NYS IAAI held its annual Spring Seminar in Saratoga Springs. It was a big success – not only did we have fantastic presentations, but we had record attendance. We could see the future of fire investigation in that audience – literally.

Madeline Orenstein, NYS IAAI's Spring Seminar Student Scholarship winner, attended the training. An accomplished student, Madeline's record of involvement in school and fire department activities was impressive. She is what our field needs and NYS IAAI was proud to sponsor her!



Madeline is currently a master's student enrolled at the University of New Haven pursuing a degree in Fire and Explosion Investigation. She recently received her Bachelor's Degree in Fire Science with a concentration in Fire/Arson investigation, a Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice with a concentration in Investigative Services, and a certificate in paralegal studies from the University of New Haven. While pursuing her master's degree, she is also a graduate assistant who is currently re-vamping the undergraduate Fire Science: Fire/Arson program as well as updating the master's program. Madeline also assists in laboratory experiments and educating students on fire scene investigation in the University's three burn rooms.

During her time as an undergraduate student at the University of New Haven, she completed two internships. One was with the Nassau County Fire Marshal's Office, where she spent time with the fire investigation division.

If that was not enough, Madeline is also a volunteer firefighter/emergency medical technician in Roslyn, New York. She has been a member of Rescue Hook and Ladder Company #1 of Roslyn, New York, since April 2021.

When Madeline graduates in May of 2024, she hopes to be involved in the fire investigation field. We are sure she will have no trouble finding a fire investigator position. She is a bright woman who is well-prepared to be successful in this challenging profession!

NEW IAAI CERTIFICATIONS

NYS IAAI Would like to congratulate the following on their new certifications

Fire Investigation Technician

Michael Glinski
Daniel Leven
Thomas Shea

Certified Instructor

Brendon McCarthy

Motor Vehicle Fire Endorsement

Michael Coyle
Stephen Masom
Scott Shear
Christopher Treloar

Evidence Collection Technician

Michael Coyle
Joseph Cultrera
Bryan Fealy
George Finn
Kenneth Hettwer
Frederick Hoffman
Craig Kleinschmidt
Daniel Pagels
Steven Tagliani
Michael Urban

Certified Fire Investigator

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Gerald Payne, Director of Fire Onondaga County Emergency Management

Ron Ryan, Senior Fire Investigator Onondaga County Emergency Management

Most county fire investigation units were created as a result of the New York State Arson Grants of the 1970s in response to a recognized arson problem identified through available national data. This national data identifying an increase in arson appeared to hold true for the City of Syracuse and Onondaga County. In 1977, the Onondaga County Fire Investigation Unit was created as the "Onondaga County Arson Task Force". After creating the Onondaga County Arson Task Force, county leaders recognized the need to prepare individuals for future fire investigator positions by creating the Onondaga County Fire Investigator Apprentice program. This apprentice program allowed individuals from various fire departments in the County interested in fire investigation to shadow Onondaga County Arson Task Force members to learn the art and science behind fire investigation by participating in and observing actual fire investigations. In addition, the apprentices attended monthly training sessions where the fundamentals of fire investigation were reviewed.

In concert with the NYS General Municipal Law 204c, that required "the governing body of each county except a county contained wholly within a city, and the governing body of any city in which a county is wholly contained shall develop

a plan for arson investigation within such county or city. Such plan shall be submitted to the Office of Fire Prevention and Control (OFPC) for approval." No plan was to be approved unless it provided for the coordination of fire, law enforcement, and prosecutorial services. The Onondaga County Legislators and Syracuse Common Council adopted their first Arson Control Plan in 1981 after being approved by the NYS Office of Fire Prevention and Control, as required by NYS GML 204c. As with most Arson Control plans in the State, the Onondaga County Arson Control Plan has been updated multiple times to stay up to date with the latest trends recognized in the field of fire investigation. Onondaga County's current plan requires individuals appointed as fire investigators for the City of Syracuse or Onondaga County to possess New York State Fire Investigation Certification. This requirement is in



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addition to any other nationally recognized fire investigation certification an individual may process.

Initially, NYS Fire Investigation Certification consisted of a two-tier system, Level One and Level Two, which required the applicant to accumulate a certain number of on-scene hours assisting in investigating fire or explosive events. A maximum number of hours could be earned at any single event. This encouraged students to participate in various fire events to enhance their experience as they accumulated their hours for whatever level of certification they were working to obtain.

Starting With the Basics

As with all fire investigation educational programs, the Onondaga County Apprentice Program provided basic fire investigation training based on the discipline's accepted practices. Apprentices were taught principles and practices used in fire investigation at the time, many of which are still used today, such as identifying "lines of demarcation," "lowest point of burning," and fire behavior resulting in "V" fire patterns but also accepted theories at the time for spalling of concrete, glazing of glass and resulting depth of char on structural members, to name a few. The program also allowed the apprentice to respond with fire investigators to fires throughout the County to experience and observe the basic concepts utilized in the fire investigation field.

The first apprentice program was a one-year opportunity designed and administered by North Syracuse firefighter Alton Lewis. Lewis was the first fire investigator of Onondaga County, who subsequently assisted in the development and taught fire investigation classes at the NYS Fire Academy.

Legal Considerations

Each department was required to attest that the fire investigation apprentice program was recognized as an educa-

tional and training opportunity to benefit the apprentice's home department and assist their Chief in meeting his obligation under NYS General Municipal Law 204d. This also addressed the legal and liability concerns of having members from various fire departments responding outside of their fire department's district. Therefore, the apprentice would be covered under the Volunteer Fireman Benefit Law (VFBL). This approach worked well in addressing the liability concerns of both county and local fire departments. The VFBL is still used today and has survived the test of time with only a few claims over the last 45 years.

Aligning With NYS Training

With the establishment of the requirements for an individual to obtain NYS OFPC Level-One and Level-Two Fire Investigator, the objectives of the Onondaga County Fire Investigator apprentice program were changed to provide the individual interested in obtaining NYS Fire Investigator certification an opportunity to obtain their on-scene field hours by responding to fires in multiple jurisdictions within the County instead of being limited to their own department's fire investigations. This change resulted in apprentices experiencing more types of fires and completing state certification requirements more quickly. In some instances, apprentices could ride along with Syracuse Fire Department fire investigators, receiving even more opportunities to participate in fire investigations. Fire Investigator Apprentices would still meet monthly to listen to guest speakers and lectures on various fire investigation-related topics, discuss case studies, and stay current on evolving trends in the fire investigation field. During this time, the requirement that limited the apprentice to one-year participation was dropped, and ap-



prentices were allowed to stay in the program as long as they demonstrated interest and continued to actively participate in the apprentice program by attending meetings and responding to scenes.

Meeting NFPA Standards

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) adopted professional qualifications for Fire Inspectors, Fire Investigators, and Fire Prevention Education Officers in 1977 as NFPA 1031. Subsequently, in 1987, it was decided to create separate standards for each of these fields and to address civilian entry into the field of fire investigation. This resulted in the first edition of the standard entitled “Professional Qualifications for Fire Investigator” being adopted as NFPA 1033 in 1987. As with all NFPA standards, NFPA 1033 has been modified several times since its first adoption in 1987, resulting in the current NFPA 1033 “Professional Qualification for Fire Investigator” 2022 Edition. Most noticeable is the document’s acknowledgment of the need to remain current in the subjects listed in Chapter 4.1.7 in order to successfully complete the tasks identified in the Job Performance Requirements (JPRs) of the Standard. The 2022 Edition also requires the investigator to complete and document a minimum of forty hours of continuing education every five years by attending formal education courses, workshops, and seminars.



OCC Fire Investigation Students Prepare to Qualify as Experts

In 1992, the first edition of NFPA 921, a peer-reviewed document focused mainly on determining the origin and cause of fires and explosions in structures, was published by the NFPA. The NFPA 921 committee recognized that many fire investigations were based on folklore (junk science) and incorrect analysis of burn patterns in any given fire scene ex-

amination. The fire investigation discipline evolved from previously accepted traditional methods to being science-based and implementing the scientific method in fire investigations. It was also recognized that not all individuals who received fire investigation training became fire investigators, and, as a result, those who were not conducting fire investigations tended not to remain current on practices and procedures accepted in the fire investigation field after their initial training. Recognizing this deficiency, NFPA 1033 added the continued education requirement. NYS implemented an annual in-service requirement of tested training and on-scene experience to maintain NYS Fire Investigation Certification. The Onondaga County Fire Investigator apprentice program filled that gap by allowing individuals to stay current by participating in the program, where both tested training and on-scene experience were offered to supplement the training offered by the State. This also provided a pool of qualified individuals for consideration in filling future fire investigator positions in the public and private sectors.

As a result of the transformation to science-based fire investigations, and as additional editions of NFPA 921 and NFPA 1033 were adopted, it became apparent that continuing education was needed for fire investigators to prepare them to qualify as expert witnesses. At the same time, the Federal Court Case of *Daubert vs. Merrell Dow Pharmaceuticals* was decided in 1993. New York remained a “Frye” state, based on the Federal Court decision in “*Frye v. United States 1923*,” which recognized individuals as experts as long as the expert’s opinion was based on a scientific technique and was admissible only when the technique was generally accepted as reliable in the relevant scientific community. In contrast, in the “*Daubert*” decision, the Judge is looked to as the “gatekeeper” to assure that the methodology is valid by considering whether the theory or technique

in question can be, or has been tested, whether it has been subject to peer review and publication, its known or potential error rate, the existence and maintenance of standards controlling its application and whether it has widespread acceptance within a relevant scientific community. The Federal Courts and several other State Courts (excluding New York, among others) adopted the “Daubert Standard” for the consideration of admission of any given expert testimony.

Identifying and Utilizing Educational Resources

Onondaga County was fortunate to have Onondaga Community College (OCC), founded in 1961, which provided a range of areas for academic study spanning Liberal Arts, Sciences, Medicine, and Technical and Applied Fields. This included fire protection classes added in the early 1980’s. As a result of hard-working, forward-thinking educators and fire officials, a bunk-in program was developed in 1993 by the extremely busy and progressive area fire departments in the county, where students could live and volunteer at a fire department while obtaining an education and earning a degree in Fire Protection Technology at Onondaga Community College. Onondaga Community College

Fire Protection Technology Degree is the only program in New York State to offer International Fire Services Accreditation Congress (IFSAC) National Firefighter Certification.

During this time, although OCC offered a class in fire investigation in their Fire Protection course curriculum, National Certification for Fire Investigation was not available. In 2013, the current fire investigation adjunct instructors recognized that obtaining National Accreditation for fire investigation would enhance the college’s Fire Protection program. Subsequently, OCC successfully developed and met the accreditation requirements of the International Fire Services Accreditation Congress (IFSAC) to offer students the opportunity to obtain National Certification in Fire Investigation. Simultaneously, instructors partnered with Onondaga County Emergency Management to allow students meeting the requirements to participate in the Onondaga County Fire Investigation Apprenticeship program, allowing them to respond, observe, and assist in actual fire investigations of incidents occurring within the County. This allowed students to apply the theories and concepts taught in class to real-life experiences in the public and private sectors. However, college officials recognized the



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advancements in the fire investigation field and the challenges in obtaining detailed knowledge in each subject listed in 1033 section 4.1.7 as required “requisite knowledge.” In addition, the educational benefit of demonstrating and having the students conduct hands-on practical experience in the subjects listed in NFPA 1033 through candle experiments, burn pods, ¼ scale burns, flow path analysis, creating electrical activity by fire, spontaneous heating events, among a host of other activities, would emphasize the scientific method as it pertains to fire investigation in collecting data, developing hypothesis and various methods of testing hypothesizes. Analyzing NFPA 1033 in its totality, along with its intent in 1987 to recognize civilian entry into the field of fire investigation and current court cases, including but not limited to Daubert v. Dow Chemical and Kumo Tire v. Carmichael, having a comprehensive field of study in fire investigation available at OCC became a goal of college officials. In 2017, a second semester in fire investigation was developed, approved, and implemented as Fire Investigation II. Graduate OCC students throughout the United States and worldwide would have National Certification but were also encouraged to obtain State Fire Investigation Certification offered by their state. Qualifications for State certification in fire investigation vary tremendously from State to State. Not all states provide high-quality education or require in-service tested training and field hours to maintain that State’s fire investigation certification, as is required in New York.

OCC also offered a Service-Learning Opportunity for students. Students were acknowledged on their transcripts for participating in community service if such service was part of the student’s discipline. In 2018, once again thinking outside the box, a service-learning component was built into the fire

investigation classes. It acknowledged students for contributing and participating in the fire investigation apprentice program through Onondaga County Emergency Management. A student participating in the three credit hour Fire Investigation I class quickly recognized the fire investigation class was unique in its educational delivery, where “death by PowerPoint” was secondary to the hands-on practical educational opportunities offered, enhanced by participating in actual fire investigations through the fire investigation apprentice program, while being recognized and acknowledged for performing community service. During the three credit hour Fire Investigation II class, students realize they are becoming the well-prepared experts of tomorrow due to their ability to utilize their resources and pay attention to detail skills developed by the practical (hands-on) education they have experienced.

Continued Challenges

It is the authors’ objective that by providing the detailed history of Onondaga County’s Fire Investigation apprentice program along with information on the evolution of NFPA 1033 and NFPA 921, individuals will continue to recognize the importance of recent court case decisions and their effects on the fire investigation field. The authors encourage continuing progressive educational programs like those offered by the International Association of Arson Investigators (IAAI), the NYS Office of Fire Prevention and Control (OFPC), and Onondaga Community College. This, along with indirect educational opportunities such as student Associate membership in NYS IAAI Chapter 23, will encourage others to improve on existing programs and continue to develop innovative ways to prepare the fire investigator expert of tomorrow through educational programs offered today.

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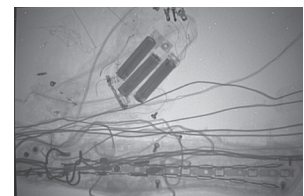
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TRAINING AND EDUCATION

Scott Shear, T & E Chairman

Our May 2023 Spring Seminar in Saratoga Springs was a success. With about 115 members in attendance, the T & E committee assembled a terrific lineup of speakers and presenters to deliver excellent training. I want to thank Trace Lawless, IAAI 1st VP, and David Bridges, 2nd VP and IAAI T & E Chairman, for making the trip to New York to discuss the IAAI and present Challenges to Expert Qualifications, Methodology, and Opinions. Juan Rosado-Marin, an Electrical Engineer with the ATF, provided outside-the-box thinking on Electronic Data in Fire Investigations, yet another tool to develop data during your investigations. Michael Abraham, PE, is a licensed electrical engineer with the ATF. He brought our members a hands-on small appliance Fire Investigation class where members broke off into groups and competed on manipulating their appliance to catch fire first. It was a friendly competition which brought together the group with lots of laughs. We closed our Seminar with Leo Hermannn, the country's leading expert on chimney fires. Leo clearly shows all the intricacies of chimney fires and what to look for when investigating them.



This year, NYS IAAI Chapter 23 partnered with the ATF to provide this hands-on training event, and we thank them for all they do to provide instructors and material/financial support to our members. Thank you to ATF Special Agent in Charge Mark Meeks of the Albany Office for making this happen. We look forward to partnering with you again in the future.

The T & E committee is working on the Spring Seminar to be held again in Saratoga Springs, NY, on May 22-24, 2024. We are preparing the lineup and reviewing presentations to provide advanced training to our members.

We have scheduled a Long Island training day for Tuesday, January 23, 2024, at the Hicksville Fire Department. Mike Abraham, ATF, will present Electrical



Spring Seminar Television Coverage

www.news10.com/news/saratoga-county/arson-investigators-test-our-training-thursday-with-atf-iaai/

Aspects of Fire Investigation and Lithium-ion Battery Fires. Look for the details soon. This will be an 8-hour technical class that all members are encouraged to attend

We can't forget about our annual virtual training that occurs around the winter break in December. We will once again provide our members a free virtual training class as a thank-you for your membership and support of our organization. This training will be announced via social media, email, and our website.

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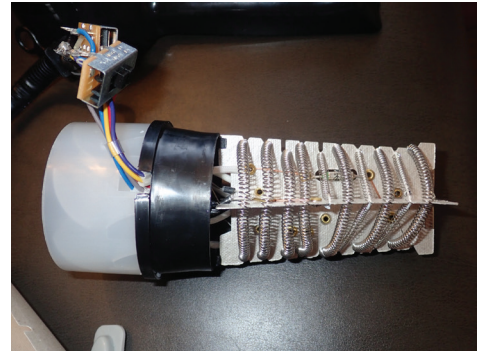
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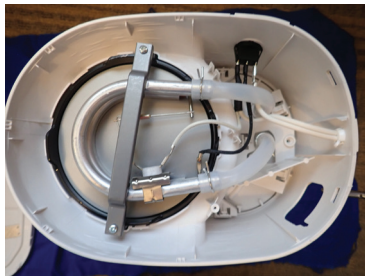
May 2023 Spring Seminar First To Burn Competition



ALL ATTENDEES GATHERED



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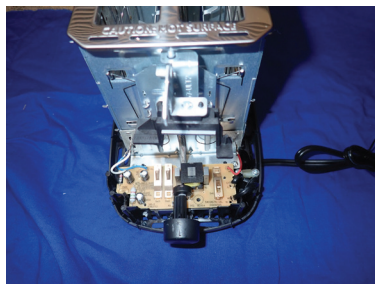
INTERNAL CONTROLS OF A COFFEE MAKER



COFFEE POTS QUICKLY WENT TO FAILURE

At our training, the fundamentals of small appliances and their designs were presented. Small groups then each received one of four appliances and a small kit of tools. With the knowledge from the class and tools provided, each team was to modify and rebox their appliance to have the fastest time to flaming combustion. The modification or lack thereof would also play a role in the ventilation provided to have the first fire.

All in attendance reported a great experience!



STANDARD TOASTER CONTROLS



LAST MINUTE TOASTER REPAIR



THE DESIGN OF THE SPACE HEATER PROVIDES LITTLE FUEL



SPACE HEATERS CAUSING IGNITION



Southern Zone

by Vice President
Karl Vollmer

Greetings from the Southern Zone

In my Spring message, I discussed safety and wearing proper PPE, especially during fire investigations involving lithium-ion batteries. I could not imagine what I would encounter a few short months later.

As always, I stress the attention we must give to scene safety and our personal safety while on scene. Recently, we had a fire and investigation in East Fishkill involving lithium-ion batteries. We have all had fires involving these batteries, usually a cordless appliance, laptop, cell phone, or an EV car fire. This fire came in as a structure fire, and upon arrival, Command reported an active fire in the garage and on the side of the house. After a short time, it was determined that this fire involved several lithium-ion batteries. When I say several, I mean thousands of 18650 batteries, made in China, that the homeowner purchased online through Amazon. The homeowner had constructed a rather large battery pack and was utilizing solar panels lying in his driveway to charge this pack. There were many other styles of lithium-ion battery packs also within the scene. Once Command became aware of this and the magnitude of the situation, they immediately put protocols into place mandating that ANY person entering the structure, at any time, was to be in full turnout gear AND must be on air. This included the driveway area where the homeowner had dragged the flaming homemade battery pack.

In this particular case, Command was on their

game, immediately set safety protocols in place, and called in the Dutchess County Haz Mat Team. Within a short time, we had Westchester County Haz Mat and New York State Haz Mat on scene, as this scene was classified as the largest lithium-ion battery fire in the state.

If we initiate our investigation and, during that investigation, we discover a safety issue that Command is unaware of, then it is our duty to stop our investigation and immediately inform Command of the situation. It is our duty to preserve everyone's safety, especially ours. Also, make sure you are wearing the appropriate PPE. Although wearing SCBA while conducting a fire investigation is cumbersome and makes our job difficult, there are times when it may be unavoidable and necessary to utilize SCBA. The other option is to wait until the scene has been deemed safe.

During this investigation, we performed some aspects of our investigation, such as photographs and some scene examination while wearing SCBA. Photographing the batteries was vital since they were being removed and packaged for disposal. Interviews were also easily done, as they did not require being in the hot zone. Once the scene was deemed safe, and SCBA was no longer required, we could go in and perform the scene examination and reconstruct the scene to pre-fire conditions, less the batteries.

Afterward, proper decontamination of all equipment is also a big part of personal safety, so please ensure you are practicing all the safety protocols.

I still encourage any teams in the Southern Zone to contact me or Director John Zboinski with any unique or challenging investigations you were involved with. Also, please submit recommendations for any awards we present at the Annual Meeting.

Stay safe and enjoy the Fall.



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Additionally, each sustaining member will have their name, organization, business, firm, or corporate name prominently identified in each issue of The Fire Scene Magazine for as long as they are a sustaining member. Each issue reaches over 500 members of the New York State Chapter of the IAAI and many other friends and organizations throughout North America. It's without question a unique method of advertising your firm, corporation, or business.

WHAT DOES IT COST? Membership cost is an annual contribution of \$200. Sustaining membership allows the Chapter to keep our membership costs to a minimum, helps us assist local host site committees in bringing in topic speakers from outside New York, as well as many other worthwhile projects.

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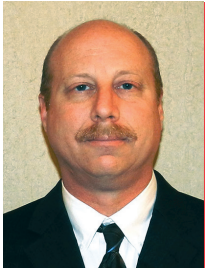
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Western Zone

by Vice President Scott A. Shear

Greetings from the Western Zone

After years of conducting public and private Fire Investigations, I have sat back and made a general observation. There are a lot of experienced investigators out there. And by experienced, I mean older. Some have seen it all; some have been there, seen that! This is no surprise to all of us. Researchers have said that the average age of a Fire Investigator is 49+. The older guys/girls have been in the fire service or law enforcement for a long time and use their experiences to assist us in investigations. We get further help from our partners, who bring different experiences. These experiences are born from life learning, skill building, street style, and, lately, a few extra seminars and training events. But regardless of how old we are or how seasoned we feel, there is always a new thing to learn. Perhaps a new process or equipment to document the fire scene

and recent science has been researched, and the results are being shared with the fire investigation community. Some will embrace these changes, and some will resist. I mention this to encourage you to find the next generation of Fire Investigators in your organization or department. Mentor these younger investigators and share your experiences. They rely on your wealth of knowledge to assist them in solving their cases. The new generation of fire investigators may have all kinds of new training, even a four-year bachelor's degree in fire science, electrical or mechanical engineering, or possibly a master's in a related discipline. While these up-and-coming investigators have a great foundation, they won't have experience in the field. Help these investigators all you can to capitalize on your experience because you've Been There, Seen That!

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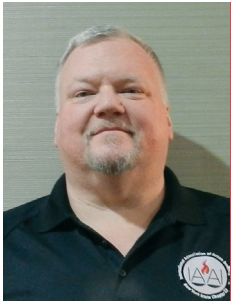
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Southeastern Zone

by Jim Cuffe

Greetings from the Southeastern Zone

As I write this, the summer is winding down, and I hope everyone enjoyed some fun times. The annual OFPC Arson Seminar occurs again this November, and hopefully, we'll see many of you there for some excellent training.

We are all aware of the continued changes in our profession, with the updates to NFPA 921 and 1033 arriving in the next couple of years and the introduction of the new NFPA 1321, Standard for Fire Investigation Units. I'm hoping folks have been paying attention to this process and looking at what is being proposed, especially since it will affect us all. These documents are undoubtedly beneficial to maintaining the professionalism needed in our field, so long as they maintain a good balance with what is reasonable, especially for those in the public sector. Stay informed, and don't hesitate to offer input as you see fit.

I recently viewed a training video from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. It covered two unfortunate Line of Duty Death incidents involving an elevated fire in the basement crawl space, creating atypical smoke-filling conditions. Both fires also involved lightning strikes that energized corrugated stainless-steel tubing (CSST), which we have all likely seen during an investigation. The remarkable families of the two deceased firefighters provided significant support to the ATF to provide this training so that others may learn about this hazard we may encounter on a fire scene and prevent another tragic outcome. We typically get requested to investigate these LODD fires. The knowledge gained through this video can likely assist in understanding another unique hazard occurring due to modern building construction practices. You can view this video, which runs just under 43 minutes long, here:

[youtube.com/watch?v=9ceIAOo-xiQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ceIAOo-xiQ)
or search ATF Video Timeline LODD Analysis of Firefighter Nathan Flynn

Watching it will be time well spent.

Enjoy the fall and football season for those who are fans like me, and as always, stay safe and watch out for one another.



JASON KARASINSKI IAAI-CFI, NAFI-CFEI

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—Chicago Fire Department
• Bradley Batka, Assistant Commanding Fire Marshal
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Fatal Fire Investigations, Case Study

—Chicago Fire Department
• Bradley Batka, Assistant Commanding Fire Marshal
• Bill Granat, Instructor-Trainer

November 16 Closing Presentation:
Fatal Fire Death Investigation

—Dr. Elayne Pope, Fatal Fire Forensics



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