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President's Message

M. Dixon Robin, IAAI-CFI

As we go to print this month, we see our Chapter evolving and continuing to serve our membership by offering numerous training and networking opportunities. Our membership continues to expand, with over 750 members, as the benefits of joining become more apparent to those investigating fires in our region.

I am very proud of our work. Since the last issue of the Fire Scene, we have successfully held our first election using electronic balloting. This required a lot of new processes and volunteer work, and it worked seamlessly. I want to congratulate and thank Stu Morrison for running in the election and joining the Board. He is going to be a great addition.

With the roll-out of NFPA 1321, NYS IAAI jumped into action and delivered free training to multiple county and local teams throughout the state – from Long Island to Oswego and points in between. Volunteer instructors from our Board met with representatives from over 30 counties thus far, and we explained the concepts within NFPA 1321. We also shared an excellent document the Washington County team produced that provided sample SOPs to comply with NFPA 1321.

This year, we pursued an aggressive training schedule by providing an Expert Witness Courtroom Testimony course in Rochester and increasing the hours at our annual seminar in Saratoga Springs in May. We revived the Training Cruise on Norwegian Cruise Lines, leaving New York City in September, and added a three-day car fire class in Rochester for presentation in the fall. Our virtual training on lithiumion batteries was timely and valuable.

After a year of discussion, debate, and evaluation, we concluded that the cost of our November President's Reception in Watkins Glen is no longer sustainable. Unfortunately, costs have continued to rise significantly, but our critical sponsorships have not kept pace and increased in kind. It is much more fiscally responsible for NYS IAAI to present the President's Reception and Awards ceremony during its Spring Seminar in May. Because of the switch in timing for this coming year, we have elected not to present any awards this year and to allow our SOPs and processes to catch up with this change. We are truly thankful to all of you who have joined us over the years at the Harbor Hotel, and we hope you will join us in Saratoga Springs to carry on this great tradition.

As if we did not do enough, the Board revamped the NYS IAAI sponsorship program to better align with the goals of our organization and the marketing and networking opportunities sought by sponsors. We know this new system will bring more resources and allow us to bring you the best and most relevant training. The members are the bedrock of this organization, and we strive to bring you more every year.

Stay safe (and informed) out there!!

On The Cover

On Wednesday, November 6th, 2025, at 10:19 hours, a fire occurred in a 2-story woodframe residence in Hampton Bays, NY. The last occupant left the residence that morning from a basement apartment, observed smoke coming from the residence, and dialed 911. A quick response from the fire department prevented the fire from spreading to other areas of the residence. The fire originated in the living room, on the fireplace mantle. An occupant of the primary residence stated that they lit a candle on the mantle the day before the fire. The candle was left burning until the next day, as other occupants of the primary residence recalled seeing the candle lit in the early morning hours on the day of the fire. The candle eventually ignited a painting that hung within proximity and directly above it on the brick-faced chimney. The fire has been classified as accidental.

Credit: Ryan P. White, Fire Marshal II NAFI-CFEI, IAAI-FIT, Town of Southampton rpwhite@southamptontownny.gov









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Safety at Post-Fire Scenes

Jeff Pauley MS, IAAI-CFI®
Past Chairman of the IAAI Health & Safety Committee

Almost every post-fire scene has safety issues that need to be recognized and addressed before any work starts. Whether it is a vehicle fire, a wildland interface fire, or a structure fire, it is essential to acknowledge this basic but sometimes overlooked premise. Fire scenes are organized chaos, and for good reason. Saving lives and extinguishing fires are critical tasks that need to be done expediently. Fire investigations, on the other hand, should be organized and methodical. And they need to be done safely. In addition to wearing adequate and appropriate PPE, including respiratory protection, there are important safety steps that need to be taken before the investigation starts.

Conducting a site safety assessment is a necessary first step for almost every investigation. At larger scenes, a designated safety person should be responsible for conducting this assessment and taking any necessary remediation actions. However, these types of investigations are relatively few and far between for most fire investigators. In the vast majority of fire investigations, this responsibility falls on the investigator who is at the scene working alone or, in some instances where there are several investigators, to the lead person.

While it is true that only a few fire investigators, including one from Syracuse, NY, in 1999, have been killed on the job in the last thirty years. there is no national data available regarding fire investigator injuries or near-miss incidents. In most cases, public fire investigator information is combined with that of firefighters. No known data source includes a category specifically for private fire investigators. The only data collection tool available specifically for fire investigators, which includes near misses and accidents that I am aware of, is the University of Miami's Personal Exposure Reporter, which is available free to all public and private fire investigators at https:// per.miami.edu. It was developed as part of their Firefighter Cancer Initiative, and members of the IAAI's Health and Safety Committee worked with them to include fire investigators. EVERY fire investigator should participate in this vital data

collection project that, over time, will provide statistics and trends that will benefit the fire investigation community. Deidentified summary data will be available to help identify trends and training needs, among other things.

Before we discuss the safety actions that should be taken at almost every post-fire scene, let's examine the various safety requirements applicable to fire investigators. Previously, I wrote here about the OSHA requirements applicable to fire investigators (see the Spring 2023 issue), and those need to be kept in mind when applicable.

- NFPA 1033 Standard for Professional Qualifications for Fire Investigators, 2022 edition, states that fire investigators shall complete a site safety assessment on all scenes and follow regional and national safety standards (Section 4.1.3). It also says that fire investigators shall remain current on the subject of fire scene safety, including hazard recognition, evaluation, and basic mitigation procedures, hazardous materials, and safety regulations (Section 4.1.7 (3)).
- NFPA 1550 Standard for Emergency Responder Health and Safety, 2024 edition, states that there is to be a risk assessment of all fire investigation activities (Section 9.10.1). This section also addresses PPE and respiratory protection. Of particular importance here is section 9.11.9, which requires SCBA use for at least the first two hours after overhaul. Section 16.5.2.1 then covers the use of air-purifying respirators in the post-fire environment after that initial period.
- NFPA 921, Guide for Fire and Explosion Investigations, 2024 edition, addresses post-fire scene safety in Chapter 13, which was completely rewritten and updated for this edition. It first addresses the OSHA duty to have a safe workplace. It then covers in great detail the various pieces of the safety task, starting with hazard identification, risk assessment, and

mitigation. It then presents an overview of the many hazards that could be found at the post-fire scene and how to evaluate and manage them. Then, Chapter 13 looks at the many potential health hazards that can come from working in post-fire scenes. Finally, it addresses some specific safety and emergency action plans that could be needed.

Given the above information, please take a moment to reflect on your work practices and consider whether you might need to add or change some. As with the fire service as a whole, the concept of everyone going home safe also applies to fire investigators. We need to assess the post-fire scene and then make it as reasonably safe as possible before we start our investigation. Remember that if something happens and a lawsuit results, your actions will be examined against these documents.

Buildings are typically constructed with a safety factor; however, the effects of fire will usually outweigh and offset these factors, which can significantly contribute to collapse potential. Here are some burned building tactical considerations adapted from Corbett & Brannigan (2021).

- ✓ A building's tendency to collapse is increased by fire
- ✓ When all or part of a structure can no longer resist the added live and impact loads, collapse will occur
- ✓ Gravity acts instantly once collapse starts, the results are unpredictable
- ✓ Except with Type I construction, there are no design provisions to prevent structural failure from fire
- ✓ The slightest indication of a column failure requires immediate evacuation, as this will likely fail suddenly

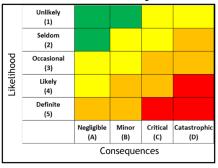
The first step is to conduct a site safety assessment, the primary goal of which is to identify any hazards, assess their impact on the work to be done, and, if necessary, reduce them to an acceptable level. It is essential to mitigate

the hazards that could harm you and anyone else working at or attending the scene. This could include shoring, covering holes, or marking areas to prohibit access. It could also mean not entering a structure at all. These mitigation measures must also be documented.

The site safety assessment starts with a 360-degree survey of the exterior. Then, an examination of the interior for safety hazards is conducted. For many, the natural tendency is to look for fire effects and related information at the same time. Trying to do both often means that something will be missed, so it is better to do it twice. The first time, looking at things from a safety perspective and the second time from an investigation perspective. If safety hazards are identified, these should be documented in your report and with photos. This is also the time to check the status of utilities, including making sure that the electricity is off if that applies. Chapter 13 of NFPA 921 provides a good overview of the types of safety hazards you should be looking for.

The next step is to assess the risk of each identified safety hazard as it relates to your investigation activities. In most instances, you will mentally consider the likelihood of something bad happening and, if it were to happen, what the consequences might be. A hazard in an area away from where you will be working might have a different risk factor than one that is in your area

of fire origin. This chart gives you an idea of how this process works. Anything in the orange or red areas needs to be addressed through mitigation.



Once the identified hazards have been mitigated to as low as reasonably practicable (ALARP), the investigation work can start. It is probably not possible to eliminate every hazard in every instance at a post-fire scene, so the goal is to reduce those hazards that can be changed so that the risk is ALARP. Reasonably practicable involves using the risk management principle of

Adapted slightly from the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation, <u>see https://everyonegoeshome.com/</u> for additional information

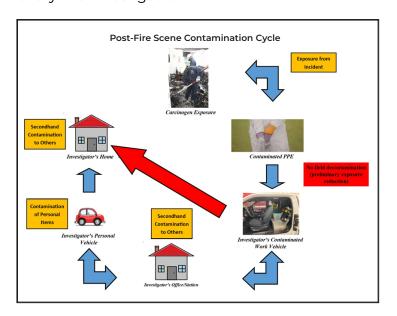
weighing a particular identified hazard against the trouble, time, and money needed to control it. Thus, ALARP describes the level to which we expect to see workplace risks controlled. However, investigators must remember that undetected hazards may still exist and that, in most cases, there is no such thing as a completely safe and hazard-free post-fire scene.

When you have completed the scene examination portion of the investigation, you need to follow accepted decontamination procedures before you get into your vehicle to leave. This is the last at-scene safety step because failure to do so could lead to health issues in the future. It can also expose your family and others to the harmful toxicants present at the postfire scene. The current edition of the IAAI's Fire Investigator Health and Safety Best Practices details the steps for this critical practice. The practice of field decontamination is an essential step to not taking contaminants home with you or back to your office. The graphic below shows the contamination cycle that must be broken with this critical step.

Almost every post-fire scene exposes the investigator to carcinogens in the form of nanoparticulates and gases. By not taking the last safety step at the scene and doing effective field decontamination, the investigator gets back into their vehicle, which then becomes contaminated. If the investigator then returns to their office or fire station, those contaminants are then spread into that area as the investigator walks around. When the investigator leaves this location in their

personal vehicle, that, too, becomes contaminated, and once the investigator arrives home, those contaminants are spread throughout. Should the investigator go home directly from the scene (red arrow), the good news is that those other places do not get the contaminants. The bad news is that it leaves more to spread into the residence. These are called secondary contaminations and take-home exposures. The proper use of adequate and appropriate PPE and field decontamination procedures will minimize this risk.

Taking the steps to ensure your safety and the safety of others who may be present during your investigation is often a simple procedure. However, in some cases, it can be more complex and time-consuming. Regardless, it is a critical first step that needs to be taken at the start of every fire investigation.



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Central Zone Vice President Joseph Galloway, IAAI-CFI

Notes from the Central Region

As the winter days get shorter and we move slowly into spring, we prepare for two great educational seminars: the IAAI International Training Conference on April 6th-11th in Atlantic City, New Jersey, and your Chapter 23 Annual Spring Seminar in Saratoga Springs, NY, May 7th-9th. What an opportunity for quality education and networking all here on the Upper East Coast of New York! I look forward to seeing you if you attend either of these programs.

Congratulations to the award winners and newly installed officers who attended our annual meeting and president's reception on Tuesday, November 19, 2024, at the New York State Office of Fire Prevention and Control's Annual Arson Seminar in Watkins Glen.

Over the fall and winter, we met with several county teams, rolling out our presentation on the new NFPA 1321 standard, its requirements, and information to assist your team with information for fire investigation units to meet this new standard. As a reminder, the document went into effect on August 5, 2024. You, as an investigator or as a fire investigation team, should be prepared to be able to answer questions about the standard, how it affects you as a team, what your plan is to meet the standard, and possibly why you haven't addressed it at all if you haven't. Your Chapter board remains committed to getting the information out to you. Feel free to contact your zone Vice President with any questions.

The IAAI has been working on a project to streamline and modernize the IAAI certification program. The IAAI has released the following:

- The IAAI Certification Manual has been updated and combines all stand-alone certification manuals into one document.
- Updates to all IAAI Certification requirements will now be vetted against

- hours for training, education, and work experience and will no longer utilize a point system.
- In 2024, the IAAI moved all certification applications to an online format. These applications, with requirements set forth prior to May 1, 2025, will be accepted until April 30, 2025. Beginning on May 1, 2025, IAAI will only accept the updated 2025 online applications that reflect the changes made to the program requirements.
- In mid-2025, the Certified Fire Investigator (CFI) exam will be conducted through an online testing platform or an in-person testing facility with protected and secure examinations. A proctor will continue to monitor the examinations, either online or in the testing facility.
- Certifications and designations will now require renewals after five years for all certification types. There will be a ninetyday grace period for all certification renewals. If the recipient fails to renew within that window, the recipient will need to reapply as a new applicant.
- Effective March 1, 2025, all renewal dates will be aligned, allowing recipients to track a single renewal date for all certifications. If a member currently holds two or more certification dates, IAAI will proactively adjust the renewal date to match the latest renewal date. If this shift results in any other certifications being extended for two or more years, the members must complete a realignment application for those certifications by August of the expiration year at no additional fee.

The IAAI is also working on updates to its website.

Please don't hesitate to contact me to schedule an NFPA 1321 or <u>CV and the Courtroom</u> presentation for your investigation team. We are always available to attend your county or team meeting to discuss the Chapter, answer any questions, or bring any of our training programs to your team. Email me at centralvice@ nyfireinvestigators.org to discuss or set up a time.

2024 Election Results

This past November was the first time we utilized an online voting platform for our elections. The Board was hopeful that this would be a good transition for us, and we have to say everything went smoothly. We are happy with the ease of the process and the returned results. We hope that our membership shared our good experience. One hundred sixty-nine votes were cast out of the 685 members who were eligible to vote.

The results are as follows:

Sergeant-at-Arms

Ron Ryan: 105 votes, 73.94% Gary Laskowsky: 35 votes, 24.65% Jacob Ruppert: 1 vote, 0.70% Joe Fenell: 1 vote, 0.70%

Ron Ryan wins. Votes tallied: 142 Abstentions: 27

Secretary / Treasurer

Ric Giampaolo: 159 votes, 99.38% Tom Reidy: 1 vote, 0.63%

Ric Giampaolo wins. Votes tallied: 160 Abstentions: 9

Vice President Eastern Zone

Phil Brousseau: 150 votes, 96.77% John Fairclough: 1 vote, 0.65% Andrew Pohl: 1 vote, 0.65% No Confidence: 1 vote, 0.65% Chris Duffy: 1 vote, 0.65% Rich Daus: 1 vote, 0.65%

Phil Brousseau wins. Votes tallied: 155 Abstentions: 14

Vice President Southeastern Zone

James Cuffe: 154 votes, 99.35% Rocco Morgan: 1 vote, 0.65%

James Cuffe wins. Votes tallied: 155 Abstentions: 14

Vice President Western Zone

Scott Shear: 160 votes, 99.38% Joe Fenell: 1 vote, 0.62%

Scott Shear wins. Votes tallied: 161 Abstentions: 8

Director Eastern Zone

Stuart Morrison: 152 votes, 99.35%

Chris Duffy: 1 vote, 0.65%

Stuart Morrison wins. Votes tallied: 153 Abstentions: 16

Candidate: Director at Large

Nicholas Fletcher: 128 votes, 52.67% Kavin Winton: 112 votes, 46.09% Gary Patnode: 1 vote, 0.41% Rocco Morgan: 1 vote, 0.41% Tom Reidy: 1 vote, 0.41%

Nicholas Fletcher and Kavin Winton win.

Votes tallied: 243 Abstentions: 23

Comparison of New York State Versus Federal Practice for Fire Investigators

Dan Coffey, Esq.1

Any time a public or private first investigator performs an origin and cause fire investigation, there remains the possibility the investigator will later be called to prepare a report or testify at a deposition or trial. Only a small percentage of fire cases actually make it to trial, but many proceed at least through the deposition stage prior to being settled. A criminal case involving an alleged arson is more likely to proceed to trial than a civil case involving insurance money, as criminal cases involve the possibility of the accused arsonist facing jail time. When must a fire investigator prepare a report? When must an investigator give deposition testimony? The answer depends on whether the matter is being litigated in state or federal court. Most cases are litigated in New York State Supreme Court. However, where the plaintiff and defendant reside in different states, and the matter is over \$75,000, the defendant often removes the case to federal court.

Fire Investigator's Reports

In New York State practice, there is no requirement that an investigator prepare a report. Most of the time, I advise my investigators to not prepare a report as it will only give defense counsel fodder for cross-examination. The investigator should take lots of photographs and take lots of notes of interviews, scene diagrams, etc., but not actually prepare a report. New York state practice only requires the attorney furnish a "CPLR 3101(d)" disclosure, which sets forth "in reasonable detail" the subject matter on which he/she is expected to testify; the substance of the facts and opinions. the investigator's qualifications,2 and a summary of the grounds for each opinion. The 3101(d) disclosure is drafted by me, as attorney, and does not need to be signed by the investigator. I have

the investigator review a draft and it is important that the disclosure accurately capture all of the investigator's opinions, as failure to disclose an opinion may result in that investigator being prevented from testifying at trial.

In contrast, federal courts require the investigator to prepare and sign a report. Federal Rules of Civil Procedure 26(a)(2) mandates that the investigator's report contain a complete statement of all opinions he/she will express and reasons for them; the facts or data considered by the witness; any exhibits that will be shown to the jury; the witness's qualifications, including a list of all publications authored in the past 10 years; a list of cases in which, during the past 4 years, the witness testified at a deposition or trial; and a statement of the compensation to be paid for the report and testimony. Often, the report is prepared at the latter stages of discovery, and I will furnish to the investigator any discovery pleadings, deposition transcripts, etc., relevant to their investigation.

Deposition Testimony

In New York state court practice, a private fire investigator rarely testifies at deposition. There is no provision in state law for an attorney to take the deposition of an opposing investigator/expert, except in limited circumstances. For example, if plaintiff subrogating carrier's investigator conducted a scene exam and the scene was destroyed prior to the opposing investigator vising the scene, defense counsel is entitled to take a "limited scope" deposition of plaintiff's investigator, limited to what that investigator saw and did at the scene and plaintiff investigator may not be asked to give his/her opinion.

¹ Dan is the founding member of COFFEY LAW PLLC, an Albany-based law practice which litigates in all Courts in New York State and the Federal District of Vermont. The firm specializes in insurance subrogation recovery, as well as litigation of first- and third-party insurance claims. Dan can be reached at: dan@coffeylawny.com.

²There is no requirement to provide the investigator's curriculum vitae but that is the most common way to disclose his/her qualifications.

In federal practice, a party is entitled to take the deposition of the opposing investigator and often does.3 The deposition occurs after said investigator has produced his/her signed report. The party seeking the deposition normally must pay that investigator's fee to prepare for and appear at the deposition. Since COVID-19, many depositions have occurred over Zoom or other virtual platforms rather than in person.

Conclusion

I much prefer litigating plaintiff's subrogation cases in NYS court (as opposed to federal) as my investigator need not prepare and disclose a report, and I need not (normally) produce my investigator for deposition. Most of the time in state court, the first time defense counsel gets to question plaintiff's investigator is when the investigator is on the stand testifying in the courtroom. While state practice doesn't require preparation of a report, sometimes, in smalldollar matters, I request a report be prepared in the hopes it will prompt settlement discussions. If you're not sure whether to prepare a report or not, or whether you're in state court or federal court, give the handling attorney a call to discuss.



³Federal Rules of Civil Procedure 26(b)(4)

BEST PRACTICES

for Preventing FIREFIGHTER CANCER

- Full protective equipment (PPE) must be worn throughout the entire incident, including SCBA during salvage and overhaul.
- A second hood should be provided to all entry-certified personnel in the department.
- Following exit from the IDLH, and while still on air, you should begin immediate gross decon of PPE using soap water and a brush, if weather conditions allow. PPE should then be placed into a sealed plastic bag and placed in an exterior compartment of the rig, or if responding in POVs, placed in a large storage tote, thus keeping the off-gassing PPE away from passengers and self.
- After completion of gross decon procedures as discussed above, and while still on scene, the exposed areas of the body (neck, face, arms and hands) should be wiped off immediately using wipes, which must be carried on all apparatus. Use the wipes to remove as much soot as possible from head, neck, jaw, throat, underarms and hands immediately.
- Change your clothes and wash them after exposure to products of combustion or other contaminants. Do this as soon as possible and/or isolate in a trash bag until washing is available.
- Shower as soon as possible after being exposed to products of combustion or other contaminants. "Shower within the Hour"
- PPE, especially turnout pants, must be prohibited in areas outside the apparatus floor (i.e. kitchen, sleeping areas, etc.) and never in the household.
- Wipes, or soap and water, should also be used to decontaminate and clean apparatus seats, SCBA and interior crew area regularly, especially after incidents where personnel were exposed to products of combustion.
- Get an annual physical, as early detection is the key to survival. The NVFC outlines several options at **www.nvfc.org**. "A Healthcare Provider's Guide to Firefighter Physicals" can be downloaded from **www.iafc.org/healthRoadmap**.
- Tobacco products of any variety, including dip and e-cigarettes should never be used at anytime on or off duty.
- Fully document ALL fire or chemical exposures on incident reports and personal exposure reports.

FUNDING PROVIDED BY











How Cleaning and Storage Practices Protect You (and Those Around You).



Why is gross decon on-scene important

after a fire call? Soot contains dangerous chemicals and carcinogens that cling to gear and off-gases for long periods of time, which is harmful to you and those around you. However, much of this contamination can be washed off on-scene with **soap**, **water**, **and an industrial scrub brush**.



Why should firefighters use a wet wipe to clean their skin after a fire response? The neck, face, and hands are highly susceptible to

soot exposure, making these the easiest places for fireground substances to meet the skin. **Using a wet wipe on-scene** after response helps clean these areas of harmful substances before they get absorbed into the body.



Why is it important to put dirty gear in a sealed bag outside of a cab or personal vehicle?

Gear exposed to harmful fireground chemicals can continue to off-gas, putting firefighters at risk if kept in the cab of a vehicle. Placing the PPE in a **sealed bag or container separated from the firefighter** eliminates this exposure risk.



Why should firefighters shower within an hour of fire response and change into a new set of clothes?

Skin and clothes can absorb toxic chemicals and carcinogens from the fire scene, which can then continue to off-gas, putting the firefighter at risk. It is important to **wash these particles off** the body **as soon as possible** and change into a fresh set of clothes.

Learn more in the Lavender Ribbon Report at www.nvfc.org/lrr.



Training and Education

The Training and Education committee is working hard on our upcoming Spring Seminar in Saratoga Springs. This year, we are hosting our seminar at the Saratoga Hilton due to its popularity. The increased demand required us to seek a larger space to accommodate our attendees and the program. We are pleased the membership chooses to attend our seminars, where we provide updates on current trends and deeper dives on subject matters that mean the most to you. We bring in recognized experts in the fire investigation industry to provide you with the most current information to help you conduct your best investigation.

Some of the past few training events were absolute successes. In November, we conducted an Expert Witness Courtroom Testimony (EWCT) course offered by the International Association of Arson Investigators. The offering in Rochester, NY, was a tremendous opportunity for our members to increase their testifying confidence and skills. The committee wants to thank our VP of the Southeastern Zone. Jim Cuffe. and Director Nick Fletcher for delivering this course content. We also want to thank the generosity of the Town of Irondequoit for providing a perfect course setting at the Town Court building and Town Justice Brian Green for sitting on the bench. Monroe County Assistant District Attorney Aliyah Fowler came in on Testimony Day and assisted us with cross-examining and prosecuting the case. We recognize the amount of work everyone contributed to making this a success. Another offering of this class is in the planning stages for Downstate in the near future.

Our annual virtual training event in December was highly attended. Cameron Novak, PE with the ATF Fire and Research Laboratory, presented Li-Ion battery events and proper collection and storage of the evidence. This free, member-only, two-hour presentation was provided to over 150 members. It's always nice to partner with the ATF, as their wealth of knowledge is an asset to our members. Thank you, Cameron, for sharing your research with us.

Watch for upcoming training events in New York later this year. In the works is a 3-day Vehicle Fire Investigation course. This class will be in Henrietta, NY, on October 15, 16, and 17th, 2025. Registration will open this summer. Check our website and look for our email. As always, these events are only available to NYS IAAI Chapter 23 members.

Don't miss the NYS IAAI Chapter 23 Training Cruise to Bermuda on September 25th-29th, 2025. Details are available on our website nyfire-investigators.org. Bring your spouse, invite your friends, and enjoy beautiful Bermuda. Training will take place on "At Sea" days. It's a great event and should be a fantastic time. Sign up now!

See you all at Saratoga Springs. It's going to be great!

Scott Shear Western VP and T & E Chairman training@nyfireinvestigators.org





Eastern Zone

Vice President Phil Brousseau

The NYS IAAI Eastern Zone is on the move with new leadership. At the November general membership meeting, Stu Morrison was elected Eastern Zone Director, and I was elected Eastern Zone Vice President.

For those who don't know me, I am the President and Past Chief of Department of the Vischer Ferry Fire Company, Saratoga County. I served ten years as the Chief and twenty-six years as a Chief Officer. As of March of this year, I have been an active member of the Fire Service for forty-seven years. I am a Senior Fire Investigator with the Saratoga County Fire Investigation Unit and President of the Capital District Fire Investigators Association. I am a Desk Sergeant with the Saratoga County Sheriff's Office, assigned to the Communications Division (911 Center).

The Eastern Zone comprises the following counties: Albany, Clinton, Columbia, Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Montgomery, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, Warren, and Washington.

One of the significant challenges facing all of us in 2025 is NFPA 1321, "The Standard for Fire Investigation Units". All fire investigation units of two or more members must develop an agency compliance document spelling out how your FIU addresses the requirements outlined in NFPA 1321. Washington County has completed its 1321 compliance plan, and Saratoga County is working on theirs. The NYS IAAI is here to help you develop your compliance plan. We can meet with your team or your leadership and provide you with the information needed to meet this requirement.

There are several important upcoming NYS IAAI training dates in 2025. May 7-9, 2025, is our annual Spring Seminar in Saratoga Springs. September 24-29, 2025, is our 3rd Presidential Cruise and Training Seminar. For more information and to register for these events, please visit our website at nyfireinvestigators.org

As we begin the new year, it is never too early to obtain your twelve hours of tested training through our Spring seminar, OFPC Arson seminar, or CFltrainer cfitrainer.net.

I would be remiss not to thank Chief Bill McGovern for the outstanding job he did as a Director and Vice President of the Eastern Zone. His knowledge, expertise, leadership, and commitment to public service have guided this organization to where we are today. He is a mentor in the true sense of the word. He has helped me along my journey. Thank you, Bill.

I am always looking for events in your county, information on fires you have investigated, cases that have gone to court and their outcome, or any wisdom that makes our job more productive. Please feel free to reach out to me or Director Morrison.

Phil - eastvice@nyfireinvestigators.org

Stu - eastdir@nyfireinvestagators.org





Southern Zone

Vice President Karl Vollmer

Happy Spring, everyone! I hope everyone weathered the cold winter well and looks forward to the warmer weather. As we look back over the past few months, several investigations in the Southern zone brought to light an important aspect of fire investigation - cooperation with various agencies we interact with throughout an investigation. Of course, we work with local fire departments to determine the origin and cause. However, we also work with local law enforcement, depending on the specific circumstances of the scene and the specific criminality that may be involved. Was the fire the criminal act, or was the fire a subsequent criminal act used to cover a separate criminal act? As we do this, we need to understand the importance of the involvement of law enforcement, and if that takes precedence, we need to work together to achieve the common goals of both agencies.

On another note, we look forward to another outstanding seminar in Saratoga Springs this May. Our Training & Education Committee has worked tirelessly, as they always do, to provide the best training for the Chapter. I can assure you that you will not be disappointed with the schedule of training topics they have chosen. Please take advantage of this excellent opportunity and register for the seminar as early as possible. Details are on our website.

Finally, the Chapter is always available to present on NFPA 1321 Standard for Fire Investigation Units. Please don't hesitate to reach out to us for assistance.

Enjoy the warmer months; we look forward to seeing you in Saratoga Springs.

God bless you, and be safe at the fire scene.



NEW CFI, CI, ECT, FIT and MOTOR VEHICLE CERTIFICATIONS

NYS IAAI congratulates the following on the new certifications

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Certified Instructor

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Fire Investigation Technician

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Motor Vehicle Fire Endorsement

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NYS IAAI to move the President's Reception and General Membership Meeting to the NYS IAAI Spring Seminar in May 2025

Through many meetings and discussions, the NYS IAAI Board has decided to move our President's Reception, annual awards ceremony, and General Membership Meeting from Watkins Glen (November) to Saratoga Springs (May), effective May 2025.

This realignment requires time; therefore, we will not have an awards ceremony or accept award nominations for 2025. The awards program will resume in 2026. We will have our next General Membership Meeting in Saratoga Springs on May 7, 2025.

NYS IAAI has continued to grow and evolve over the last year. With over 750 members, we have held some of our most successful training in the past year and provided more offerings than ever. Our members have come to count on some constants in our lineup – the May Spring Seminar in Saratoga Springs, the December virtual training, and the November President's Reception and Awards presentation in Watkins Glen. Every year, we add additional training offerings such as one-day courses or IAAI programs like Evidence Collection Technician and the Expert Witness Courtroom Testimony class.

To be blunt, all this costs a lot of money. We are a cost-conscious organization run by volunteers. At each quarterly Board meeting, we gauge our finances and projected expenses. You elected us to provide vigilant oversight, one of our primary responsibilities.

We did not make this decision lightly, as we have a great history of being part of the annual OFPC Arson Seminar. We are grateful to have been included for many years and appreciate the hard work done by OFPC. The dwindling number of attendees at our President's Reception and the shrinking number of sponsors made the offering an expensive proposition for something designed to benefit a significant number of our members. The President's Reception cost several thousand dollars; in the past, donations had covered much, if not all, of that cost. However, the last two President Reception offerings incurred higher costs as the venue had raised prices, and we could only cover approximately half of those costs with donations. With the attendance at the reception being sharply lower (the trend over the last four years), we could not justify spending the funds on the event.

We are excited to present our 2025 General Membership Meeting in Saratoga Springs and our Annual Awards ceremony there in 2026. We will have a similar venue and provide a beautiful evening for all. We hope you will continue joining us for our Saratoga Springs President's Reception as we socialize, network, and look for spare red drink tickets!

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Wednesday, May 7th - 6 hours

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Sponsored lunch

Investigating Heavy Equipment and Machinery Fires hands-on training stations

- NYS IAAI General Membership Meeting
- Sponsored networking event

Thursday, May 8th - 8 hours

Electric Vehicle Fire InvestigationsJoseph Herzberg – IAAI-CFI(V), NAFI-CFEI

- Sponsored lunch
- Sponsored social event

Friday, May 9th - 4 hours

Arson Homicide Case Study

Paul Makuc – IAAI-CFI, Connecticut State Police, retired

Testifying to Fire Cause vs. Classification

Nicholas Fletcher – Oneida County Assistant District Attorney

Reduced registration fee for NYS IAAI members

\$300 Member

\$400 Non-Member
(includes one-year NYS IAAI membership
upon successful vetting)

Register Online
2025 NYS IAAI Seminar

PRIZES & RAFFLES

The Saratoga Hilton

534 Broadway Saratoga Springs, NY 12866

NYS IAAI room rate: \$184 per night

Hotel booking link provided with Seminar Registration. Additional accommodations available nearby



NYS IAAI's New Sponsorship Program Kicks Off in 2025

The New York State Chapter of the International Association of Arson Investigators (NYS IAAI) has just completed a significant re-vamping of its Sustaining Membership program, converting it into a much more streamlined Sponsorship program. We did this to generate more sponsor dollars to offset increasing prices and to keep tuition costs for our programs, membership fees, and the publication costs of our award-winning magazine to a minimum.

For over 40 years, the NYSIAAI has been a leader in education, training, professional development, networking, advocacy, and providing resources for fire investigation and insurance professionals. We partner with outside agencies and organizations to build these programs. We ran a successful Sustaining Membership program for the last few decades, which received constant and generous support. It is in no small part due to this program that we continue to grow, and we now have over 750 members! We are very grateful for our past Sustainers and thank them.

However, the Sustaining Membership program was limited in size and offered little to dis-

tinguish it from event sponsors or advertisers. We needed to synthesize these three areas into one package and provide Sustainers (now Sponsors) with options for different levels of support. This effort happened over the last six months because several members of your Board of Directors put in long hours.

Without these sponsors, we cannot provide what our members have come to expect. We need it specifically to help underwrite our training throughout the state and in virtual forums, to publish and distribute our awardwinning and peer-reviewed magazine (The Fire Scene Magazine) twice a year, and to maintain an active and informative presence on social media platforms.

The most expensive piece of NYS IAAI's mission is its training offerings. Every year, NYS IAAI supports a series of one-day and multiple-day seminars, including our Spring Seminar in Saratoga Springs, NY. We include networking events such as luncheons and social hours as part of these events. These efforts can become costly quickly, and the support we get from our



sponsors is used to offset these costs and lower the price point for our members. NYS IAAI's new sponsorship program provides a structured means to support our programs and members. We have already seen a marked increase in sponsorship, which helps keep our Spring Seminar costs down and allows us to bring in expert presenters from outside New York. It has become successful out of the gate!

SPONSORSHIP LEVELS



Bronze – Business card size magazine advertisement, advertising on our social media, 10% off tuition for seminar registration, and subscription to our award-winning magazine. Contributions of \$350 to \$1000.



Silver – Quarter-page size magazine advertisement, advertising on our social media, 15% off tuition for seminar registration, and subscription to our award-winning magazine. Contributions of \$1,200 to \$1,500.



Gold – Half-page size magazine advertisement, advertising on our social media, inside booth at annual Presidential Reception, 20% off tuition for seminar registration, and subscription to our award-winning magazine. Contributions of \$1,700 to \$2,000.



Platinum – Full-page size magazine advertisement, advertising on our social media, hallway booth at annual Presidential Reception, event recognition as Platinum Sponsor, 25% off tuition for seminar registration, and subscription to our award-winning magazine. Contributions of \$2,250 and greater.



Magazine Sponsor – Front and back cover banner advertising on the magazine, advertising on our social media, choice of booth space at annual Presidential Reception, event recognition as Magazine Sponsor, 25% off tuition for seminar registration, and subscription to our award-winning magazine. Contributions of \$5,000 and greater.

If you want to become a sponsor or know someone who might, we would love to discuss it further. Please contact President Dixon Robin at president@ nyfireinvestigators. org and help us keep growing and providing the best training and networking available!

See the QR code and sponsorship link.





partnering with our sponsors for 51/2 hours of tested training

Tuesday, May 6th

0830 check-in, 0900 start, 1600 end

<u>Lithium-ion Batteries and Thermal Runaway</u> Presented by John H. Diggle III, P.E., NAFI-CFEI

<u>Legal Aspects of Subrogation Recovery</u> Presented by Daniel Coffey, Esq.

Sponsored luncheon and networking event

Scene Investigation with Lithium-ion Battery Incidents & Evidence Collection

Presented by Jeffrey Wilson, IAAI-CFI, NAFI-CFEI

Demonstration

Presented by Diggle and Wilson

Hands-on, Question & Answer Session, Wrap-up Presented by Coffey, Diggle, and Wilson Reduced registration fee for NYS IAAI members

\$70 Member

\$100 Non-Member (includes one-year NYS IAAI Associate membership upon successful vetting)

Register Online

2025 NYS IAAI Insurance Seminar

The Saratoga Hilton

534 Broadway Saratoga Springs, NY 12866





Southeastern Zone

Vice President Jim Cuffe, IAAI-CFI

Greetings from the Southeastern Zone

I hope you're enjoying the start of 2025 and accomplishing some of the goals you set for yourself this year.

In November, we hosted a successful IAAI Expert Witness Courtroom Testimony class in Irondequoit. Eight students took part in this course, performing 40+ hours of pre-class work in addition to the twenty hours of classroom and courtroom time. Congratulations to the students who completed this hard work and courtroom testimony! We plan to hold another EWCT course in 2025, so stay tuned for details. Additionally, I have provided one offering of the Chapter's NFPA 1321 presentation in the Southeastern Zone. More presentations will follow throughout 2025.

New York has led the nation in civilian fire fatalities over the past few years. Unfortunately, 2025 has already had a significant number of deaths as well. Hopefully, we can change this trend and improve the safety of our residents. NYS OFPC asks fire departments to complete a fire fatality report for any fire that results in death. This form looks to

gather information about the incident, identify if there were working smoke detectors in place, and identify what type of conditions the fire department may have encountered. The goal is to identify ways to reduce fatalities. Is there a need for a smoke detector education program? Does the community need more education on general fire safety guidelines and suggestions? While the fire chief may be able to collect this information, fire investigators often gather it in their investigative efforts. We can play a crucial part in helping make improvements to reduce the number of fatalities through our diligence in collecting this critical data. Hopefully, we can reduce these numbers collectively within our fire departments and communities.

In addition to everything else in our lives, we all strive to continually improve our knowledge in fire investigation. Our professional development helps us all in our quest to be our best. I hope to see many of you at the Chapter's spring training seminar in Saratoga Springs. As always, please contact me if you have questions or are looking for help from the Chapter.

Keep up the professionalism, and continue to support your fellow fire investigators.

Stay Safe,

Jim

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2024 AWARD RECIPIENTS



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Lt. Michael Hoosock Onondaga County Sheriff's Office (Post Humously)

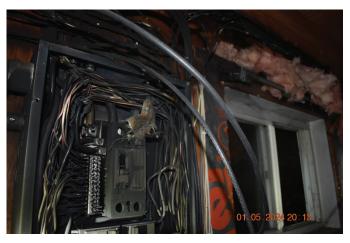
Family of Lt. Hoosock accept his award



Director Marsenison presents award to Investigator Ryan



President's Award
of Excellence
Bill McGovern
Deputy Chief McGovern and
President Dixon



Jack Meehan Memorial Photography Award Ron Ryan - Accidental

Alton L. Lewis Fire Investigation
Team of the Year Award

Onondaga County

Department of Emergency Management

Fire Investigation Unit

(not pictured)

Outstanding Chapter Publication





The Outstanding Chapter Publication Award is given for outstanding newsletter or magazine publications that disseminate knowledge, education, and information to the chapter/international members and others. The award will be chosen by the Committee after a review of nominees from the chapters or members.

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Western Zone

Vice President Scott A. Shear, IAAI-CFI(V)

Last year, NYS IAAI sent a letter of support for a FEMA-funded Fire Investigator Safety and Health grant awarded to the University of Miami. The University of Miami has researched the correlation between firefighters and cancer for many years. The Firefighter Cancer Initiative has taught them many things to help prevent cancer. As a result of the support we offered, we were invited to participate on a national advisory board for a specific Fire Investigator Comprehensive Occupational (FICO) Health and Safety Assessment Cohort Study related to our exposures as fire investigators (both public and private).

Ivolunteered to be the NYS IAAI representative for this vital initiative. I am honored to represent us on this advisory board and look forward to sharing information learned from the study to make our lives safer and healthier. As a board member, I will provide strategic guidance, review project plans and study results, and assist in disseminating the findings.

In February, I attended the 2025 International Fire Service Cancer Symposium in Miami. What an experience and eye-opening event! One message repeated during the conference was "GET IN/GET OUT and shower within the hour." The more time you spend in the "HOT" Zone, the greater the risk to your health.

We will also add safety-related information to our website, social media, and articles in our award-winning Fire Scene Magazine. We plan to bring new training opportunities to our state that will specifically address our safety related to our health and physical self. We must all practice safe fire investigations.

Scott Western Zone Vice President westvice@nyfireinvestigators.org





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NYS IAAI is excited to present its 3rd Presidential Cruise and Training Seminar

Wednesday, September 24th to Monday, September 29th, 2025

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Departing 3 pm – Returning 7 am from Manhattan Pier 94

Two three-hour training sessions will be conducted during two days of sea travel, allowing you to network with other Chapter members. Enjoy the island of Bermuda while partaking in the hospitality of Norwegian Cruise Lines

The Chapter has reserved 25 double-occupancy cabins at a discounted rate. The fare includes all meals, entertainment, 150 minutes of internet per person, \$100 onboard credit, a \$50 discount on shore excursions, taxes, and port fees. Alcohol drink packages are available for an additional \$150 per person

Oceanview Cabin (no balcony) \$1,675 double-occupancy
Balcony Cabin \$1,870 double-occupancy
Club Balcony \$2,015 double-occupancy

Single occupancy rates vary: Oceanview \$1,375, Balcony \$1,485, Club \$1,650

Cabins must be booked before Apr 1st on a first-come, first-served basis To reserve a cabin, submit your \$50 PER PERSON deposit here Full Payment is due to Norwegian Cruise Lines by May 20, 2025!

For further details, visit our website or contact Gene Pietzak at 516-330-0372 or NCFM78@aol.com



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The Fire Scene Magazine is the official publication of the NYS IAAI and is published bi-annually. The NYS IAAI was first chartered in 1976 and is a certified non-profit association and is sanctioned as such by the United States Internal Revenue Service.

The Fire Scene Magazine is an educational and advisory aid to members of political subdivisions, companies, and organizations working in the field of fire investigation to assist them in raising the level of expertise in the fire investigation field. Articles herein express the views and opinions of the authors and are not necessarily representative of the views and opinions of the NYS IAAI or the publisher of The Fire Scene Magazine. This publication's content is intended solely as an educational and advisory aid to those working in fire investigation. Your participation is requested and very much encouraged. Please share your knowledge,

thoughts, and concerns by submitting articles and information of interest to the editor or your area Vice President for future publications.

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- 1. The advertisement must pertain to a product, item of equipment, publication, system, or service that relates directly to fire or arson.
- 2. The advertiser must be prepared to validate any claims or statements made in the advertisement.
- 3. The advertiser must not mention a competitor or make or imply a comparison with other than the advertiser's product, equipment, publication, system or service.
- 4. An advertisement must not display a picture or artwork that is not a true and accurate representation of the product, equipment, publication, system, or service being advertised.
- 5. An advertisement that contains a reproduction of published material must be accompanied by written authorization from the publisher.
- 6. An advertisement must not contain news matter for "The Fire Scene Magazine."
- 7. It is understood that an advertisement in the NYS IAAI publication does not constitute, and shall not be interpreted as an endorsement of the advertiser or the advertiser's product, equipment, publication, system or service by the NYS IAAI.
- 8. It is understood that an advertiser shall not use the NYS IAAI name or image in its commercial activities in any matter that would directly or indirectly indicate endorsement of the advertiser or advertiser's product, equipment, publication, system, or services.
- The review committee of "The Fire Scene Magazine" will be the responsible party for making the final decisions in the magazine. All advertisements submitted should be camera-ready artwork Payment should accompany advertisement data.

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