

Texas Fire Chiefs Association
DOCUMENT SUBMISSION FORM

Candidate Department: **Irving Fire Department**

Best Practice Standard: 7.03 Fire Cause Determination

Proofs of Compliance Submitted:

1. *IFD Fire Prevention Division SOP Manual* - Pages 15-18.

Submitted By: **Scott Johnson, Program Manager**

Date:

Evaluator's Review

Evaluator:

Date Accepted:

IRVING FIRE DEPARTMENT
Department Standard Operating Guidelines
Fire Prevention Division
Standard Operations Policy Manual

This document shall be reviewed and amended, as necessary, on an annual basis. Please refer any corrections or suggestions to the Fire Marshal for consideration in the next update of this document.

Members should be guided by the following:

1. Positive public relations are a very important area of concern to the Fire Department.
2. Members shall exhibit a positive and professional image in their personal mannerisms, appearance and attitude toward the public.
3. Fire Department members shall endeavor to answer questions and handle complaints from the public in the most professional, polite, courteous and expeditious manner possible.
4. Those members assigned to be involved in fire safety education details shall be well prepared to handle such duties and shall endeavor to provide the most accurate and helpful information available.

Quarterly review of Fire Cause Reports

Every quarter the report entitled “Fire causes by Occupancy”, located on the SBClient, shall be run by the Fire Marshal or his designee. A review will be performed to compare the current report with past reports in an effort to discover new or evolving trends in the causes of fire. This review will serve to guide Public Education efforts to reduce future fires in the indicated trouble areas.

Fire Investigation Procedures

Duty and Authority

The Fire Department is required to investigate the cause, origin and circumstances of every fire occurring within the city.

In so far as possible, the Officer in Charge of any fire in which damage or destruction to property has occurred shall determine the cause origin and circumstances surrounding the fire. If the Officer in Charge cannot determine the cause, or if he deems the cause to be suspicious or incendiary, he shall notify the Alarm Office and request the on duty fire investigator to respond.

A request for an investigator shall also be made if there is any loss of life, or injuries to persons, or if it is determined that the fire is the result of criminal neglect or carelessness on the part of the owner, occupant or a third party.

One member of Fire Prevention is assigned each week and will respond to these fires when needed. If, due to vacation or other absence, an on duty Investigator is not available, the back up Investigator will be called out.

The Investigator shall use the following outline when responding to a fire scene:

- I. Dispatch to the Scene
 - A. Observe weather conditions, road conditions.
 - B. Check for Fleeing Persons/Vehicles.
 - C. Observe color of smoke and flames.
 - D. Interview Firefighters
 - E. Secure the Scene (Barricades, Fire Line Tape etc.)
 - F. If Fire Deaths are involved, notify the Fire Chief, the Fire Marshal, Coroner and the Irving Police Department.
- II. **When Fire is Under Control and The Structure May be Safely Entered:**
 - A. Take air samples from all accessible areas with vapor detector.
 - B. Determine Point of Origin (Low Point) Locate area of most severe damage. Check to see if fire originated outside building.
 - C. Record Path of Fire Through Structure

1. Note available combustible.
2. Check char patterns on all surfaces.

III. **Determine Cause of the Fire.**

- A. Determine if cause was accidental.
- B. Rule In/Out all accidental and natural causes.
- C. Determine if Fire was Set
 1. Check for "plants"
 2. Check for Chemical containers
 3. Check for accelerant containers
 4. Check for unusual accumulations of combustibles
 5. Check for trailers
 6. Check for heat producing devices, which may have been used to start fire.

IV. **Evidence Collection**

- A. Photograph the Scene using digital media, color film, or videotape. Take exterior and interior photos. Photo all rooms involved in fire. Photo all victims.
- B. Take liquid and/or solid samples - Label and identify.
- C. Prepare a rough sketch of the scene - show location of origin and victims.
- D. In so far as possible, determine identity of fire victims.

V. **Interview of Firefighters, Occupants, Owners and Witnesses**

- A. Use appropriate statement forms where needed.
- B. Get signed consent to search form if needed, or ascertain if Search Warrant is needed.

VI. **Post Fire Investigation**

- A. Prepare final sketches from rough drafts.
- B. Process and print photographs -Mount and label same.
- C. Establish Motive for fire.
 - 1. Check financial condition of owner.
 - 2. Check amount of insurance on structure and contents.
 - 3. Look into possibility of revenge.
 - 4. Determine if valuables, inventory, clothing, appliances, etc. were recovered or are missing.
 - 5. Consider possibility of burglary with arson to cover the crime.
- D. Submit samples to crime lab for analysis.
- E. Prepare Texas Fire Incident Report and any Casualty Reports necessary.
- F. Prepare Narrative Report for submission to District Attorney's Office.
- G. Get copies of reports and information from other agencies involved including:
 - 1. TEXFIRS
 - 2. Police Department
 - 3. Medical Examiner
 - 4. Insurance Companies
 - 5. State Fire Marshal's Office, etc.

All reports, sketches, statements, photos, etc. are to be placed in a permanent file folder and filed with the Arson Division of the Fire Prevention Department. This file is not to be made public while the investigation is still in progress. In any investigation involving juveniles, the identities and places of residence of the juveniles will be held strictly confidential.

The fire investigator will work with any local, state or federal authorities having jurisdiction in the matter to conclude the investigation. Copies of all pertinent material shall be forwarded to the District Attorney's Office for prosecution