

CHAPTER II Operations**SUBJECT 2 Command****TOPIC 4 Fire Investigation****A. SCOPE**

Standard operations for use at all fire incidents. Examples of fire incidents: Incident Commander deem necessary to determine a cause, a fire fatality, suspicious fire, or injury, and for any incendiary fire.

B. PRIORITIES

Priorities will be protection of the fire scene and preservation of physical evidence, once rescue and fire control are achieved.

To treat scene as a crime scene until it has been proven otherwise.

C. SAFETY

1. Fire Investigators shall wear protective equipment as deemed appropriate by the Incident Commander.
2. The Incident Commander will determine if the building is structurally safe before permitting anyone to enter for investigation purposes. The atmosphere shall be checked with air monitoring equipment to make sure it is safe to enter.
3. The Incident Commander will assure that the area involved is well lighted.

D. INVESTIGATION

The Incident Commander shall attempt to determine the cause of the fire after fire control activities, and before taking salvage and overhaul actions, which could hinder the investigation.

Fire scene overhaul **shall keep to a minimum** until the fire investigator has time to survey the area involved.

Incident Commander shall interview witnesses, and occupants, then relay this written information to the Fire Investigator when called, **time permitting**.

D. INVESTIGATION (continued)

The Incident Commander upon completion of the incident shall fill out and forward to the Fire Investigation Unit, an Incident Commander Statement form located on the S-drive in the Fire Investigation folder.

The Incident Commander shall assign personnel to protect the integrity of the fire scene and maintain custody awaiting arrival of the investigator. Fire personnel shall post all entrances of the fire scene.

The Fire Department has authority to close the scene, even to the owner.

Do not allow unauthorized persons to enter area. This includes the owner, any building occupants, maintenance workers and Red Cross etc. Check with on scene Fire Investigator if someone needs to enter the building, before allowing them enter. If the Fire Investigator gives permission for that person to enter, a fire personnel must escort them the entire time they are in the structure.

Prevent fire personnel from unnecessarily disturbing fire area, and avoid walking on or dragging hose lines through evidence.

All fire personnel shall stay out of fire area unless Fire Investigator requires your assistance. If the fire is still smoldering, post a fire watch to prevent spread.

When a fire occurs outdoors or in a junk auto, at times other than normal office hours, the fire investigator may be notified by phone, e-mail, and their actions noted on the 902F under remarks. Fire investigators can be requested **to go to a fire ground channel** at all times when questionable situations occur.

All personnel shall cooperate with the Fire Investigators.

Upon completion of the incident all first alarm companies shall fill out and forward to the Fire Investigation unit, a Company Statement form located on the S-drive in the Fire Investigation folder. Each member of the company shall fill out this form individually (one for each member of the company).

Evidence to be collected in an investigation is subject to laws of search and seizure, and if unlawfully seized, cannot be used in court. For this reason, the Fire Investigator must maintain custody of the Incident Scene.

The fire scene is the investigators laboratory necessitating completion of these procedures:

- Collection of witness information and statements
- A careful and thorough search of fire area
- Photograph everything, in place

- Diagram carefully
- Collect and preserve evidence

E. RESPONSE

1. A Fire Investigator **shall be dispatched** to a **3** alarm or greater fire incidents.
2. A Fire Investigator shall be called to the scene anytime there is a fire fatality **and serious injuries related to the fire incident.**
3. A Fire Investigator shall be called to the scene when a person has been burned and the cause is not accidental **(Examples- attempted suicide by fire, person deliberately burned, and children playing with fire which burn another child.)**
4. **The Incident Commander is responsible to conduct a preliminary investigation of the incident prior to requesting a fire investigator respond.**
5. A Fire Investigator may be assigned to make other **fire** investigations as authorized by the Fire Chief.
6. **When simultaneous incidents occur after hours, and the incidents require investigators. The on-call investigator will contact the fire companies requesting the investigator to survey the facts of the incidents. The on-call investigator will articulate these facts to the on-call duty chief. Who will approve or disapprove additional investigators.**

F. JUVENILE FIRESETTERS

1. A cooperative program between the Cincinnati Fire Division and the Hamilton County Children's Mental Health Services is available to counsel juvenile firesetters.
2. Candidates for the program can possibly come one or more of the following sources:
 - a. Referrals from Districts and Companies
 - b. Fire Investigators Reports
 - c. Request from the public
 - d. Juvenile Court
 - e. Schools
3. Juvenile firesetters are described as being between the ages of 2 and 8 depending on the facts of the incident.

202.04 JUVENILE FIRESETTERS (continued)

Accidental fires caused by juveniles between the ages 2 and 8 shall be considered to be children with matches, lighter, etc. Juveniles involved in these fire shall be referred to the Juvenile Firesetters Program. If the officer in charge has a question on the referral, or needs some guidance, they shall contact their District Chief for assistance, **or the on-call investigator via radio.**

Avoid making statements or **promises** to parents or others that may jeopardize referral or prosecution when situation warrants.

Pursuant to Chapter 1251 of the Cincinnati Municipal Code, a civil offense citation can be issued to the parent, custodian or guardian that allows a juvenile under the age of twelve to have access to a fire starting apparatus (lighter, matches etc.). District Chiefs, Fire Investigators and the Juvenile Firesetter Coordinator can issue this citation.

4. Referrals to the Juvenile Firesttters Program shall be made by e-mail or F-47 to the Juvenile Firesetter Coordinator.

A referral to the Juvenile Firesttter Program shall include the following information:

- Date of fire, dispatch time, address of fire and incident number
- Juvenile's name, DOB, age, race, home address, school and current grade
- Parent's/Guardian's name, home address, relocation address if applicable, and phone numbers (home, work, cell, or relative where they can be contacted)
- Brief description of the incident

Referral can also be made for non-fire incidents. Examples of these types of incidents include the following;

- Parents that come to the firehouse asking for help for their child who has a problem with fire setting
- During a school inspection and a school official approaches you about a child who is having a problem with fire setting

Contact the Juvenile Firesetter Coordinator for guidance with this situation, or if you have a question about the referral.

202.04 JUVENILE FIRESETTERS (continued)

5. Juvenile's names shall not be included on the 902 F fire report. Fire reports are public record, and available to the general public when requested. Juvenile authorities insist that the name of juveniles remain confidential.