

Firefighter Arson Prevention & Recovery Toolkit

Firefighter arson is a serious issue impacting the fire service. A collection of media reports suggests thousands of incidents have occurred dating back to the 1800s. The vast majority of firefighters serve honorably and enjoy a sterling reputation that has been earned thanks to tremendous dedication and bravery. Unfortunately, this reputation is damaged each and every time a firefighter commits an act of arson. While firefighter arson is deeply troubling and unpleasant, the fire service must remain vigilant and work to understand its root causes to prevent future incidents.

The National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC), a nonprofit organization representing the American volunteer fire and emergency medical services, has taken steps to address this very serious issue by providing statistical data and solutions to mitigate the problem. In 2010, the NVFC, with support from the United States Fire Administration (USFA), convened a working group comprised of fire service leaders, law enforcement and fire investigators, government representatives, and academic researchers from across the country. With their guidance the NVFC released the report, ***The Firefighter Arson Problem: Context, Considerations, and Best Practices*** in 2011. The report addressed the historical and contemporary scope of the problem, considered the impact of firefighter arson, and offered best practices for investigative strategies and prevention.

This Toolkit is a continuation of the NVFC's efforts and aims to assist departments in adopting preventive measures. Resources and guidance are also provided for departments navigating through the aftermath of an incident. **Documents and resources are available on the accompanying CD-ROM and on www.nvfc.org.** Departments can adapt these resources to fit their needs.

The topics covered in this Toolkit include:

- > Establishing a department policy and procedure for firefighter arson prevention
- > Evaluating new recruits
- > Training for fire chiefs and firefighters
- > Developing a crisis management plan
- > Effectively working with the media
- > Communicating with local and elected officials
- > Cooperating with an investigation
- > Repairing trust within the community
- > Repairing relationships within the department



Table of Contents

Section One: Prevention

- 2 **Adopting a Zero Tolerance Policy and Opening the Lines of Communication**
- 3 **Background Checks, Registration Forms, and Affidavits**
- 4 **Training and Education**

Section Two: Recovery

- 6 **Dealing with Crisis**
- 8 **Working with the Media**
- 12 **Working with Local and Elected Officials**
- 14 **Cooperating with an Investigation**
- 15 **Repairing Trust within the Community**
- 16 **Repairing Trust within the Department**



Section Three: Documents and Materials

- 19 **Sample Zero Tolerance Policy**
- 21 **Sample Affidavit**
- 22 **Firefighter Training Presentation & Instructor Notes**
- 43 **Department Leadership Training Presentation**
- 62 **Sample Crisis Contact Log**
- 63 **Sample Crisis Contact List**
- 64 **Sample Letter to the Editor**
- 65 **Sample Op-Ed**
- 66 **Sample Press Release**
- 67 **Investigation Checklist**



All documents and materials can also be found on the Toolkit CD-ROM.



Acknowledgements

The National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) would like to thank the following individuals for their contributions to this Toolkit:

Dr. Matthew Hinds-Aldrich

Assistant Professor of Fire Science, Anna Maria College

Robert Kilpeck

President, National Volunteer Fire Council Foundation

Chief Adolf Zubia, Retired

Former South Carolina State Fire Marshal
Chairman, International Association of Fire Chiefs Fire Life and Safety Section

Daniel Hebert

Special Agent, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, New Orleans

Doug Williams

Former U.S. Fire Administration Arson Training Program Manager/Specialist

James Pharr

Assistant Professor/Fire and Safety Engineering Program Coordinator, Eastern Kentucky University

Timothy Patrick O'Dowd

U.S. Fire Administration Project Officer

Deputy Fire Chief Tom Aurnhammer

Los Pinos Fire Protection District, Colorado

Fire Marshal Brett Martinez

Suffolk County, New York

Chief Ron Lindroth

Central Valley Fire District, Montana

This Publication was prepared by the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) under Contract # HSFEHQ-11-C-1617 for the United States Fire Administration (USFA), Federal Emergency Management Agency. The NVFC would like to acknowledge the substantial support provided by the staff of the USFA to develop this toolkit.