



Documents and Materials

The following prevention and recovery resources can be adapted as needed. Editable versions can be found on the Toolkit CD-ROM and at www.nvfc.org.

FIRE LINE DO NOT CROSS

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FIRE LINE

Sample Zero Tolerance Policy

Model Zero Tolerance for Firesetting Standard Operating Guidelines

Zero Tolerance for Firesetting:

- > Firefighter arson is a problem that affects the entire fire service.
- > Any time a firefighter sets an illegal fire it casts the entire fire service in a negative light.
- > The **[insert name here]** Fire Department operates a zero tolerance policy for firesetting.
- > Any firefighter who sets a fire or is aware that another firefighter is setting fires without intervening is subject to severe departmental discipline, up to termination, in addition to any legal punishments that may be imposed.
- > If it is not an officially sanctioned training or prescribed fire it is arson—and ARSON IS A CRIME.

What Constitutes Firesetting:

- > Firesetting is the act of setting any type of fire no matter how large or small.
- > There are very limited instances in which it may be acceptable, legal, or permitted to set a fire for training or prescribed purposes.
- > Only firefighters with the required training, authorization, and paperwork may EVER set these approved fires.
- > Any fire set without proper training, authorization, and paperwork is an illegal fire and the person(s) involved may be subject to severe departmental discipline, criminal charges, and/or potential jail time.

Live Fire Training Procedures:

- > All fires set for the purpose of training must be set in accordance with the NFPA 1403 Standard on Live Fire Training Evolutions.
- > Only firefighters with approved fire instructor qualifications and authorization from the chief or his/her designee may set controlled live fire training evolutions.

- > Informal, unofficial, or unsanctioned training fires—whether for the purpose of training or not—are NEVER acceptable.
- > Any acquired structures, vehicles or other live fire training props must be approved by the chief or his/her designee.

Prescribed Burn Procedures:

- > Any fire set to reduce a potential fire risk or manage vegetation must be done in accordance with all relevant departmental, local, state and/or federal requirements and procedures.
- > A prescribed fire is ALWAYS a controlled fire.
- > There must be an approved prescribed burn plan and sufficient suppression personnel and equipment on site.
- > It is NEVER acceptable to set (or let others set) an unofficial, unapproved, or unplanned prescribed burn.
- > See **[insert page/chapter/SOG reference]** for more detailed procedures and requirements regarding prescribed burns.

Duty to Act:

- > Every firefighter in the **[insert name here]** Fire Department has an obligatory duty to help prevent, stop, and/or notify a competent authority of firesetting by firefighters.
- > INACTION IS NOT ACCEPTABLE.
- > Firefighters must make an affirmative effort (some sort of decisive action) to attempt to intervene. This may include informing competent authorities (commanding officers, law enforcement officers, other duly sworn authorities).
- > Simply telling the suspected person involved to stop is not sufficient.

Failure to Act:

- > Any firefighter who is found to have knowingly failed to intervene when aware of a fellow firefighter setting fires is subject to discipline, up to and including termination.

Anonymity:

- > Any firefighter who is aware of or suspects firesetting may choose to inform competent authorities anonymously, or may request anonymity during the course of the investigation.

Protection from Retaliation:

- > Any firefighter who attempts to prevent, stop, and/or notify competent authorities about illegal firesetting by fellow firefighters or others affiliated with the fire service shall be considered a whistleblower and receive all protections afforded to whistleblowers.
- > Whistleblowers MAY NOT be harassed, intimidated, and/or retaliated against under any circumstances.
- > Any firefighter found to have engaged in said hostile behavior, whether directly or indirectly related to the specific firesetting incident, may be subject to discipline, up to and including termination.

Knowingly False Statements:

- > Any firefighter who knowingly perjures themselves by intentionally giving false statements, orally or in writing, is subject to discipline, up to and including termination.
- > This may include but is not limited to a firefighter who falsely claims a fellow firefighter has set a fire for the sole purpose of harassing, intimidating, retaliating, or otherwise targeting same firefighter.
- > This may also include a firefighter who intentionally lies about a firesetting incident during an investigation.

Sample Affidavit

Insert Department Logo Here

Fire Department Name
Address
Contact Information

Affidavit for Membership

I, _____ hereby swear, under penalty of perjury of false swearing, that I have never been convicted, pleaded nolo contendere, or been found guilty of the following:

1. The crime of arson or its related offenses. I have read the definition of “Arson and Related Offenses” as set forth in Section [#] of the Crimes Code [insert state statute number here], which is attached hereto as Exhibit A, and I hereby swear that I have never committed nor engaged in any of the acts defined or described in this section.

2. The crime of false alarms to public safety agencies. I have read the definition of “False Alarms to Agencies of Public Safety” as set forth in Section [#] of the Crimes Code [insert state statute number here], which is attached hereto as Exhibit A, and I hereby swear that I have never committed nor engaged in any of the acts defined or described in this section.

I further swear that as part of this membership application; I have made full disclosure of any and all arrests, convictions, or adjudications for any other criminal offenses.

I understand that if subsequent investigations reveal that I have falsified or misrepresented the true nature of any criminal offenses that involve myself, I may forfeit my membership in the above-mentioned organization and be subject to the criminal penalties for perjury or false swearing.

I fully intend to be bound hereby, by affixing my hand on this, the _____ day of _____ in the year _____.

Signature of Applicant

Signature of Parent / Guardian
(For Applicants Under 18 Years Old)

Printed Name of Applicant

Signature of Magistrate

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The Reasons: Continued

- Why do firefighters set fires:
 - We haven't had a "real" fire in months...I could go for a call tonight...
 - I'll prove myself on the next fire and show them I know what I am doing...
 - Do you think a port-a-potty will burn? I bet it will go up like a torch...
 - If they disrespect me again I will just have to make them respect me...
 - These car payments are killing me and the damn thing never works right..
 - That vacant only attracts trouble...We have been getting a little rusty...

Regardless of the reason or rationale the outcome is the same...

CRIMINAL CHARGES!

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Several motives for firefighter arson have been explored.

Excitement

Competitiveness and boredom are unfortunately hallmarks of many fire departments across the nation. The silent fire alarm may discourage firefighters who have spent countless hours training to join the department and respond to fire incidents. They may be driven to create their own incidents to reduce boredom or to ensure their skills remain current/fresh.

Hero Complex

These are often referred to as vanity firesetters. In this case, firesetters set fires in order to warn others, potentially rescue trapped persons, or even simply to demonstrate how alert and helpful they are.

Vandalism

The motive here is the destruction of property, usually similar targets. They may include sheds, port-a-potties, vacant buildings, or other readily available objects or structures.

Revenge

This motive is sparked when the firefighter has an ax to grind and uses arson to right perceived wrongs. There have even been several cases of firefighters burning their own fire station out of anger over discipline or perceived mistreatment.

Financial

Firefighters may be behind on their mortgage or vehicle loan payments and hope to get relief by burning their own property to collect insurance.

Occupational Overzealousness or Training

Another common but often overlooked motive is the desire to provide the department with training opportunities. Recent research has highlighted a number of occurrences where firefighters took it upon themselves to rid the community of dilapidated buildings and flop houses. While they may think they are doing the fire department and the community a service, they are actually putting firefighters and the community at risk.

There are a variety of motives for firefighter arson, but the reality is that there is not one model that all firefighter arsonists fall into. Oftentimes there is more than one motive driving the firefighter to act. It is not as clear cut as these categories may imply.

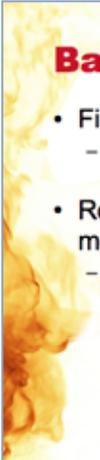
Firefighter Arson Department Leadership Training

Note: A recorded version of this training is available on the Toolkit CD-ROM. Take notes while watching the presentation here.

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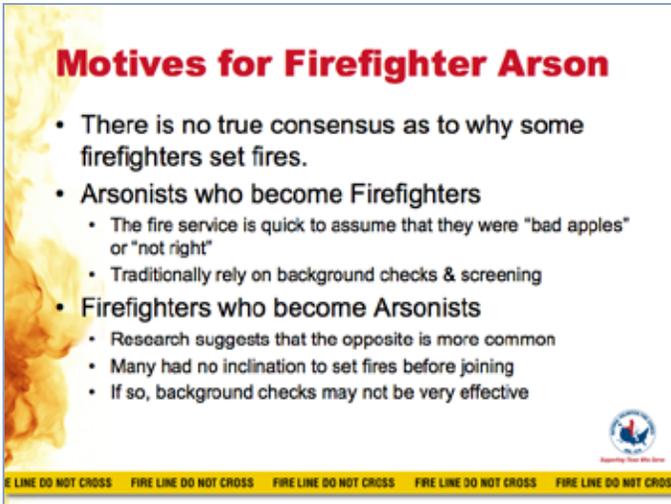
Background

- Firefighter arson is not a new phenomenon
 - Cases are documented from the 1800s
- Real time global media reporting has brought more exposure
 - The NVFC has collected more than **900 hundred** cases through media reports since the year 2000



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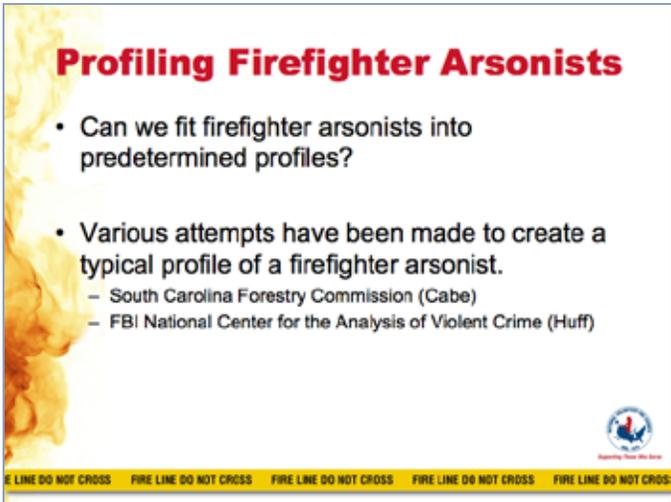
Motives for Firefighter Arson

- There is no true consensus as to why some firefighters set fires.
- Arsonists who become Firefighters
 - The fire service is quick to assume that they were "bad apples" or "not right"
 - Traditionally rely on background checks & screening
- Firefighters who become Arsonists
 - Research suggests that the opposite is more common
 - Many had no inclination to set fires before joining
 - If so, background checks may not be very effective



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Profiling Firefighter Arsonists

- Can we fit firefighter arsonists into predetermined profiles?
- Various attempts have been made to create a typical profile of a firefighter arsonist.
 - South Carolina Forestry Commission (Cabe)
 - FBI National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime (Huff)

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Profiling Firefighter Arsonists

South Carolina Forestry Commission (Cabe)	FBI National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime (Huff)
White male, age 17-20	White male, age 17-25
Product of disruptive, harsh, or unstable rearing environment.	One or both parents missing from home during childhood. If from an intact home, the emotional atmosphere was tense and unstable.
Poor relationship with father, overprotective mother	Dysfunctional. One of their parents left home before the child reached age 17. Cold, distant, hostile, or aggressive relationship with natural father.
If married, poor marital adjustment.	Poor marital adjustment. If not married, still living at home with parents.
Lacking in social and interpersonal relationships.	Lack of stable interpersonal relationships.
Poor occupational adjustment, employed in low-paying jobs.	Poor occupational adjustment. Menial laborer, skilled laborer, clerical jobs.
Fascinated with the fire service and its trappings.	Interested in fire service in the context that it provides an arena for excitement, not for the sake of public safety.
May be facing unusual stress (family, financial, or legal problems).	Alcoholism, childhood hyperactivity, homosexuality, depression, borderline personality disorder, and suicidal tendencies.
Average to above average intelligence, but poor or fair academic performance in school.	Mixed findings on intelligence, but most arsonists have been found to have average to higher intelligence. Poor academic performance.

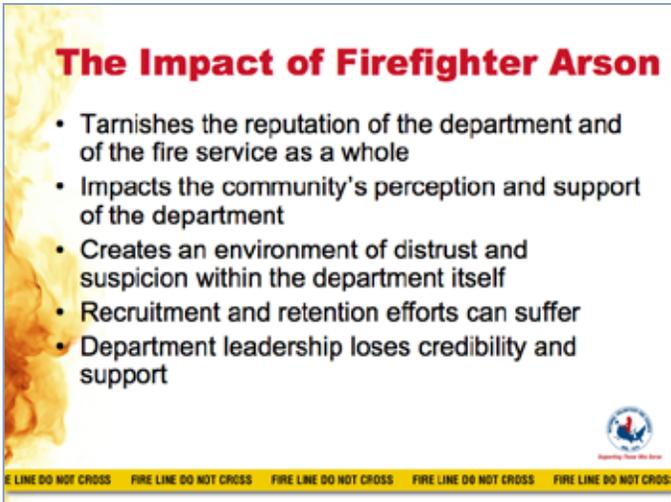
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Profiling Firefighter Arsonists

- There are several important limitations of firefighter arson profiles that cannot be overlooked:
 - The research studies that resulted in these profiles drew from small population samples.
 - The cases that were analyzed were not geographically diverse.
 - If a firefighter fits the profile, does that mean they will set fires? NO!
 - If a firefighter does not fit the profile, does it mean they won't set a fire? NO!

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The Impact of Firefighter Arson

- Tarnishes the reputation of the department and of the fire service as a whole
- Impacts the community's perception and support of the department
- Creates an environment of distrust and suspicion within the department itself
- Recruitment and retention efforts can suffer
- Department leadership loses credibility and support



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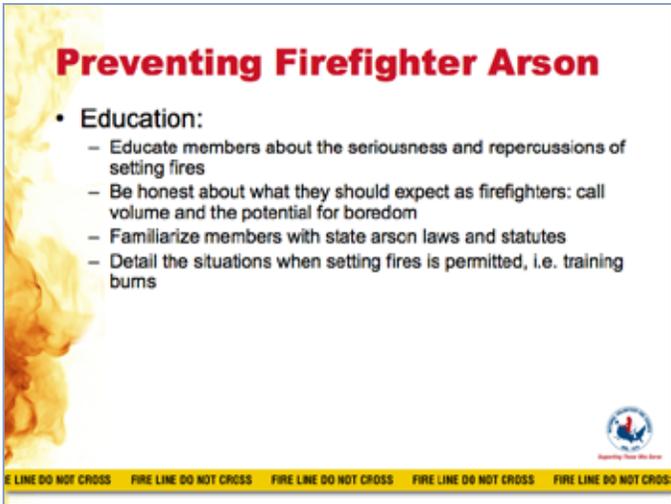
Preventing Firefighter Arson

- Fire department leadership can adopt simple measures to assist in the prevention of firefighter arson incidents:
 - Background checks and applicant screenings
 - Education
 - Zero-tolerance policy
 - Empower your members to take a stand

Firefighter Safety

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Preventing Firefighter Arson

- Education:
 - Educate members about the seriousness and repercussions of setting fires
 - Be honest about what they should expect as firefighters: call volume and the potential for boredom
 - Familiarize members with state arson laws and statutes
 - Detail the situations when setting fires is permitted, i.e. training burns



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Preventing Firefighter Arson

- Adopt a zero-tolerance policy
 - Establish a written, communicated, and affirmed zero-tolerance policy that clearly states that firesetting is not acceptable.
 - The policy should also clearly identify when a fire can be set (i.e. training fires that comply with all of the relevant NFPA standards, prescribed burns that include all of the required documentation, etc.)

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Preventing Firefighter Arson

- Empower your members to take a stand
 - Firefighter arson goes against everything the fire service stands for
 - Open the lines of communication and remind your members that when they "See Something, Say Something"



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Sample Crisis Contact Log

Use this log to keep track of outreach efforts during a firefighter arson crisis. An editable version can be found on the CD-ROM, and online at www.nvfc.org.

Name of Contact	Organization	Home Phone	Work Phone	Mobile Phone	Fax	Date & Time	Notes	Contacted By
John Doe	Herald Press	555-2341	555-5647	555-2346	555-3670	8/23/12 9:30am	Discussed the department's plan to implement firefighter arson prevention measures.	Chief Smith

Sample Crisis Contact List

Add important contacts to this list for quick reference during a firefighter arson crisis. An editable version can be found on the CD-ROM, and online at www.nvfc.org.

	Name of Contact	Title	Home Phone	Office Phone	Mobile Phone	Fax	Email
Mayor's Office	John Smith	Mayor	555-653-9985	555-3402	555-7584	555-3758	mayor@city.gov
	Jane Doe	Chief of Staff	555-7654	555-3402	555-6758	555-3758	chiefstaff@city.gov
City Manager							
Neighborhood Associations							
Regional Officials							
Congressional Representatives							
Community Leaders							
City Council							
State Fire Association							
Media							

Sample Letter to the Editor

*Customize this template to fit the department's situation and use it to respond to news coverage.
Use department letterhead for a professional touch.*

Name and Title

Department Name

Address

Date

Dear Editor:

In a **[insert date here]** article in the **[insert publication here]**, it was reported that **[briefly insert particular details from the article here]**.

Recent firefighter arson incidents have shaken the community and have cast doubt over the fire department. The thought of firefighters setting fires is profoundly upsetting and goes against everything believed to be true about the fire service. Please understand that these actions are equally appalling to the vast majority of firefighters.

There are over one million firefighters in the United States. It is important to remember that almost all firefighters serve honorably and are dedicated to protecting others. Unfortunately, the actions of a few tarnishes the reputation of the entire fire service.

The recent firefighter arson incidents are tragic and deeply regrettable. The fire service and this department will not tolerate these unconscionable acts. The **[department name here]** will take the necessary steps to prevent any future firefighter arson incidents. We understand that these incidents have severely damaged the bond between the fire department and the community, and we will work tirelessly to rebuild that relationship.

The **[department name here]** is committed to serving the citizens of this community. The individual(s) responsible for this breach of trust do not represent the department or the fire service as a whole. We will learn from these lessons and move forward.

Sincerely,

Name and Title

Sample Op-Ed

Below is a sample op-ed calling on the fire service to make firefighter arson prevention a priority. This op-ed can be edited and distributed to fire service publications. Include a personal story to illustrate why prevention measures are important and necessary. Include a brief bio, along with a phone number, email address, and mailing address at the end of the piece.

The Fire Service Must Proactively Combat Firefighter Arson

Firefighters across the country enjoy widespread public support. This positive perception has been earned by centuries of firefighters whose good deeds, devotion, and diligence have secured this reputation. Unfortunately, this reputation is threatened by a small number of firefighters that undermine the very mission of the fire service by intentionally setting fires. The fire service must do everything in its power to face this problem head-on in an attempt to prevent future occurrences.

Firefighter arson is not a new problem; in fact, cases have been documented as far back as the early 1800s. The rate of reported cases has increased in recent history. A review of media reports suggests at least 900 cases of firefighter arson since the year 2000. Firefighter arsonists are not defined by a set of characteristics, and their motives are not always clear. They could be trouble-makers, over-achievers, new recruits, officers, or even junior firefighters.

Firefighter arson incidents can cause irreparable damage to a department. The sense of betrayal is overwhelming, not only in the department itself, but also within the community. Firefighter arson endangers the very people the department swore to protect. It also endangers the arsonist's fellow firefighters and other emergency responders. Recovery from a firefighter arson incident can be slow, and in some cases, a complete recovery proves to be impossible.

The fire service needs to make prevention a priority. Departments may not be able to prevent every firefighter arson incident, but they can take proactive steps to greatly reduce the number of occurrences. Resources are available from organizations like the National Volunteer Fire Council to help departments implement prevention measures.

There are over one million firefighters in the United States. It is important to remember that the vast majority of these firefighters serve honorably and dedicate themselves to protecting their community. Even though a small percentage of firefighters set fires, their actions tarnish the reputation of all of their brothers and sisters. It's time for the fire service to step-up and aggressively address this issue.

Sample Press Release

A sample press release is below. Edit the content to reflect the department's situation and convey pertinent information.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information contact: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Date: _____

[Department Name] Addresses Recent Firefighter Arson Incident(s)

(City, State) Firefighter arson is an unfortunate problem that undermines the mission of the fire service. The **[insert department name]** has recently been confronted with an allegation that one of its own has been setting fires.

[Provide any important details of the incident(s) in this paragraph. Be sure not to release any sensitive information that may compromise an investigation. Consult legal counsel if unsure.]

The **[insert department name]** will not tolerate these actions and will work with law enforcement to ensure justice is served. Additionally, the department is reevaluating its policies and procedures and will be developing a prevention plan to eliminate the possibility of future incidents. **[Detail some of the plans here if known. Use the NVFC's Firefighter Arson Toolkit as a blueprint.]**

A town hall meeting will be held at the department located at **[insert address]** on **[insert date]** at **[insert time]** to begin the healing process with the community. Community members are encouraged to attend to ask questions and communicate their thoughts or concerns.

Every day the **[insert department name]** answers the call of those in need. Firefighters respond to **[insert amount]** calls each year for a wide array of emergencies including fires, emergency medical incidents, and more **[update list depending on the department]**.

“The reprehensible actions of this individual do not represent this department or the fire service as a whole,” said **[insert name and title of chief or PIO]**. “Our mission has not changed. The **[insert department name]** will continue to serve the community and its citizens with honor, dignity, and devotion.”

Investigative Checklist

Checklist

Record the names/unit numbers (and times, if possible) of the first 5 (or so) arriving firefighters.

Rationale:

This may require reading run reports, listening to radio traffic/dispatch logs, examining surveillance camera footage, reviewing electronic lock/keycard access reports, and/or speaking to other firefighters. It is worth going back to earlier fires to record this information as well. Consider patterns of firefighters that consistently attend all of the suspect fires. Also note how quickly after (or before) the fire was dispatched they arrived at the station or on scene.

Listen to the 911 call(s) reporting the fire. If possible, call the witness(es) back and ask to set-up an interview about what was seen.

In many firefighter arson cases the firefighter may call in the fire anonymously or have a close friend/accomplice call in the fire for them. The voice may be recognized or fire service jargon may be used. Radio traffic may be noticeable in the background. The dispatchers may be able to provide information about the caller and determine if that caller has previously had contact with 911—a pattern may surface where the firefighter has found a number of fires.

Involve law enforcement/fire marshal as early as possible in the investigation even if only in an advisory capacity.

Many of the concerns about involving outside agencies can be mitigated by working with law enforcement agencies that have established relationships with the department.

They can help with conducting the investigation, recovering evidence, interviewing witnesses and subject(s), liaising with the prosecutor's office, etc. In the interest of transparency and neutrality it may be requested that law enforcement officers conduct their investigation independently.

Checklist

Plot all potentially incendiary fires on a map or GIS mapping program.

Rationale:

Geographic patterns (or time/day patterns) are likely to become evident when plotted on a map. While this can be accomplished with colored pushpins and a paper map, a local or regional law enforcement agency, planning office, or transportation office, may have access to GIS (Geographic Information Systems) and can quickly create a digital map with all of the fires.

Note any suspicious behavior among firefighters or bystanders.

Observations at the scene can be pivotal in arson cases. Note any people acting suspiciously or out of character. Note the license plates of any vehicles present at multiple fires. Note footprints, tire tracks, or other evidence that may be related to the case. Make sure to also ask crew members to relay their observations.

Protect the fire scene and any potential evidence from destruction or tampering.

As with any potential arson fire, it is imperative to take steps to identify and preserve evidence. A fire investigation should begin from the time of the first call not after the scene has cooled down. Firefighters may inadvertently step on, bury, or otherwise destroy potential evidence. Take steps to barricade, tape off, mark, or otherwise note where evidence is located.

Photograph or video record the scene to document potential evidence.

It is important to record the fire scene and extinguishment activities whenever possible to help the investigator piece together what happened, when it happened, and how it happened. Record any potential evidence as soon as it is identified. Conduct a 360-degree walk around of the fire and potentially conduct an interior survey. Also, if possible, record the faces in the crowd and their vehicles.

Many times bystanders or the media may be taking video or photographs. Speak to them, gather their contact information, and request a copy of their footage.

Checklist

Keep overhaul activities to an absolute minimum to prevent rekindle.

Rationale:

If possible, it is recommended to have a different crew do overhaul than the crew that extinguished the blaze. This reduces an opportunity for any involved party to destroy evidence. Overhaul can destroy both the evidence and fire patterns that investigators use to identify origin and cause.

Contact the fire marshal from the scene and try to maintain control of the scene until they arrive.

If there is reason to suspect that a fire may be incendiary or undetermined, contact the fire marshal or fire investigator as soon as possible. If they are planning to visit the fire scene within a reasonable period of time, try to maintain control of the fire scene until they arrive. Leaving the fire scene may require investigators to obtain a search warrant, taking valuable time and providing an opportunity for people to tamper with the scene or destroy evidence.