

FIRE INVESTIGATIONS

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Purpose: *Kentucky law requires that the highest ranking officer conduct an investigation into the cause and origin of a fire. Proper investigation is beneficial for fire prevention efforts as well as to discover any deliberately caused fires.*

Procedure:

1. This procedure is applicable to structure fires. Other fires shall be investigated as determined appropriate by the Incident Commander.
2. Whenever possible, the highest-ranking member of the fire prevention bureau on the scene shall be deemed "Lead Investigator", and shall be responsible for the conduct of the investigation.
The Lead Investigator may request response of additional fire prevention bureau personnel as needed.
3. If the Lead Investigator is a part of a crew, the Incident Commander should find a replacement so the investigation can continue unhampered by crew duties. If other fire prevention personnel, who are present at the scene as crew members, are needed to assist in the investigation, the Incident Commander should find appropriate replacements.
4. The Lead Investigator shall be responsible for contacting building occupants/owners for information gathering purposes as well as an investigative interview.
5. Interviews should be conducted discretely with a minimum number of department personnel present. This avoids intimidating a witness.
6. It is realized that most firefighters wish to be helpful or are curious about a fire's cause. However having too many firefighters in the area of suspected origin is counter-productive. The investigator in charge shall ensure that non-essential firefighters are tactfully removed from the area.
7. Firefighters who wish to know how the origin was determined should make their desire known to the fire prevention bureau member in charge of the investigation. The fire prevention bureau member should make an effort to accommodate the request at an appropriate time.
8. When a Louisville Fire and Rescue ("LFR") arson investigator has responded to the scene pursuant to appropriate procedure, that person shall be in charge of the investigative process.
9. No information concerning a fire's origin and cause shall be released unless approved by the Incident Commander (and the LFR investigator as appropriate).
10. No member of the department shall offer any opinions about a fire's origin and cause to non-department members.
11. When a Louisville Fire and Rescue ("LFR") arson investigator has been requested, any salvage or overhaul operations shall be ceased unless necessary to prevent additional property damage.
12. Any other salvage and overhaul operations shall be done only after receiving approval from the Lead Investigator unless necessary for fire suppression purposes.

Standard Operating Procedures are meant only to be guidelines. Actual conditions may warrant alternative actions.

Okolona Fire Department
Standard Operating Procedure

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13. No civilians such as property owners, occupants and residents shall be permitted to enter the structure unless approved by the lead investigator and Incident Commander.
14. Entry by other persons acting in an official capacity, such as law enforcement officers and utility workers, shall be coordinated through the Lead Investigator.

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