


Title:	Fire Investigation			
Section:	400 Fire Operations			
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Effective Date:	January 1, 2024	Revision Date:		
Authorized By:	Fox River Fire District Chiefs			

## A. PURPOSE

The purpose of this guideline is to establish a standard investigation process for determining the origin and cause of fires. All Fox River Fire District-Agenies shall make every effort to determine the origin and cause of all fires. Once rescue and fire control are achieved, priorities will be the protection of the fire scene and preservation of physical evidence.

## B. SCOPE

This guideline shall apply to every fire incident, and when the cause cannot be determined by the Incident Commander, and for any incendiary fire.

## C. TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

There are no special terms or definitions in this section.

## D. GUIDELINE

### 1) Investigation

- a) The Incident Commander shall attempt to determine the cause of the fire after fire control activities, and before taking salvage and overhaul actions that could hinder the investigation.
- b) Non-essential overhaul shall be delayed until the investigator has time to survey the area involved.
- c) If the Incident Commander cannot determine the cause a investigator should be called to the scene. The initial investigation may be conducted by an investigator if one is available. If an investigator is not available, then Incident Command should contact the Brown County Fire Investigation Task Force.
- d) When a delay in response by an investigator is indicated, the incident commander shall assign personnel to protect the integrity of the fire scene and maintain custody until the arrival of the investigator.

e) Evidence to be used 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 department must maintain custody of the incident scene.

f) When the possibility of evidence at a scene is a concern:

i) Post a guard.

ii) Maintain custody of the fire scene.

iii) Do not allow unauthorized persons to enter the area. The fire department has authority to close the scene, even to the owner.

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

g) The fire scene is the investigator's laboratory necessitating completion of these procedures:

i) A careful and thorough search of the fire area.

ii) Photograph everything in place.

iii) Diagram the scene.

iv) Collect and preserve all evidence. (May require assistance from outside agencies)

2) Response.

a) The Brown County Fire Investigation Task Force shall be called to the scene anytime there is a fire fatality.

b) The Brown County Fire Investigation Task Force shall be called by Incident Command or an on-scene Investigator at their discretion.

3) Safety.

a) Fire investigators shall wear protective clothing as deemed appropriate by the incident commander.

b) The incident commander will determine if the building is structurally safe before permitting anyone to enter for investigative purposes.

c) The incident commander will assure that the area is well lit, when necessary.

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