

INVESTIGATIONS - GENERAL

9420

(No. 16 April 2012)

It is the policy of the Department to actively and thoroughly investigate all fires. Each Unit Chief is responsible to see that all fires within their area of responsibility are investigated and proper reports are prepared.

Employees conducting fire investigations shall possess the knowledge and skills necessary to determine origin and cause.

It is the goal of the Department to investigate all fires according to established procedures, to quickly identify arson or potential civil cost recovery cases, and to staff and manage investigations adequately and in a cost effective manner.

FIRE INVESTIGATION RESPONSIBILITY

9420.1

(No. 16 April 2012)

The Incident Commander of each fire in the State Responsibility Area (SRA) or CAL FIRE's direct protection area (DPA) shall ensure that an accurate and complete origin and cause investigation is done. Once a lead investigator is assigned to an incident, this responsibility becomes theirs.

Whenever possible, the lead investigator should not be diverted to other assignments until the origin and cause investigation has been completed and all evidence has been protected and/or collected. If the investigator is diverted, it will be the responsibility of the Incident Commander to see that the origin of the fire is protected, witnesses identified, and a replacement fire investigator is requested.

The investigator should determine if assistance is needed and make a request in a timely fashion. The Region Law Enforcement Duty Chief is responsible for coordinating assistance to the Units.

FIRE INVESTIGATION DUTIES OF DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEES

9420.2

(No. 16 April 2012)

All employees who have fire suppression duties have a responsibility to identify and protect the area of origin of all fires within SRA or CAL FIRE's Direct Protection Area (DPA). All Fire Apparatus Engineers (FAE), Fire Captains (FC), and Battalion Chiefs (BC) with fire suppression duties have the responsibility to conduct origin and cause investigations for these fires when a fire investigator is not available.

Fire investigators should be specially trained in complex case development and shall be responsible for assuming investigative responsibility from fire suppression staff. This includes investigation of complex cases including suspected arson, large loss fires, fires involving injury or death and potential cost recovery cases.

TRAINING FOR THOSE EMPLOYEES WITH FIRE INVESTIGATION DUTIES

9420.3

(No. 16 April 2012)

In order to accomplish the Department's goals of investigating all fires in the SRA and CAL FIRE's DPA employees with these responsibilities will be trained to an appropriate level.

This training should include:

- The National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) course of FI-110 (Origin Protection) for all seasonal and limited term employees,
- NWCG course of FI-210 (Origin and Cause Determination) for all permanent FAE, FC, and BCs,
- NWCG FI-210 and FI-310 (Case Development - Criminal) and FI-311 (Case Development - Civil), for all employees assigned to a Fire Prevention Bureau. Fire prevention bureau staff should complete the course work and task book to become a certified wildland fire investigator (INVF), and investigation team member (INTM).

CAL FIRE recognizes that the INVF and INTM ICS positions are established by NWCG to provide a minimum level of both training and experience. To assure that CAL FIRE employees meet that minimum level, CAL FIRE investigators should complete both the training and task book prior to being entered into the Emergency Response Directory as an INVF or INTM.

All Fire Captain Specialists and Battalion Chiefs who are assigned to the Fire Prevention Bureau should also be trained to the SFM Fire Investigation 2A and 2B level and should be certified at the Investigator II level within three years of taking a position in a fire prevention bureau.

INVESTIGATION STANDARDS

9420.4

(No. 16 April 2012)

All employees with wildfire origin and cause investigation responsibilities shall use methodology and practices consistent with those established in the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) "Wildfire Origin and Cause Determination Handbook" (NWCG Handbook 1, PMS 412-1, NFES 1874) and taught in the NWCG course FI 210, "Origin and Cause Investigation". All wildfire investigative report writing shall reflect that methodology and terminology.

[Next Section](#)

[HB Table of Contents](#)