



NORTHAMPTONSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE
Fire Investigation (FI)

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Executive summary	This Fire Investigation (FI) policy supports our Service's approach to the investigation of all fires in accordance with Section 45 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 and provides guidance and information on the investigation into the origin and cause of fire.

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Job title	Fire Investigation (FI) Manager
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1 INTRODUCTION

This Fire Investigation (FI) policy document supports the NFRS approach to the investigation of all fires in accordance with Section 45 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.

Note: If you are reading a paper copy of this document it may not be the most up to date version. For the latest version view the information on our intranet system.

Further Information in respect of this policy can be found in the following documents:

- Fire and Rescue Service Circular 1/2006
- Kirk's Fire Investigation
- NFPA 921
- Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004
- UK Fire Investigation Dog And Handler Teams, Guide to Best Practice

2 POLICY STATEMENT

This document provides policy and procedures to assist with investigation into the origin and cause of fire.

3 COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

NFRS will not discriminate against any persons in the application of this policy or subordinate procedures.

This policy document has undergone an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) initial screening and it has been agreed that any potential negative impact identified is not sufficiently adverse to warrant a full impact assessment on this occasion.

This policy is OPEN under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

4 KEY INFORMATION

Guidance contained within this policy document embeds the Service's approach towards compliance with relevant Fire Service legislation and supporting guidance.

For the purposes of this document, the terms "arson and deliberate fire" include all "non-accidental fires". It is noted that the Police definition of arson is found within the Criminal Damage Act 1971, Section 1.3.

This service policy document provides instruction and procedures for the investigation of fires. It outlines that all fires attended by NFRS will be investigated at an appropriate level:

- i. Every fire incident will undergo sufficient investigation by the Incident Commander (IC) to reliably determine whether the fire was deliberate or accidental. Gathering of information relating to origin and cause, casualties, rescues, building performance/failure and contravention of fire safety requirements.
- ii. Investigations by Fire Investigation Officers (FIOs) into pre-determined incident types, including those for which the officer in charge (i. above) cannot determine the cause.
- iii. Team/multi-agency investigations into larger scale, complex, protracted or high profile fires including those involving fatalities.

This policy details the reasons for investigating fires, which can be summarised as preventative and legislative.

The FI level 1 – 3 structure of NFRS is outlined as follows:

Level 1: All operational personnel involved in the determination of cause, origin and development of the fire.

Level 2: Flexible duty officers who have been trained as FIOs.

Level 3: FI team composed of FIOs and specialists such as forensic scientists and Police.

Details of training requirements for competency at each level are provided in this document.

This document gives instruction in measures to be adopted to provide scene safety for FI, provides guidance on inter-agency liaison, gives information on forensic issues and provides details on exit strategies for FI. It describes the administrative process to be followed for all FIs, including statement preparation and report writing. The legal implications of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 are explained in detail.

5 REASONS FOR INVESTIGATING FIRES

At every fire, including secondary fires, the IC must investigate the circumstances leading to its discovery to determine the most probable origin and cause and to evaluate the behaviour of the fire. On those occasions where persons are involved it is also essential that a record is made of their involvement i.e. if and how they escaped, how they were rescued, type and degree of injury/fatalities, etc. The emphasis for all Fire and Rescue Services has shifted from intervention to prevention; only from thorough and methodical FI can the origin and cause of a fire be reliably identified and this information used to support our prevention strategy.

Accurate fire origin and cause determination is fundamental to focusing our community fire safety resources on appropriate preventative measures and campaigns.

The majority of fires in the United Kingdom are investigated solely by Incident Commanders (ICs), through level 1 FIs, supported by colleagues as part of the fire crew.

Note: Where the Incident Reporting System (IRS) asks “What was the cause of the fire?” It is not necessary to be certain that the fire was due to the cause given, only that the cause was the one that could be reasonably supposed, given the evidence available. Investigating Officers should strive for a high degree of accuracy and must be prepared to qualify and justify their findings (IRS Help and Guidance).

The information collected from each IRS is collated by central Government and published in an annual statistical bulletin that highlights trends. However, the gathering of such information does not simply form part of a statistical exercise, but is compiled for specific purposes i.e. to monitor the cause and effects of fire and to identify and monitor trends where future action may reduce the human and financial cost of fire. The information also assists in the development of operational and community safety strategies.

Whatever their level of experience and ability, each Investigating Officer is in a position to make a positive contribution towards the common aim of reducing or preventing fires by:

- Identifying dangerous processes or faults in plant and machinery
- Identifying design failings or negligent behaviour leading to the occurrence of accidental or careless acts or omissions
- Evaluating how a property fire has behaved in relation to its structure and contents
- Commenting on the effect of fire protection measures that affected fire development
- Assessing the reactions and behaviour of people involved in fire, e.g. mobility, available means of escape, evacuation, etc.
- Learning lessons in terms of fire safety, operations, training and publicity
- Helping prevent similar fires occurring
- Identifying and reducing arson

The primary role of the IC is to save life and to ensure the fire is extinguished, but in doing so should at the earliest opportunity, make every effort to preserve the scene and gather evidence.

The insurance industry regularly uses FIs to satisfy itself of the validity of claims; most companies have a fixed figure of loss which, when exceeded, results in automatic independent FI. There are occasions when we could find ourselves in court, defending the findings published in an IRS report; hence they need to be accurate and robust.

With widespread developments in forensic science, criminals are frequently turning to fire as a means of destroying criminal evidence. However in most cases evidence will still be in the scene on arrival, and can be retained by effective scene preservation, which will greatly assist the Police and FI.

6 LEVELS OF FIRE INVESTIGATION (FI)

At most fire scenes it will be the duty of the IC to investigate the circumstances, including the cause and origin of the fire. However other factors may dictate that an in-depth investigation is necessary and that further support is required.

Whatever the level of investigation, it is important that the IC ensures that:

- The fire is extinguished
- All fire scenes are treated as crime scenes until they can be confirmed otherwise
- Turning over operations are measured against the need to preserve the scene

Note: Reconstruction is an important part of the investigation and can become impossible if a fire scene has been turned over or dug out. If turning over is necessary to extinguish hot spots, the IC should consult with the FIO and make every effort to record the scene prior to allowing crews to commence turning over operations.

- All relevant information is passed to the appropriate interested parties involved in the investigation, e.g. safety information and briefings, fire ground observations and witness details
- Inter-agency liaison and co-operation is optimised

There are three levels of FI, these are set out as follows:

6.1 Level 1 investigations

Investigations carried out by the IC, supported by fire crews.

Where the fire may be of deliberate, criminal origin or appears to be of a suspicious nature, the IC must send a message "ARSON SUSPECTED" and request that the Police are informed. The Police will then determine what action they will take and provide Fire Control with a Police incident log number or where appropriate a crime number. Additional information regarding deliberate fires is provided later in this document.

Where there is difficulty in determining a cause, a request should be made to Fire Control for an FIO to attend.

ICs must not record the cause of a fire as "unknown".

6.2 Level 2 investigations

These are incidents where the investigation is carried out by specialist FIOs.

FIOs will take charge of the investigation and liaise with other interested parties. These may include the Police and Crime Scene Investigators, Local Authorities, Health and Safety Executive, Forensic Scientists and insurer representatives. The lead FIO may subsequently compile a FI Report which could be used in legal proceedings such as Crown, Magistrate or Coroner Courts. Copies of

investigation reports may also be formally requested by others acting for interested parties. Such requests must be made in writing to the Chief Fire Officer (CFO) and a charge made.

6.3 Level 3 investigations

At more complex fire scenes, the investigation of which may last for an extended period, a team approach involving a number of agencies may be required. These investigations will often be led by the Police or a forensic scientist with FIOs playing a key role as part of the investigation team.

On these occasions the NFRS Investigation Team will be led by a Principal FIO.

Investigations at this level may also be supported by officers from other Fire and Rescue Services, in accordance with the Regional Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

At the commencement of a level 2 or 3 FI, Fire Control must be informed of the name of the lead officer for that investigation.

7 **FIRE INVESTIGATION (FI) TEAM STRUCTURE**

The FI “team” in its broadest sense comprises all Fire Control and operational personnel involved in any particular incident, as each has a part to play in gathering and recording information that will assist the overall investigation. The Community Protection Department may also play a significant role in supporting the investigation.

8 **MOBILISING OF FIRE INVESTIGATION (FI) OFFICERS**

In line with service policy B1 – Operational Response Mobilising Fire Control will mobilise an FIO in the following circumstances, to complete a level 2 FI:

- All fires involving fatalities and/or rescues
- All building fires of 4 or more pumps
- Fires involving trains, planes and boats
- On request of Police or where a Police Crime Scene Investigator is attending
- All fires where casualties (including Fire Service personnel) are removed to hospital
- Explosions resulting in fire
- At the request of the IC where the officer in charge is not able to ascertain the cause
- Domestic property where fire is not confined to the room of origin
- Fires in Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)
- Fires in major residential buildings, hospitals, schools, places of public assembly, cinemas, theatres, major licensed premises other than cooking fires contained to the cooking appliance
- Fires of political or public sensitivity

- Fires of peculiar or special interest (trends, unusual fire spread, explosions, radical or terrorist groups, revenge or fraud etc.)

In such circumstances the IC may initiate mobilisation of an FIO by sending a message stating “Fire Investigation Officer required due to...(insert statement).....”

The FI Manager will be informed by Fire Control via email quoting the incident number, when an FI is sent to carry out a level 2 investigation or on occasions when the FIO has been refused entry into a domestic property.

9 SCENE SAFETY

The aftermath of a fire or explosion presents many potential risks to anyone who is required to enter and examine the scene. On completion of firefighting operations, control of the site passes to others; in the case of a potential crime scene the Police will take control for the duration of their investigation. In other cases responsibility may pass back to the owner or to the occupier or insurer. It is important to recognize that even relatively small fires can result in the creation of significant hazards. Due to a potential hazardous environment, full firefighting Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) will be worn for initial FI. Following the completion or update of an Analytical Risk Assessment (ARA) by the FIO at a level 2 or 3 investigation, other levels of issued PPE may be appropriate. Before commencement of any level 2 or 3 investigation, the FIO will ensure that an ARA is completed and implemented.

Where possible FIOs should not work alone and consideration must be made to request the attendance of a supporting FIO in line with service policy B1 – Operational Response Mobilising and service policy E4 – Lone Working.

On occasions where there is a potential risk to FIOs posed by the stability of the building, consideration must be given to requesting the attendance of a representative from the Local Authority to evaluate the risk. Consideration may be given to utilising an Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) Team where potential risk does not allow access for a local authority inspection.

9.1 Investigation timing

Where possible, internal examination of the fire scene should only commence once the fire is fully extinguished and it has been determined that the structure/scene is safe. It may be necessary for the FIO to delay any physical investigation for some time and in such circumstances it may be appropriate for the FI Team to withdraw and carry out interviews and other information gathering away from the risk area and return later at a time when scene safety has been fully established.

Note: Utilities such as gas, electricity and water should be isolated where appropriate.

Whenever possible, it is preferable that only the main electrical isolation switch is isolated rather than including the Residual Current Device (RCD), individual Miniature Circuit Breakers (MCBs) or fuses.

9.2 Information sharing

Once the risk assessment is completed all members of the FI Team must be made aware of its findings and actions.

The IC and Safety Officers, if still on scene, must be advised prior to the FI Team entering the risk area and again on their withdrawal.#

Other interested parties such as Police, contractors and personnel from the utilities must also be informed and processed in accordance with the Incident Command System.

Copies of ARAs must be placed in the FI file and the original ARA processed as per service policy B3.1 – Incident Risk Management.

10 **INTER-AGENCY LIAISON**

In all instances where the message “Arson Suspected” is sent, Fire Control will inform the Police and request a Police incident log/crime number.

At incidents where there are serious injuries, fatalities, or the site of the fire is a potential crime scene it is essential that effective formal liaison is maintained with the Police and Crime Scene Investigators. This is usually achieved by carrying out a joint investigation with the appropriate officers and reports being compiled by the FIO and submitted to the Police.

The Police and Crown Prosecution Services will ensure FIOs are fully involved in the construction of cases.

HM Court Service (HMCS) will inform FIOs of any forthcoming court hearings where their evidence will be considered and/or tested.

To enable the application for and provision of warrants to enter premises HMCS will provide the FI Manager with details of the duty roster for the on call Magistrate Clerk (Magistrate’s Clerk phone number is 01604 497000).

11 **INFORMATION SHARING**

11.1 Partner agencies

Service Level Agreements (SLAs) exist with a number of partner agencies involved in FI activities. A statutory duty also exists through the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to share data with partner agencies involved in the community safety field to reduce crime; this will be exercised through the FI Manager in liaison with the Community Risk Managers and Community Protection Manager.

11.2 Third party agencies/organisations

It is often beneficial to work in collaboration with third party experts at fire scenes; an FIO will make a determination as to whether this is appropriate for the

particular incident they are investigating/supporting. If there is doubt the FIO must seek confirmation with the FI Manager, a Principal FI Officer or if unavailable the Officer of the Day (OOD).

Parties other than the Police, usually insurance industry investigators, will often request information from operational staff and/or Fire Control relating to fires. All requests must be forwarded to the FI Manager for action. It must be borne in mind that independent investigators may be working for insurance companies or claimants or third parties, it is therefore important to establish how any released information will be used, there is also a risk of breaking the rules of disclosure.

12 FORENSICS ISSUES

Every fire scene should be treated as a potential crime scene and preserved as such until it is possible to confirm otherwise. It is important to consider the Locard Principle, "every contact leaves a trace". Forensic Scientists and Crime Scene Investigators are capable of collecting minute trace evidence from fire scenes, this evidence could be used to demonstrate that a particular person, tool, shoe or vehicle, etc. was present at a scene. Much of this evidence can be destroyed by the actions of fire crews, yet could be preserved by observing preservation principles such as keeping crews to a minimum and away from areas of potential evidence and maintaining common approach paths where possible. Fire crews and FIOs must always decontaminate their equipment, particularly the soles of their footwear after every incident to avoid cross contamination and the introduction of flammable liquids, blood, soil or chemicals from one incident to another.

Personnel must ensure that they leave no rubbish, food or cigarette ends at any scene. The FI cordon will often extend to involve a larger area than the original firefighting cordon and time can be wasted eliminating "evidence" left by fire crews.

13 INCIDENT EXIT STRATEGY

Where an operational crew is still on scene at the end of an investigation, the FIO will liaise with the IC and exchange relevant information regarding scene safety. The IC will then take on the responsibility for closure of the Incident.

The FIO will pass on appropriate details for the IRS.

Where possible, when the FIO remains on scene after the operational crews have vacated, the FIO should conduct a handover to the person responsible for the site. This should take the form of a verbal briefing and handover sheet which should be recorded in the FIOs contemporaneous notes.

14 ADMINISTRATION

14.1 Level 1 investigation

In the case of a level 1 investigation, the IC will confirm to Fire Control whether the incident is deliberate or accidental. An IRS (where appropriate) will be completed and submitted as normal. IRS data will be periodically audited by the Principal FIOs.

14.2 Level 2 investigation

When an FIO is required, Fire Control will mobilise FIO(s) as detailed in service policy B1 – Operational Response Mobilising and will make available any relevant details such as the incident log, GIS maps and 999 recordings as requested.

As soon as is practicably possible, the FIO must enter details of the incident they have been mobilised to on the FIO overview page on FirePlace in Fire Investigation and maintain this log during the investigation.

All reports must be produced on the templates forms FB189 and FB190 and must not be released until the FIO has had the report verified by a Principal FIO. When the report is verified a copy of the report, all notes, images, sound files, witness statements and evidence etc. must be placed in an FI file with all hard evidence and be handed over to and signed for by the FI Manager for secure filing. The FIO must then update the FI overview page on FirePlace in the FIO section.

Contemporaneous notebooks will be completed and any interviews carried out, images taken and statements made in accordance with the guidance provided in this document and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) F12, F14, F15, and F16.

The generic findings of level 2 FIs will be made available for use by the Community Protection Department and others on request.

Electronic plans of fire scenes can be prepared for FIOs by a CAD operator through a request to the FI Manager. Computational fluid dynamics modelling of fires can be carried out by the Principle FIOs, however this is a labour intensive exercise and the cost and benefit of carrying such work must be discussed with the a Principal FIO at the earliest opportunity.

15 COURT ATTENDANCE

Where any member of a firefighting team or FIO is summonsed to attend Court (Crown, Magistrates or Coroners) in relation to a fire then they must inform the FI Manager as soon as practicably possible.

The circumstances of the case and the experience of the member of staff will determine what support is offered and whether a Principal FIO attends to observe the hearing. A Court attendance data base will be maintained by the FI Manager.

16 INFORMATION REQUEST

Any requests made by a third party in relation to FI Reports, IRS reports, statements or interviews must be passed to the FI Manager, or in their absence

a Principal FIO, who will liaise with Service Information Manager if appropriate and make arrangements to facilitate the request. Costs attributed to facilitating such requests will be charged as detailed in form FB009 and FB009a.

17 DATA COLLECTION/ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Additional information may be required to be captured at fire scenes which may provide information on current trends. Guidance will be published on the intranet when and if occurrences arise.

18 REPORT WRITING

All FI Officers are issued with contemporaneous investigation notebooks, digital dictaphones and cameras and they are responsible for the security and preservation of any evidence collected at all times.

An FI report should be prepared for the following circumstances:

- Fire fatality or potentially fire fatality
- Incidents involving the rescue of casualties
- Identified Corporate Risk – any significant event likely to impact Northamptonshire County Council (NCC)
- Fire related injury to Service personnel, resulting in removal from duty
- On request of the Police
- All level 3 FIs

Additionally, FI reports may be required on the following occasions:

- On the request of the FI Manager for FIO development purposes
- On request from an insurance company following consultation with the FI Manager

19 STATEMENTS

A statement is a written communication of facts observed by a witness. These facts should be presented concisely, clearly and accurately and in a logical order.

The credibility of the individual and the organisation represented may depend on the quality of the written evidence and the manner in which it is presented in Court.

Whilst it is unlikely that a Fire Service witness or FIO will be allowed to refer directly to their statement at Court, they will normally be taken through it and questioned about the content. Extensive, accurate, legible notes may, however, refresh their memory.

Service personnel may be required to provide a written statement for other agencies, for example:

- Fatal fires - for the Coroner

- Following an insurance company interview
- To assist in a Police enquiry

There are common reasons why statements are prepared:

- To elicit all relevant information from the witness as soon as possible
- To obtain a written record, this will be read and confirmed by the witness
- To determine appropriate action and justify such action

20 DIGITAL IMAGES

Evidential integrity must be maintained for all images which are created by digital methods intended for use as evidence, or which may become evidential. Such images will be captured, used, stored and retrieved using the procedures in appendix H and NCC digital images policy.

21 FATAL AND SERIOUS INJURY FIRES

For information on dealing with fatal and serious injury fires, please see appendix F.

22 CRITICAL INCIDENT DEFUSING

Following a fatality, all personnel attending the scene and in contact with the casualty should consider debriefing and defusing as detailed in service policy B25 – Incident Defusion and Critical Incident Debriefing. However FIOs often remain on scene long after the firefighting attendance has left and may not be present at the any debriefing/defusing session. Furthermore, in researching and compiling the Investigation Report, and in preparing and giving evidence at the subsequent hearings at either Coroner's or Crown Court, the FIOs, particularly the Team Leader, will be continually re-exposed to graphic and sensitive images and text. Given this re-exposure, there is an increased potential for individuals to experience elements of post-traumatic stress.

In order to reduce this potential, the FI Manager should debrief the FI Team following a difficult and sensitive investigation and make arrangements for them to undergo further debriefing and defusing should it be necessary.

FI Team members should make their own arrangements to meet with Employee Assist should they feel it necessary.

23 FIRE INVESTIGATION (FI) DOG

An FIO can request the attendance of a FI search dog and handler from within the Service or if unavailable from neighbouring Fire Services. These dogs have been trained to search for and detect traces of ignitable liquids at the scene of fires.

FIOs requiring the attendance of an FI search dog at an incident can make a request via Fire Control. It is important to note that the dogs will only enter a fire scene under the following conditions:

- Only if the scene is “cold”
- At the discretion of the dog handler, who will first carry out a risk assessment of the scene to ensure that it is safe to initiate a search of the area by the dog
- The dog and handler must be accompanied by the FIOs dealing with the FI
- Personnel remaining within the area of the fire scene will be briefed by the dog handler prior to the introduction of the dog

For further information see appendix J.

24 TRAINING

Training requirements for each financial year will be identified and submitted by the FI Manager to the Training Manager via the Service budget planning process. For information on role related FI training see appendix D.

25 ARSON

For information on arson and arson legislation see appendix A.

26 POST INCIDENT CONSIDERATIONS/ACTIONS

Following all fires involving fatalities, and occasionally fires generating significant societal/organisational risk, there will, at the earliest opportunity, be a Community Impact Assessment, see SOP EM 6.5. FIOs are required to support the process and provide information where appropriate.

APPENDIX A

ARSON

Arson is the largest single cause of major fires in the UK, currently costing England and Wales around £3 billion annually. It is a serious crime that causes deaths, injuries and damage to property, endangers firefighters and diverts valuable resources, carrying a maximum punishment of a life sentence. There needs to be close working between the Fire Service and the Police to tackle arson; information sharing and co-ordinated investigation of crime scenes is essential. Many arsonists are habitual and re-offenders are estimated to account for a large proportion of arson attacks across the country.

Arson is strictly speaking a criminal act defined by the Criminal Damage Act 1971 and only offences that meet the definition of the Act can be properly termed arson. The act of arson is also an anti-social activity which is included in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

Legal definition

The Criminal Damage Act 1971 covers damage to property in general, however it is caused. Section 1(1) of the Act states that it is an offence to damage or destroy property belonging to someone else without lawful excuse.

It is not an offence to destroy property if it is done in the honest or mistaken belief that the property is one's own. It is however an offence to act in a reckless manner (which means, in law, knowing or closing one's mind to the obvious fact that there is a risk of damage) which increases the risk of damaging or destroying property. An owner can damage their own property if, at the same time, it belongs to someone else within the meaning of the section. For example, if a person sets fire to their own house which is subject to a mortgage, they can still be charged under Section 1(1) and (3) as the mortgagor will have a proprietary right or interest in the property.

Section 1(2) covers damage to property that also endangers the life of somebody else. Under this section of the Act, it is an offence, intentionally or recklessly, to damage or destroy property when at the same time there is an intention or recklessness about endangering the life of another person.

Section 1(3) specifies that when the damage to property has been done by fire, the offence shall be charged as arson.

It is also an offence under the Criminal Damage Act 1971 to make threats that such damage would be carried out, in a manner such that the person threatened believes it likely that the threats would be carried out (Section 2), or to have objects in one's possession with the intention of carrying out such damage (Section 3). A charge under Section 3 of the Act will often be appropriate where the evidence falls short of an attempt to destroy or damage property, provided the necessary intent can be established; for example, when a defendant is stopped with petrol and matches before they have had a chance to set fire to anything.

APPENDIX A

Section 3(a) is confined to damaging property belonging to another. Section 3(b), which is the offence in aggravated form, relates to the defendant's own property or the property of the user.

Dealing with arson incidents

- Inform Fire Control, “potential arson incident”
- Request the attendance of the Police
- Request to speak to the duty FIO
- Preserve the scene by using a cordon to keep all non-essential people out
- Be prepared to provide a Police statement or FI Witness Record

Classification of accidental or deliberate fires

The terms ‘malicious’ and ‘doubtful’ have been found to cause legal problems for the various agencies who pursue prosecutions for arson offences as ‘malicious’ presumes the officer is aware of the offender’s state of mind and ‘doubtful’ makes our opinion appear vague. Therefore guidance has been issued to clarify and simplify the classification of the likely cause of fire. There are now only three classifications that may be chosen once a FI has been undertaken by the IC or FIO, these are:

DELIBERATE – where it is certain or suspected that the fire was deliberately started
ACCIDENTAL – where it is certain or suspected that the fire was not deliberately started
NOT KNOWN – where there is no indication at all as to whether the fire was deliberately started or not

The term “Not Known” can only be used by FIOs.

If the IC is not able to establish the cause of fire a FIO must be requested. If, after a thorough investigation by the FIO, the cause can still not be established then ‘Not Known’ may be used.

Quality control of the Strategic Incident Recording System (SIRS)

Any fire reported via Strategic Incident Recording System (SIRS) which states “Not Known” must have been investigated by an FIO.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 received Royal Assent in July 2004 and came in to force on 1 October 2004. The Act replaces the Fire Services Act 1947. It puts the prevention of fires at the heart of legislation by, for example, creating a duty to promote fire safety and by providing the flexibility for Fire and Rescue Authorities to work with others in the community to carry out this duty.

The Act also introduces powers for FI;

Part 6 - Supplementary (sections 44 to 54 and Schedules 1 and 2): concerns the powers of Fire and Rescue Authority employees to undertake rescue work and investigations, as well as a number of consequential provisions and repeals, including the abolition of the Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council.

Powers of entry

An FIO must be authorised by the Fire and Rescue Authority in writing and this written authorisation must be available to produce on request.

An authorised FIO may, at any reasonable time, enter any building (with the exception of private occupied dwellings) for the purposes of investigating the cause and spread of any fire.

For private occupied dwellings entry by right can only be made by:

1. Obtaining the consent of the occupier

OR

2. Giving to the occupier, or leaving at the premises, a notice giving 24 hours' notice of entry. If the name or address of the occupier cannot be ascertained after reasonable inquiry, the notice may be given, (a) by leaving it in the hands of a person who is or appears to be resident in the dwelling, or (b) by affixing it to a conspicuous part of the dwelling.

OR

3. Obtaining a warrant from a Justice of the Peace authorising the Fire Investigation Officer to enter the dwelling at any time. A Fire Investigation Officer is not permitted to use force when gaining entrance to any premises. Where entry is to be made following authorisation through the issuing of a warrant, and where resistance is met, the Fire Investigation Officer should request the attendance of the Police for assistance with execution of the warrant.

APPENDIX B

An authorised officer, who has made lawful entry into any premises for the purposes of FI, is permitted to take with them any other person they consider necessary to complete the investigation. This power should be used when a person who can materially assist the investigation does not have the legal right of entry.

Therefore competent persons (electrician, gas engineer, fire alarm engineer etc.) may legally make entry into the premises to assist the FIO with the investigation into the origin, cause and spread of the fire. Police officers are covered by their own legal powers of entry which they should use. Crime Scene Investigators (CSIs) and Forensic Scientists will generally enter premises under Police powers.

Seizure

An authorised officer when investigating the cause and spread of fire is permitted to:

1. Take any equipment necessary to carry out the investigation into the premises.
2. Inspect and copy any documents or records or remove them from the premises.
3. Carry out inspection, measurements and tests as necessary.
4. Take samples of an article or substance found on the premises, but not so as to damage or destroy it, unless that is necessary for the investigation.
5. Dismantle an article found at the premises, but not so as to damage or destroy it, unless that is necessary for the investigation.
6. Take possession of any article or substance found on the premises to carry out necessary inspection, measurements and tests, prevent tampering, or for future use as evidence in proceedings for an offence relevant to the investigation.
7. Require a person present on the premises to provide facilities, information, documents, records or other assistance.

Where a sample is taken, it is a legal requirement that a notice is issued to the responsible person, or if that is impracticable, then fixed to a prominent part of the premises, describing any sample, and stating that it has been taken. If it is practicable to do so, a portion of any such sample should be given to the occupier. This portion should be marked to sufficiently enable the responsible person to identify it. Where any article or substance is taken, a notice is issued to the responsible person or, if that is impracticable, then fixed to a prominent part of the premises, which clearly identifies the article or substance taken and states that the authorised officer has taken possession of it.

When CSI's are present at FI scenes then the collection, recording, transport and storage of any evidence will be their responsibility.

Pro-forma

1. Formally recording the consent of the occupier of a private dwelling, giving access to an authorised officer.
2. Notice, for giving to the occupier or for posting at a private dwelling, that entry will be made in 24 hours.
3. Notices for formally recording any samples or articles removed from premises by an authorised FIO.

APPENDIX B

4. Obtaining a Warrant giving access at any time to a private dwelling and authorised by a Justice of the Peace (JP).

The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) and the Criminal Procedures and Investigations Act (CPIA) 1996

PACE covers various aspects of an investigation, including the way in which evidence is handled and the way in which suspects are questioned. All investigators should have a good understanding of relevant sections within the PACE codes of practice. When dealing with exhibits it is vitally important that they are labelled correctly, stored securely and their movements recorded, adding details of everyone who comes into possession of that property or views it during the investigation.

The CPIA covers the duties of investigators in retaining and disclosing information. Under the rules of disclosure, all evidence gathered during the investigation is disclosed to both the prosecution and the defence. Therefore, all contemporaneous notes must be kept on the master file.

This includes written notes, drawings and sketches, plans, digital images and audio recordings. Whether the notes are recorded in official notebooks or on the back of an envelope, the material must be signed and dated at the time of writing, and held on file.

It is good practice to keep a schedule of all such material from the start of any investigation.

If an investigation later becomes a criminal investigation it is vital that Fire Service personnel in possession of any potential evidence make the Police Senior Investigating Officer aware of their existence at the earliest opportunity and supply copies as required.

It must be remembered that although investigations are generally well conducted, failure to comply with PACE or disclosure requirements can see the case being discredited and/or thrown out of court due to technicalities.

APPENDIX C

FIRE INVESTIGATION TEAM STRUCTURE

Fire Investigation Officers (FIOs)

FIOs are normally selected from the flexible-duty rota and are given specialist training in FI. They are authorised officers, empowered by the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. FIOs in development, having received initial theoretical and practical training, will undergo a programme of mentored and supported attendance at incidents before being deemed competent to lead investigations.

At incidents, FI Teams will be managed by a nominated lead officer who will attend the scene and request additional resources as necessary. These may include an accelerant detection dog and handler, fire crew(s), CSI(s) and the Police. Additional FIOs may also be requested according to need.

Best practice dictates that, other than for level 1 investigations, the Incident Commander, or other officer involved in the operational management of the incident, should not normally take on the role of Fire Investigation Team Leader as they are in effect a material witness.

A full FI Team will often not be assembled until the hours of daylight, the fire is fully extinguished and the scene is safe and secure for the investigation to commence. A preliminary assessment may be made during the fire, possibly at night, in order to gather initial evidence to be utilised when an investigation is initiated.

Fire Investigation (FI) Manager and Principal Fire Investigation Officers (FIOs)

The FI Manager and 2 Principal FIOs, in addition to being FIOs carry out the following functions:

- Co-ordinate and support NFRS FI Teams
- Support Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service FI
- Work towards recognised FI qualifications to deliver level 3 FI
- Provide mentoring for FIOs in development
- Lead large-scale, complex or protracted investigations
- Assist in the audit and review of SIRS reports
- Audit FI reports from FIOs
- Represent the Service in FI matters
- Attend training in Child Protection
- Provide investigation information to senior managers
- Feed information from investigations into Community Protection
- Develop and deliver FI, court appearance and scene preservation training
- Liaise with Northamptonshire Police, the forensic services, Crime Scene Managers, the Building Research Establishment, Coroners' Offices, Local Authorities, insurance investigators and other external agencies
- Arrange for FIOs in development to attend incidents for mentoring purposes

APPENDIX C

The FI Manager and Principal FIOs will make themselves available to support level 2 and 3 FIs either by incident attendance or remote involvement as required. If off duty officer recall may be utilised.

APPENDIX D

FIRE INVESTIGATION TRAINING STRATEGY

Fire Investigation Officers (FIOs)

- All officers will undertake core FI training to include practical and theoretical courses to National Occupational Standards (NOS) prior to undertaking in-house mentoring at incidents
- All officers will attend Continuous Professional Development (CPD) maintenance of skills training to meet national occupational standards on a three-yearly basis
- All officers will attend specialist training courses, e.g. electrical fires
- All officers will receive training in child protection and domestic violence awareness
- All officers will be trained to certificate level in investigative practice
- All officers will endeavour to attend quarterly FIO update meetings
- All officers will be encouraged to attend additional appropriate training including workshops, seminars and conferences delivered by the International Association of Arson Investigators
- All officers will provide FI training/mentoring to Service personnel as required
- All officers will provide FI training and support to external organisations and agencies as required

Fire Investigation (FI) Manager and Principal Fire Investigation Officers (FIOs)

In addition to the above, the FI Manager and Principal FIOs will be expected to have obtained or be studying for a degree in FI.

Incident Commanders (ICs)

- All ICs will receive in-house training on basic fire investigation principles, common causes, scene preservation, evidence gathering, recording of outcomes, court procedures and giving evidence
- All ICs will receive appropriate continuation and refresher training on a 3 yearly basis

Firefighters (Ffs)

- All FFs will receive in-house training on basic FI principles, common causes, scene preservation, evidence gathering, recording of outcomes, court procedures and giving evidence
- All FFs will receive appropriate continuation and refresher training
- All new entrants will receive scene preservation and basic FI awareness training during the initial training course

Fire Control

Fire Control staff will receive watch-based training, covering basic awareness of FI, statement preparation and the importance of their role in assisting with FI.

APPENDIX E

FIRE INVESTIGATION OFFICER EQUIPMENT PACK

Pointing trowel
Hand brush
Floorboard saw
Screwdrivers - plain/cross head (set x 4)
Pliers/wire cutters - electrically insulated (set x 3)
Adjustable spanner (150mm)
Metal tape measure
Stanley knife
1" paint brush
Knee pads
Electronic laser measure
Electrical tester (for AC/DC voltage measurement, fuse testing polarity/earth testing) with batteries
Volt pen with batteries
Digital camera with 2 batteries
High power rechargeable hand lamp
Floor standing scene lamp
Head lamp
Digital dictaphone recorder with batteries
Evidence bags
Equipment storage boxes/bags
1 x overalls
2 x polo shirts
2 x work trousers
1 x work boots
2 x CSI paper suits
Fire investigators tabard
Hard hat
Excavation gloves
Weatherproof jacket

Books

- Principles of Fire Investigation - Cooke & IDE, IFE
- NFPA 921 NFPA
- A Guide to Fatal Fire Investigation - D Leitch, IFE
- Safety at Scenes of Fire and Related Incidents - J W Munday, FPA
- Fire Investigation Pocket book, IAAI
- Fire Investigator - Principals and Practice to NFPA 921 and 1033, JBLearning
- The Expert Witness - A Practical Guide - Bond et al, Sweet and Maxwell

APPENDIX F

FATAL AND SERIOUS INJURY FIRES

In the event of any fire where a fatality or serious injury has occurred, the Police are responsible for taking the lead and co-ordinating the investigative process. Nevertheless, Police officers are advised to conduct investigations in liaison with the forensic specialists and FIs.

Whilst the Police need to establish whether a crime has been committed and are required to assist the Coroner in establishing the cause and circumstances of fire deaths, the Fire Service needs to maintain an active investigative role in order to provide specialist advice to the Police and Coroner. We also need to ensure any preventative lessons are identified and acted upon.

When using the term “serious injury”, all personnel should be mindful of the fact that when initially assessing the seriousness of injuries it may not be obvious that they are life threatening. The health of a fire victim may later deteriorate and result in death.

Fire ground assessments should take account of advice from the ambulance service, the extent of burns, smoke inhalation, shock and other injuries in relation to the age and general health of the casualty. If doubt exists, initially class the injuries as serious and call for a FIO.

Based upon such assessments it may prove prudent for FIOs to carry out their investigations into serious injury fires as if they were potentially fatal.

Fatal or serious injury fires fall into two distinct categories:

Fatal fire - accidental origin

When a fatal fire is considered by the Police, following preliminary investigative work, to be of accidental origin, the FI Team Leader will complete the investigation and compile an FI report containing all relevant statements, contemporaneous notes, sketches, photographs, etc. On completion of this report it will be signed by the Team Leader and forwarded to the FI Manager for proofing and onward transmission to the Coroner, Police or other. If the FI Manager is unavailable the proofing role will be carried out by a Principal FIO.

The FI Manager will retain the master file in accordance with the retention and disposal practice.

On receipt of the FI Report, HM Coroner may call for additional statements and the attendance of Fire Service Officer(s) at the Coroner’s Court. Officers are obliged to carry out any direction given by the Coroner, but are immediately to inform the FI Manager of any such directions.

APPENDIX F

Fatal fire - deliberate origin

On those occasions where a fatal fire appears to be as a result of deliberate origin, or where there are grounds for suspicion of a crime, then the nature of the investigation is the same as for any crime. The subsequent degree of involvement of the FI Team will then fall under the guidance, direction and control of the Senior Police Investigating Officer.

Inter-agency liaison remains paramount and any or all Service personnel involved should be prepared to provide a witness statement.

It is normal practice for the FIOs to be in attendance as part of a multi-agency team and provide specialist knowledge and support.

Handling bodies

At incidents where bodies are discovered in a fire, they will often be part buried in fire debris and may be difficult to recognise. The Police will require as much information as possible regarding the discovery. If possible, a body and any debris in the general area should be left undisturbed until the arrival of the Police.

If it is absolutely necessary to move the body, e.g. if fire threatens to destroy it, the following details should be recorded:

- The location of the body
- The position of the body
- The position of articles surrounding the body

A camera or thermal image camera should be utilised for this where available.

Moving a body

Generally fire crews will not be involved in the removal of bodies, as this should be done by the Coroner or the Police; however there may be occasions as described above when a body needs to be moved by Fire Service personnel. When moving a body the following precautions should be taken:

- Wear protective gloves, glasses and oral mask or Breathing Apparatus (BA) as appropriate
- Cover the body with a body bag or salvage sheet before moving it
- If a person touches the deceased with bare skin or comes into contact with body fluid then they should wash the affected area

Further information can be found in service policy E3 – Blood Borne Diseases.

APPENDIX F

Giving information

At the fire scene, all persons making enquiries regarding a fatal fire incident should be directed to the IC. The general public must not be given any specific information regarding the incident.

Firefighters must never give out information regarding fatalities.

Fire crews must avoid making remarks which could be overheard by onlookers.

Firefighters must ensure any statement given to the Police or a FIO is clear, concise and is not open to misinterpretation. They must avoid making commenting and only report facts.

APPENDIX G

CONTEMPORANEOUS NOTES

From National Occupational Standards (NOS):

“Technical or informative records made by investigator during initial or later stages of investigation for future reference.”

Note: In the witness box these may be the only notes available to you. You may not be given access to your report. Your report must only contain information taken from your notes.

Note: Review SOP F12, F15 and F16 for further information.

Use black ink. Cross errors out – do not conceal them.

Record:

- Incident number
- Date
- Your name
- Team leader's name (if different)
- Full address
- Time of your arrival
- Details of those present, their roles and contact numbers
- Appliances, OiCs, crew members, BA crews
- Time of arrival of Fire Service
- Any witnesses – names and contact numbers
- Conversations with anyone at scene; ask them to sign if appropriate
- Weather conditions; wind strength and direction, precipitation, temperature
- Property; including location, age, number of floors, type of construction, dimensions, use of property, condition and housekeeping, mains services provided
- Name(s) of owner/occupier and contact number
- Risk assessment; mains services isolated? Safe to enter? Level of PPE?
- Safe for Scenes of Crime Officer (SOCO)/Police/Insurance investigator? Safe for owner/occupier?
- Weather conditions, light levels
- Regularly update risk assessment
- Sketch plans; use grid squares to draw roughly to scale, label with measurements, mark North on plan, use ruler for straight edges, note wind strength and direction on plan
- Record any photographs taken
- Hypotheses considered and tested (how?)
- Write time on left hand side for each entry made or each new activity
- Sign, print name, time and date notes

APPENDIX H

DIGITAL IMAGES

1. Introduction

Evidential integrity must be maintained for all images which are created by digital methods intended for use as evidence, or which may become evidential. Such images will be captured, used, stored and retrieved using the following procedures.

Digital capture of images has changed the way in which evidence is produced both at the creation stage and the final production of the image. Because a digital image can be altered, and such alteration can be undetectable, a secure method of proving the integrity of those images must be created and adhered to. A Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) will help ensure, when challenges are made, that the integrity of the evidence can be defended successfully.

The following procedures are based on guidance from the Home Office Police Scientific Support Branch. Reference can be made to the following documents:

- House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology Report Digital Images as Evidence
- House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology Report Digital Images as Evidence, Government Response
- PSDB Paper Digital Imaging in the Criminal Justice System
- PSDB Procedures Digital Imaging in the Criminal Justice System June 2001

2. Performance standards and equipment

As digital imaging is evolving so rapidly, it has not been possible to define minimum standards for equipment or for the quality of images. Personnel who intend to use digital imaging must ensure that in addition to the camera, they also have suitable hardware and software facilities to download the images to WORM (Write Once, Read Many times) storage media, i.e. CD-R. It is essential to adhere to these procedures.

Cameras should be properly maintained and serviced to ensure clear images are recorded. Images produced by the equipment should be as clear as possible in order that they may be relied upon as evidence.

Remember: Images innocently taken at incidents may form contemporaneous evidence.

3. Continuity and audit trail

The most important requirement of using digital images as evidence is the need to guarantee the integrity of the images. This involves commencement of the audit trail at the earliest stage.

APPENDIX H

There will be a written audit trail recorded at the time of capture of any images. An electronic audit trail is suitable.

The audit trail must include details of the incident, description of the images captured, name of the photographer, dates and time of the image capture and details of the media used. The master audit trail should also include the audit trail(s) of the working copy/copies. This will ensure that the copy/copies are not misused and will protect the reliability/credibility of the evidence. The audit trail will be updated on each occasion that work is carried out.

When an additional working copy is made, the audit trail should indicate that this has been done.

If you become involved with CCTV evidence, the Information Commissioner's CCTV Code of Practice states that an audit trail should include:

- Date and time of removal of image(s)
- Name of person(s) removing image(s)
- Name(s) of person(s) viewing the images
- Reason for viewing
- The outcome, if any, of the viewing
- The date and time the image(s) were returned to the system or secure place, if they have been used for evidential purposes

4. Check operation of equipment

Time, date, operator information and definable settings must be checked and set prior to use. Digital equipment is power hungry in terms of battery consumption – sufficient batteries must be available prior to deployment.

Where media is re-writeable (eg. SD Cards), cards must be formatted in the camera they are to be used in, prior to deployment. This ensures all previous data has been removed prior to use.

5. Capture of images

It is vitally important that during the capture and subsequent procedures, the integrity of the images is maintained. One crucial aspect of this process is that none of the images taken should be deleted within the camera.

The audit trail must be updated at the point the images are captured to maintain integrity.

6. Preparing master and working copies

The integrity and authenticity of the images needs to be managed as a priority. No alterations will be carried out to any digital image prior to saving it onto the master CD.

APPENDIX H

Where reusable memory cards have been used to make the initial recording, the images will be transferred to WORM media for storage, at the earliest opportunity. The disk must be finalised to prevent further recording. This process must be carried out without using image manipulation software and the image files must be in the same format as first captured on medium in the camera.

Note: [SOP F12](#) and NCC Policy on the collection and handling of digital images provides further information and must be adhered to.

Working copies may be in the form of digital media, hard copy stills or enhanced stills.

Further working copies and/or enhancements will be made from this working copy, not from the master. This activity will be recorded in the audit trail.

Once the master WORM has been produced, the camera media card must be formatted to erase all data.

7. Storage and retrieval of digital masters

As soon as the master has been created, it must be clearly labelled, sealed and stored in a form and manner in which it can be easily retrieved and viewed later, kept in accordance with exhibit protocol and never used except by order of the Court to make copies or establish authenticity.

All master CDs will be forwarded to the FI Manager. A copy of the written audit trail must accompany the master.

The FI Manager will secure all data handed over from the FIO.

The audit trail must be updated on every occasion that access to the master is required or if it is moved or handled by anyone.

If there is a requirement to open the sealed master, all actions and details must be recorded on the audit trail. The master must then be resealed and the labels signed and dated.

Retention of the masters in this way conforms to the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Criminal Investigation and Procedures Act 1996.

APPENDIX I

FIRE INVESTIGATION (FI) REPORTS AND STATEMENTS

A report or statement is a written communication of facts observed by the witness. These facts should be presented concisely, clearly and accurately and in a logical order. The statement writer should take account of the reader's needs and whilst personal phraseology is encouraged, slang, local expressions and technical terms are inappropriate. All technical terms used must be explained. The statement should be written in the active voice, e.g. "I opened the window".

The credibility of the individual and the organisation they represent may depend on the quality of the written evidence and the manner in which it is verbally presented in a legal setting. Whilst it is unlikely that a witness will be allowed to refer directly to the statement within the Court, they will normally be taken through and questioned about the content. Accurate and legible notes may, however, refresh a witness's memory.

Service personnel may be required to provide a written statement for other agencies on a number of occasions, for example:

- Fatal fires - for the Coroner
- After an insurance interview
- To augment a Police enquiry

There are common reasons why statements are prepared:

- To elicit all relevant information from the witness as soon as possible after the event
- To obtain a written record, this may be read and checked by the witness
- To determine appropriate action and justify such action
- To assist in the examination of the witness in Court
- There are three types of statement which NFRS personnel may be required to complete
- FI preliminary report(s)
- FI final report
- Police Criminal Justice Act 1984 Section 9 statement, MG11

Guidance on report completion

First page headings

These should be completed with care, avoiding spelling mistakes or errors relating to personal particulars or incident details. It is advisable, when required to provide personal particulars at the head of the statement, to set out the address and telephone number of your place of work, rather than give your home details.

APPENDIX I

Opening

The opening paragraphs of a statement should be used to introduce the individual, to set the scene and to outline the individual's place in that scene. It is in this section of the statement where an individual can establish, if necessary, their professional credentials relative to the incident attended.

Introduction

The introduction may therefore lead off with your rank and position, length of service, place of duty and service therein and principal duties. This may not be essential in a case where the solicitor who has called upon you represents the Service because they can establish your credentials at the outset by a few brief questions. If the initial questions are from a Crown (Public) Prosecution Service (CPS) solicitor or an adversarial source that may be familiar with Service qualifications, setting out these credentials in advance may avoid some questions that may be phrased in ways seeking to discredit.

Setting the scene

Having provided the recipients of the statement with a general introduction to you (the witness), the initial scene can be set. Describe the premises, the reason for attendance, etc.

The incident - observations and conclusions

This part of the statement should set the scene on arrival of the initial attendance including an accurate time of arrival, description of the premises and chronological summary of events.

Statement conclusions

A statement of facts ideally would draw to a natural end as the account unfolds, however, on occasions where an officer is required to make an oral statement to a third party who is writing it down (e.g. to a Police officer) certain matters may have been omitted. On such an occasion, the additional facts can be added to the end of the statement.

Page headers and footers

Each page should be headed with a reiteration of the author's name and the page and number of pages and footed with the author's signature and that of the signatory witness.

Hints

A statement should always be read thoroughly and carefully before signing. Any mistakes should be ruled through and initialled in the margin. However, the incorrect words should still be legible and the correction written above. Ideally, statements should be made as soon as possible after the event and relate to supportive notes and other reports. Where legal process is anticipated, it is wise to draft out a preliminary statement, which can then be held on file.

APPENDIX J

PROCEDURE FOR DEPLOYMENT OF THE FIRE INVESTIGATION (FI) SEARCH DOG

It should be remembered that the dog unit is a specialist resource capable of assisting the FIO in the processing of a fire scene. It is not a substitute for the skills required to investigate and determine the cause of a fire. What it will provide is a means to rapidly search a site and the surrounding area to detect the presence of partially or unburnt residues of easily ignitable liquids.

Location

The dog team is based in Northamptonshire and will be able to deploy to most locations within the county within 1 hour.

When to deploy

For a dog team search to be effective, the maximum time elapsed from fire to deployment should be as soon as practicable and ideally within 48 hours.

Circumstances that warrant consideration to request the dog team to attend include the following:

- Fatal fires or fires where there is a likelihood of a fatality occurring as a result of injuries sustained
- High-profile fires where all available resources should be deployed to assist in determining the cause
- Where the cause of the fire appears deliberate or cannot be easily established
- Where there will be a high financial loss
- Where the fire is classed as one of special interest
- Where the fire is a result of an alleged racial attack or in a place of worship

Mobilising

Travel distances and handler availability will affect attendance times. This will be agreed at the time of the request. The handler might wish to contact the FIO before departure.

- The dog team will only be mobilised to an incident within the county or region when a request is received from a FIO or agreed outside agency
- In the case of a request from an outside agency, permission should be sought from the OOD prior to mobilising the dog team
- In all cases, the FI dog team will only be mobilised via Fire Control

Essential information required for mobilisation

When fire investigation dog team is requested, the following information is required:

- Contact name and phone number of FIO

APPENDIX J

- Time of call of the incident
- Address of incident
- Call number if possible
- Reasons for requesting FI dog team
- Name of officer and location to report to
- Is a Scenes of Crime Officer (SOCO) or forensic scientist in attendance?

Before arrival of the dog team

Once an FI dog team has been requested, the following actions should be undertaken to avoid the scene being compromised:

- Wherever possible, do not disturb the room contents or debris
- Avoid cutting away or turning over as this may destroy forensic evidence and make it more difficult for the dog to give an accurate location
- Restrict access into the site and surroundings to eliminate any possibility of cross-contamination which could result in any evidence found being unusable as evidence in any prosecution case

On arrival at the incident

On arrival at the scene, the FI dog handler will:

- Seek confirmation from the FIO or Scene Manager of the risk assessment put in place for the site
- Do a dynamic risk assessment of the area to be investigated, the decision to deploy the FI dog in any area is the sole responsibility of the handler
- Before commencing any search, the handler will ensure that all the necessary measures have been put into place to maintain continuity of evidence and to avoid contaminating the scene

Forensic awareness

It is essential that each and every operational search by the FI dog team is carried out by their own operating procedures.

On direction from the SOCO or forensic scientist, the FI dog handler may have to wear disposable overshoes, gloves and, if necessary, a one-piece scene examiner's disposable suit, subject to the health and safety risk assessment conditions prevailing at the time (note: this procedure should not exclude the handler from wearing full personal protective clothing if conditions warrant such). Overshoes and gloves should be changed at each and every entry into the incident.

At the end of each operational deployment, it may be required that all disposable clothing worn by the handler be placed and sealed in a nylon bag, labelled with the wearer's details, incident details and date of incident and handed to the Crime Scene Manager or Police Officer in charge of the investigation.

APPENDIX J

The dog should also wear freshly laundered protective paw coverings. After each and every operational deployment, the dog should be decontaminated. Likewise the handler and transporting vehicle should be cleansed and decontaminated accordingly. Upon request, after operational deployment, the post-deployment decontamination of dog, handler, equipment and vehicle should be recorded as part of the handler's actions in a witness statement and produced for the Police Officer responsible for the case.

Conducting a search

- An FIO, Police Officer or an SSO/SOCO should be present during the search to witness any indication given by the dog in order to maintain continuity of evidence
- The FIO should be kept informed of all findings made
- The dog handler will not be responsible for taking any samples that have been indicated by the dog, unless supervised by a SOCO or a Police Officer

Documentation

Upon request, the dog handler will provide the FIO or Scene Manager with an incident report or statement on the team's findings.

Post incident

The dog handler will be responsible for:

- Maintaining the equipment associated with the dog team
- Ensuring all equipment is fully decontaminated and documented before and after use
- Ensuring that all documentation is completed within seven days of the incident

RELEVANT FB FORMS

FB187 – Fatal Fire Briefing Note
FB188 – Fire Investigation Notebook
FB189 – Fire Investigation Report
FB190 – Fire Investigation Preliminary Report Template
FB191(a) – Fire and Accident Investigation Witness Record first page
FB191(b) – Fire and Accident Investigation Witness Record continuing page
FB192 – Observations Relevant to Fire Investigation
FB193 – Post Fire Investigation Handover Form
FB194 – Fire Investigation Bundle
FB195 – Fire Investigation Audit Form
FB196 – Fire Investigation Induction Process
FB197 – Authorised Officer Notice
FB198 – Warrant for Entry to Premises
FB199 – Notice of Entry
FB200 – Possession Notice