

HR LF	HR HF	Massachusetts District - 14 Fire Investigation Team 3800 – 19-002 Investigation Procedure	Effective Date 08/01/2020
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I) PURPOSE/SCOPE/APPLICATION

- A) The purpose of this Standard Operating Guideline (SOG) is to identify standard procedures for conducting fire investigations throughout Fire District 14.
- B) This SOG will apply to all District 14 Regional Fire Investigation Team members.
- C) This SOG should be referenced to ensure that a consistent approach is being used to conduct fire investigations in a timely manner.

II) REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

- A) NFPA 921 Guide for Fire and Explosion Investigations
- B) Massachusetts State Fire Marshal Fire Investigation Guideline
- C) MGL 148, Section 2, Investigations of fires or explosions by local officials; notice to marshal of suspicious origins or undetermined causes; reports; records

III) DEFINITIONS

- A) NA

IV) SPECIALIZED ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- A) All members shall be responsible for enforcing this SOG

V) SAFETY

- A) Failure to follow this SOG may result in injury to fire investigators.

VI) ENFORCEMENT

- A) Failure to understand this Standard Operating Guideline may result in disciplinary action.
- B) Any deviation from this Standard Operating Guideline may require a written report to the Fire Investigators Chief of Department.
- C) This policy is for internal use only and does not enlarge an employee's civil liability in any way. The policy should not be construed as creating a higher duty of care, in an evidentiary sense, with respect to third party civil claims against employees. A violation of this policy, if proven, can only form the basis of a complaint by this

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department for non-judicial administrative action in accordance with the laws governing employee discipline.

VII) STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINE

- A) The District 14 Fire Investigation Team was created to assist area fire departments with the investigation of fires within their jurisdictions. State law requires that all fires be investigated, and with the limited resources the fire investigation team can assist fire chiefs with determining a cause and origin of fires while working with the State Fire Marshal's Office within a team concept. District 14 Fire Investigators shall strive to complete fire investigations accurately and in a timely manner in a professional manner.
- B) Fire Investigators should have an investigation kit ready to go in case of an activation call for investigators. The kit shall include tools needed for investigations, a camera or device with a camera, the PPE assigned by District 14, and the requisite forms necessary to document a proper fire investigation.
- C) Fire Investigators should report to the Incident Commander of any community they respond to for an investigation. Before starting an investigation, the investigator should try and determine if more help may be needed and make the request to the Incident Commander. If the fire involves a fatality the Fire Marshal's Office shall be notified and an investigator from that office requested. Fire Investigators shall be assigned as outlined in the FIT Assignment Sheet 3800-19-001-7
- D) The fire investigation shall start with ensuring scene safety, and air monitoring has been completed to ensure the proper use of respiratory protection. A briefing from the first due fire officer to get a sense of arrival conditions, i.e. fire showing, color of the smoke, location of fire/smoke, people around the scene etc. Firefighter witness statements shall be recorded on the Firefighters Statement 3800-19-001-3.
- E) Any witnesses to the fire should be interviewed and answers documented. If possible, this should be done with a police officer present and in a quiet location. The interview shall be documented using the appropriate witness statement form and or property owner release form. If needed a waiver shall be signed using form

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3800-19-001-2. Witness statements shall be recorded on FIT Voluntary Statement 3800-19-001-6.

- F) An external survey of the structure shall be conducted taking and numbering photographs as necessary and collecting any item believed to be evidence. Photographs shall be cataloged using Photography Log 3800-19-001-4.
- G) When it is safe to do so, the fire investigator shall continue the building survey by moving inside the structure taking and numbering photographs and collecting any item(s) believed to be evidence. Evidence shall be logged in Chain of Custody
- H) All photographs shall be cataloged numerically as they are taken with a description of what is in the photo and where the photo was taken. Photos that do not appear clear will be still be cataloged with a description. Unclear photos will be retaken.
- I) All evidence collected will be cataloged in Evidence Collected and Receipt 3800-19-001-9, and a chain of custody started using the correct chain of custody form. The investigator shall use Chain of Custody 3800-19-001-8.
- J) A scene diagram shall be drawn to demonstrate where the fire occurred within the building or property, or where on the property the fire occurred. The investigator shall use form 3800-19-001-1
- K) A detailed fire investigation report shall be completed within as timely a manner as practical and submitted to the appropriate person(s) in the jurisdiction in which the fire occurred. Periodic updates from the investigator may be required to keep the fire chief informed. A Team Activation Briefing 3800-19-001-10 should be filled out and sent to the jurisdictions fire chief, and the FIT committee. The fire report shall include investigator name(s), witness names, and a narrative on how the investigation was conducted and the conclusions of the investigation. The fire investigation report shall include detailed evidence list, photograph list, diagram(s) of the property, chain of custody list if one was generated, witness statements, detailed list of equipment involved if related to the cause of the fire.
- L) The investigator shall use for 3800-19-001-1 Fire Investigation Template, and shall provide both a hard copy and electronic copy of the fire report.
- M) When the investigation is complete, the property shall be released to the property owner using form 3800-19-001-5.

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VIII) RECORDS, REPORTS, CHARTS, FORMS

A) Fire Investigator Job Description

B) Fire Investigation Forms- 3800-19-001-1, 3800-19-001-2, 3800-19-001-3, 3800-19-001-4, 3800-19-001-5, 3800-19-001-6, 3800-19-001-7, 3800-19-001-8, 3800-19-001-9, 3800-19-001-10

SOG Review Dates: 1/15/19