

1. General

1.1 Purpose. The purpose of this Standard Operating Guideline is to set forth certain guidelines regarding origin and cause investigations of fire occurring within the District.

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1.2 Scope. This Standard Operating Guideline shall apply to all members of the Yakima County Fire District 12.

1.3 Enforcement. Enforcement of this standard operating guideline is the responsibility of the District's officers. Any person deviating from the provisions of this guideline may be required, at the discretion of the officer in charge, to submit in writing, within five (5) calendar days, an explanation for such deviation to the requesting officer who will forward the explanation up the chain of command for further review.

2. Notification

2.1 The Incident Commander shall request the District's Investigation Team to respond to the following incidents to conduct an origin and cause investigation:

- Any structural fire resulting in the significant damage of the structure or contents as the result of burning, smoke, heat, water, or other fire control operations.
- Any fire, regardless of the severity, which results in the injury or death to a civilian or firefighter.
- Any vehicle fire where the cause is suspicious or the cause cannot be determined by the Incident Commander.
- Any other fire that is of a suspicious nature.
- Any attempted incendiary act involving a structure, motor vehicle, or real property.

2.2 District Fire Investigation Team Not Available. If the District's Team is not available, the Incident Commander shall conduct a preliminary investigation and the information forwarded to the Fire Chief or Deputy Fire Chief for a final cause determination. For structural fires, the Yakima County Fire Prevention Bureau or the Fire Investigation Team from a neighboring city/district may be called to assist with the cause and origin investigation.

2.3 Washington State Patrol. The Washington State Patrol will be notified and requested to respond to any fire that results in the death of a civilian or a firefighter. The Washington State Patrol shall become the primary investigative agency in these cases.

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3. Formation of an Investigative Team

3.1 At the discretion of the Chief of the District or Incident Commander, an investigative team may be formed to investigate the fire.

3.2 The team may be comprised of any number of persons, one of who must be a qualified fire investigator, as necessary to perform a complete investigation.

3.3 The team shall be under the direct supervision of the Incident Commander on the scene and the Fire Chief/Deputy Chief during the follow up investigation.

4. Police Department or Sheriff's Office Investigative Assistance

4.1 In the event that the Fire Investigation Team determines the cause to be incendiary or attempted arson, the Incident Commander shall request the Yakima Police Field Supervisor or Sheriff's Office Detective to respond to the scene.

4.2 Upon the arrival of law enforcement, the Investigation Team Leader shall brief the police as to the scene and initial findings. For the purpose of the initial investigation, the police investigator should function as a member of the fire investigation team.

5. Working the Scene

5.1 The Fire Investigation Team will perform the scene investigation, photographic work, and interviews. Information will be compiled by the team leader. This information, along with any determinations and recommendations shall be reported to the Fire Chief/Deputy Chief.

6. Accumulation and Dissemination of Information

6.1 The Fire Chief/Deputy Chief shall be the central point for the accumulation of fire investigation information.

6.2 No information regarding active or closed fire investigations may be released without the permission of the Fire Chief.

7. Accumulation of Evidence

7.1 The law enforcement agency shall be responsible for the collection and transportation of evidence for laboratory analysis. All processed evidence shall be maintained by the Police Department, Sheriff's Office or the Washington State Patrol.