

Grissettown Longwood Fire & Rescue

Fire Investigation Guidelines

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that all Fire Marshals and other firefighting personnel are prepared to perform fire investigations while maintaining the highest degree of personal safety and scene safety.

20.1 SCOPE

The Incident Commander shall be in charge of fire scene operations such as determining scene safety requirements and scene security until transferring Command to the Fire Marshal. The transfer of Command shall be made when the fire is extinguished and conditions are made safe for all personnel. The transfer of Command shall follow all Incident Command guidelines.

20.2 RESPONSIBILITY

It shall be the policy of this department that a Fire Marshal shall be requested to respond to all fire incidents whose cause cannot be determined, are suspicious in nature, incendiary in nature, result in a large loss, or involving a fatality, potential of fatality, or serious injuries. A request for the Fire Marshal shall be made by the Incident Commander who shall notify DISPATCH of his/her needs. The Fire Marshal shall be called as early into the incident as possible so that investigative procedures can be initiated.

20.3 SCENE SECURITY AND PRESERVATION

Effective scene preservation and security activities must begin as early into the Command function as possible. As soon as the Incident Commander recognizes the need for the Fire Marshal, he shall begin actions necessary to preserve the scene for investigative purposes. The Incident Commander shall order reflective fire line tape to be posted around the scene perimeter as needed to establish incident security.

In addition, the Incident Commander shall place adequate Fire personnel to view all sides of the incident perimeter thereby preventing unauthorized personnel from entering the scene.

Before transferring command to the Fire Marshal, the Incident Commander shall be responsible for keeping unauthorized personnel from entering the scene, including

non-essential Fire personnel. If it become necessary for personnel, other than those actually affecting extinguishment, to enter the scene once a perimeter has been established, their names shall be recorded and turned over to the Fire Marshal upon his/her arrival.

20.4 SCENE SAFETY

The Incident Commander shall be responsible for ensuring that all fire scene safety procedures are followed before transferring Command to the Fire Marshal. Until Command is transferred, the Incident Commander shall determine the appropriate level of personal protective clothing to be worn by the Fire Marshal.

Once Command has been transferred to the Fire Marshal, the Marshal shall be responsible for determining the appropriate level of protective clothing required for the investigation, i.e., helmet, gloves, boots, SCBA, etc.

Fire Marshals shall be responsible for ensuring that sufficient ventilation is provided in the area or building in which they are operating. When necessary, the Marshal shall make arrangements with the Incident Commander to have positive pressure ventilation supplied during the investigation.

Fire Marshals shall not work in atmospheres without SCBA that contain visible smoke, hazardous chemicals, or any other atmosphere that has not been thoroughly ventilated.

20.5 INVESTIGATIVE PROCEDURES

Upon arrival, the Fire Marshal shall report to the Incident Commander. The Fire Marshal shall also check with the Incident Commander and verify that a fire scene perimeter has been established and maintained. At this time the Fire Marshal shall meet with the Incident Commander and advise him/her of any equipment or personnel needed to conduct the investigation, i.e., lighting, ventilation, additional manpower needs, etc.

The Fire Marshal shall also use this time to obtain information about the incident from the Incident Commander and operating Companies. The first arriving Companies shall not be released from the scene until they are interrogated by the Fire Marshal.

Before Command is transferred to the Fire Marshal, the Fire Marshal shall make certain that sufficient personnel have been left on the scene to assist in the investigation. It may be necessary for the Marshal to request from the Incident Commander that firefighting personnel be left to help with processing the scene, or to protect the perimeter while the investigation is performed. If such a request is made, the Incident Commander shall make every effort to supply the Fire Marshal with whatever manpower or equipment needed to conduct the investigation.