



Competency Framework for Fire Scene Investigators

Chief Fire Officers Association

Guidance Document

Competencies relevant to different levels of Fire Scene Investigation

Document Version Control

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Introduction

The delivery of an effective Fire Scene Investigation depends on the professionals who carry out the work. Fire Scene Investigation is a challenging and evolving role where continued learning and practice is essential to develop, maintain and evidence professional competency. It is therefore necessary that organisations agree to a minimum level of competency standard which must be achieved by all personnel performing the role at each relevant level of investigation.

Scope

This guidance has been developed for organisations requiring their staff to undertake Fire Investigations anywhere within the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Previously investigations have been split into three separate levels, however it is felt that whilst the competencies required for the first level are different, the competencies required for the second and third level are actually the same. The only real difference being that the third level tended to be a multi-agency investigation. This document splits the competency requirements up into Tier 1 (previously referred to as “Level 1”) and Tier 2 (previously referred to as “Level 2 and Level 3” fire scene Investigations). It clarifies the definition of the two different tiers of investigation and provides guidance as to what level of competency is required for each of them.

Guidance on appropriate levels of competency

Tier 1 investigations can be defined as a routine fire, arson and wilful fire raising investigation and are usually undertaken to provide information required by the Secretary of State, through the national Incident Recording System, by practitioners initially attending the fire scene. In most cases that will be Fire & Rescue Service Incident Commanders, normally at Crew or Watch Manager level. Personnel undertaking such fire scene investigations will have received a level of FSI training to improve their awareness, allow them to make judgements within their level of competency and help them to determine when the complexity of the investigation is beyond their knowledge and therefore when to bring in FI’s trained to carry out a Tier 2 investigation.

FSIs performing Tier 1 fire scene investigations must be competent to a level equivalent to the Skills for Justice Level 2 Award in Introduction to Fire Investigation.

Tier 2 fire scene investigations can be defined as a fire and explosion (non-terrorist) investigation where the cause is not easily established. They may be carried out by the FSI alone, or may involve collaborative and multi-agency working with organisations that are instructed or required to form part of the investigation team, such as:

- The Forensic Science Service Provider
- Forensic Scientists from the private sector
- Fire and Rescue Service Personnel
- Nominated Police Officers/Crime Scene Managers including Murder / Major Crime Team
- Fire Investigators appointed on behalf of the Insurers.
- Specialist contractors required to perform a particular task/role.
- Coroners

These must be investigated by a competent FSI with specific training and experience to undertake a more detailed or extensive fire scene investigation than required for Tier 1 fire scene investigations.

FSIs performing Tier 2 fire scene investigations must be competent to a level equivalent to the Skills for Justice Level 5 Certificate in Fire Investigation and ensure they meet the requirement laid out in the “Code of Practice for Fire Investigators within the Criminal Justice System in the UK” if they are investigating a fire which may have been started deliberately.

Each individual organisation is responsible for determining whether or not they differentiate between FSIs that would carry out single-agency or multi-agency investigations.

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