General Information

The division periodically receives requests for information from persons interested in becoming a fire / arson investigator. The information below is intended to provide general direction in response to those questions, and is not intended to serve as a formal position description for an investigator employed by the MN State Fire Marshal Division.

General Duties

A fire investigator attempts to determine the origin and cause of a fire. A fire investigator may also be an arson investigator, who not only determines origin and cause but also attempts to determine who is responsible for setting the fire.

Employment Opportunities

- Federal agencies, such as the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives
- State agencies such as the State Fire Marshal or Department of Commerce
- Local government and public safety agencies, such as fire departments, police departments or sheriff offices. (Note: many fire investigations conducted within a fire department are assigned to a company officer, thus fire fighting may be the primary or initial career for a fire investigator who is employed by a fire department.)
- Private companies, such as insurance companies, private investigation agencies and law offices.
- Self employment as a private investigator

Career Preparation

Suggested reading

- *Fire Investigator* IFSTA (International Fire Service Training Association) (www.ifsta.org)

Education and Training
General Qualifications

- Fire fighting experience
- Experience or training as a criminal investigator
- Physically fit (the job involves much heavy lifting and manual labor in heat, cold, and hazardous environments)
- Knowledge of building construction and materials (and the effects of fire on them)
- A background in mechanical, electrical, civil or chemical engineering