

Fire / Arson Investigator Education / Training / Qualifications

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

- *Kirk's Fire Investigation. 5 th Edition.* DeHaan, John D., Ph.D. ISBN 0130604585.
- *NFPA 921: Guide for Fire and Explosion Investigations 2004 Edition.* Available through the National Fire Protection Association (www.nfpa.org)
- *NFPA 1033: Professional Qualifications for Fire Investigator.* Available through National Fire Protection Association (www.nfpa.org)
- *Principles of Fire Behavior.* Quintere, James G. ISBN 0827377320
- *Fire Investigator* IFSTA (International Fire Service Training Association) (www.ifsta.org)

Education and Training

- Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (<http://www.atf.gov/training/arsonex.htm>)
- International Association of Arson Investigators (IAAI) (<http://www.firearson.com>) (www.cfitrainer.net) International
- Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (www.dps.state.mn.us)
- Minnesota Chapter of the International Association of Arson Investigators (www.mniaai.org)
- Minnesota State Fire Marshal Division (www.fire.state.mn.us)
- National Association of Fire Investigators certification programs (<http://www.nafi.org/Certification.htm>)
- National Fire Academy (<http://www.usfa.fema.gov/fire-service/nfa/nfa.shtm>)
- National Fire Protection Association (<http://www.nfpa.org/ProfessionalDev/index.asp>)

Local technical colleges, such as the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, offer customized courses which include fire investigation. Contact the colleges directly for more information.

There is currently no specific degree for fire investigation, however advanced learning in any aspect of fire or law enforcement is a plus when you choose fire investigation as a career. For example, there are college degrees available in fire science and law enforcement.

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