

TITLE OPERATIONS MANUAL	STANDARD INSTRUCTION 01		DEPARTMENT FIRE
SUBJECT FIRE SUPPRESSION: FIRE, ARSON AND BOMB INVESTIGATION	SECTION 11	PAGE 1 of 4	EFFECTIVE DATE 07/01/01

XI. FIRE, ARSON AND BOMB INVESTIGATION

A. Initiating a MAST Investigations

The officer in charge shall request MAST respond when any of the following circumstances exist:

1. Arson or suspicious fires in structures (Consider TAC Channel for consult on small fires, trash, debris, etc).
2. Significant accidental fires in structures (i.e. over \$50,000).
3. Fire fatality or major injury/burn (except vehicle accidents).
4. When an arson arrest has been made by a police officer.
5. Juvenile fires age 15 years and above.
6. Bomb or suspected bomb-related incident.
7. Any incident where the incident commander deems a response necessary.
8. Automatic on second or greater alarm structure and grass fires.

The officer in charge should contact MAST (INV 67) by land-line, cell-phone or TAC Channel when any of the following circumstances exist:

1. Small arson or suspicious fires in structures (i.e. trash, debris, clothing, etc.).
2. Structure fires where the cause is in doubt.
3. Arson vehicle fires. Depending on the type of witness/suspect/evidence information available at scene, MAST could respond immediately or handle as a cold fire scene. If the mutual agreement is to handle the fire as a cold scene, no scene preservation is necessary. Generally these fires are handled the next morning prior to MAST going off-duty.
4. Any fires that are a part of a series; structure, vehicle, rubbish and grass.
5. Juvenile fires when the parents are not cooperative.
6. When MAST consultation is desired.

B. Investigation Scene Security

1. After initial fire extinguishment and necessary overhaul to extinguish hidden fires, all personnel shall be removed from the area to be protected, including Fire personnel. The posting of a fire fighter or an on-scene Police officer will usually be adequate to ensure security until the arrival of MAST investigators. It is the ultimate responsibility of Command to ensure that scene is protected until the MAST Team releases the scene. Command will be notified by the MAST supervisor when MAST is finished with the scene.

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2. The scene of a suspicious or incendiary fire shall not be left unattended before MAST investigators arrive. At least one Fire Suppression company shall remain on the scene with instructions to deny entrance to unauthorized persons. The company receiving this assignment shall refrain from discussion of the fire except with fire investigators or other responsible department personnel.
 - a. The fire scene and all items of evidence shall be protected from contamination, preserving it exactly as it as when the fire was extinguished.
 - b. All persons including fire personnel, and news media personnel shall be denied access until the scene has been released by the MAST investigator in charge.
3. Building owners and tenants shall not be allowed to enter/reenter fire scenes until the scene has been released by MAST investigators.
4. Security of bomb scenes entails securing much larger areas. The initial security perimeter will extend 300' outward from the most distant piece of debris that resulted from the blast. This perimeter will have the suspected seat of the blast as its center point. Security for this area will be initially provided by Fire and Police personnel as they arrive at the scene and will be maintained until the MAST Supervisor redefines the general search area. All personnel securing the scene must be alert to identify possible debris from the blast. This debris must be left in place and civilians in the area must be prohibited from removing any object.

C. Fire Deaths

1. The possibility of homicide must be considered in all fire deaths until the fire cause has been determined. Scene security is essential to ensure the admissibility of evidence as presented in court. Proper scene security is the result of prompt and effective exclusion of all personnel except MAST or homicide investigators. Fire Operations personnel involvement will be limited to necessary extinguishment of fire and ventilation.
2. Deaths resulting from a suspected bomb or an explosion must be treated as a homicide. The same rules that apply to fire deaths must be applied in these incidents. In addition, due to the blast, portions of the victim may be found in areas some distance from the initial blast. If located, they should be protected from the elements, passerbys, or animals by covering with a blanket and left in place under close observation.

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3. If there is a suspicion of arson at a death scene, Command will immediately notify Fire Dispatch so that homicide personnel may be notified as early as possible. Command shall also notify on scene police officers so that they can aid in scene security and witness identification.
4. The decision to move a body prior to the arrival of the coroner, MAST members, or homicide investigators must be based on the need to prevent further damage to the body by fire or extinguishment operations.
5. It is extremely important that all fire personnel are able to give an exact account of their activities. Personnel should be able to do this in detail and be able to give descriptions of any people present, what they said, etc. The condition of doors, windows and how the building was entered is all important information that will be needed in detail. Fire personnel should be able to do this at all fires but it is extremely important when there is fire death or severe injury.
6. Prior to going off duty, all fire fighting personnel that were involved in any manner with a fire scene involving a death or severe injury shall prepare a written statement reporting all their activities at the scene.

D. Preserving Evidence/Fire and Bomb Scene

Fire Suppression employees shall exercise care in preserving evidence and overhauling shall be held to a minimum consistent with extinguishment of the fire until a need for investigation has been determined. All evidence found at the scene of an incendiary fire should be retained. When an employee is going to recover and retain any evidence, the employee in all cases shall take the following precautions:

1. Photograph the evidence prior to removal from its location.
2. Make a sketch of the item in relation to other furnishings.
3. Carefully pick the item up with gloves. Do not touch with bare fingers.
4. Do not wipe the evidence.
5. Place item in paper or plastic bag.
6. Affix securely a tag or label with the following information:

Date and time, incident number, location and name.

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7. Include with evidence a Fire Report (FD-79) describing the items and their location. Include a sketch.
8. Do Not Discard Any Evidence.
9. Evidence, to remain legal, must never be sent through the mail. It must be hand-delivered to the investigator. If you do have evidence that needs to be picked up, notify the MAST Investigator as soon as possible. Remember, you must never lose possession or control of the evidence until it is turned over to an investigator.

E. Interviewing Burn Victims

The purpose of interviewing burn victims is to obtain information from the victim which may prove useful in determining fire cause. If MAST members are responding to the incident, they shall be responsible for the interview. After examination of the fire scene, investigators will respond to hospitals, if necessary, to conduct interviews. Information gained in the interview will then be transmitted as needed to the appropriate investigating officer.

F. News Media

While news media personnel may be permitted at emergency scenes, they do not have the authority to be within a crime scene or area which has been secured to preserve evidence. Permission to enter protected areas must be given by the MAST investigator in charge.

1. Fire and Life Safety personnel are not to permit themselves to be interviewed regarding fire or emergency incidents by media personnel. These interviews will be granted by:
 - a. Incident Commander
 - b. Public Information Officers
 - c. Metro Arson Strike Team investigators
2. General information interviews (i.e., fire safety) shall be coordinated with and under the direction of the Public Information Unit.