



PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE FROM FAILURE TO FIREPOWER: THE DISCIPLINE BEHIND THE TRUTH



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When I opened my first semester law school midterm envelope and saw a red "F" at the top of the page, I was crushed. But it was in that moment of disappointment that I learned one of the most important lessons of my professional life: **success isn't just about getting the answer right—it's about showing how you got there.** That principle is at the core of everything we do as fire and explosion investigation and litigation professionals. And it's the foundation of the International Association of Arson Investigators, Inc. ("IAAI").

Today, I have the high honor of serving as your IAAI President for the 2025-2026 term. I am here because of a journey shaped by mentorship, hard work, and perseverance—and supported by a global community of professionals who never stop seeking the truth. In 2022, it was an honor when my dear friend and mentor, IAAI Past President, Rodney Pevytoe, nominated me to serve as an IAAI Executive. It was especially meaningful to have the Honorable Jeffrey V. Brown, United States District Judge for the Southern District of Texas, administer my oath of office as IAAI President. Years ago, Judge Brown, then a Justice of the Supreme Court of Texas, administered my oath as an attorney. That full-circle moment reminded me that every chapter of our careers builds on the last, and every success is rooted in discipline, growth, and community.

The mission and vision that unites us. Since 1949, the IAAI has been the world's largest international professional association of fire and explosion investigators, with nearly 12,000 members strong. Our mission is to inspire the international fire and explosion investigation community to achieve excellence. Our vision is to make a safer world by serving as the global resource for public and private sector professionals dedicated to uncovering the truth.

This Association exists to help our members become their best selves—to become **qualified, certified, and competent.** Preparation is our focus. That is why, as IAAI President, I am committed to developing and delivering high-impact training programs that prepare every member to approach investigations with rigor, accountability, and confidence.

Lessons that endure. In law school, I learned that the conclusion means nothing if you can't defend the process. In fire and explosion investigation, the stakes are even higher. Our reports shape criminal cases, civil litigation, public policy, and public safety. Gut instinct and speculation have no place in our profession. What matters is methodology. What matters is the ability to prove what did not happen, to rule out what cannot be supported by evidence, and to present findings that can withstand cross-examination and expert scrutiny.

The strategic plan and pillars. As we look ahead, our organizational strategy centers around three key pillars:



- **Membership – Building a Stronger Community.** We are nearly 12,000 strong, and our strength lies not in size alone but in engagement. I want every current and prospective member—from veteran public sector investigators to early-career insurance professionals—to find lasting value in this Association. Through improved resources, mentorship, and outreach, we will deepen member engagement and enrich professional development.
- **Training and Certification – Expanding Access to Excellence.** Knowing the right answer isn't enough. You have to show how you got there. That's why training and certification is critical. We will expand training programs, increasing online and regional access, and removing unnecessary barriers to certification. Excellence should be accessible to everyone committed to the work.
- **Organizational Excellence – Strengthening Our Foundation.** The IAAI needs to run as smoothly as the professionals it represents. Just as we demand efficiency and clarity in our investigations, we must expect the same from our Association. We are modernizing our operations to support better communication, efficiency, and effective governance, and strategic alignment across our IAAI Chapters and Committees.

Community and gratitude: I did not get here alone. I am forever grateful to my wife, Amy, and our daughters, Rowyn and Rylee, for their unwavering support. To my parents, Bill and Jane, and to my siblings, Erin and Matt, thank you for the values you instilled in me. I also want to honor my dear friends and mentors, Russ and Chad, who championed the convergence of science and law and gave me my first real opportunity to blend both in meaningful service. Last but not least, thank you to my friends, firm and work colleagues, mentors, and every public and private sector fire and explosion investigation and litigation professional around the world who has invested in me along the way.

Let's get to work: The truth is not self-evident. It must be discovered, defended, and documented. That's our job. And it starts with preparation. If you take one thing away from this message, let it be this: **keep learning, keep growing, and keep showing your work.** Because when fire tries to erase the truth, it's up to us to bring it back to light.

Together, let's lead the charge toward excellence—in our methods, in our membership, and in our mission.

In truth and service,

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IAAI President 2025-2026

