What’s Inside:

EXPLORING THE RELEVANCE AND RELIABILITY OF WITNESS STATEMENTS IN THE SCIENCE OF FIRE INVESTIGATION

Photo Credit: Motor Vehicle Fire Investigation
City of Newport Beach Fire Station 7
Trace Lawless
January 21, 2019
Leadership in the fire investigation

Leadership is not a position; it is a process.

The fire investigation scene can be a complex, multi-disciplinary event that requires coordination and strong leadership. The fire investigator tasked with leading a fire investigation must be confident enough in their skills to be able to display a strong command presence and be an effective leader on the fire ground. Strong leadership is also necessary.

A fire investigator must develop strong relationships with peers, management, community leaders, and other individuals who may be involved in any capacity in a fire investigation. The fruits of these relationships include the ability to work together and achieve for each other, prior to the fire event. The time of an emergency is not the time to allow disputes, principles, and standards of performance. The time of the event is critical. Effective action requires the team's ability, coordination, and resilience. This leader will create synergy, allowing for a product that reflects the collective and produces a through, safe, and efficient fire investigation.

The fire investigator must continually work on their leadership skills as some might be an investigator or firefighter on the floor. A complex fire scene is usually commanded by a ranking officer, and the fire investigator must have the skills necessary to effectively lead the operation based on the needs of the scene and the needs of the investigation, so that all may work together and achieve the overall goals of the organization.

Make no mistake about it: a fire investigator must be a leader in the fire scene. Leadership must not be an afterthought; it must be developed and assessed using a controlled experiment.

The leadership times may be identified with the help of a variety of participants with the ability to have information provided by witnesses.

ABSTRACT

Information provided by witnesses is regularly used in the analysis of fire events to determine origin, cause, and cause classification; however, there is often dispute over the “scientific” value of this information. A question that often arises is how to assess reliability of information provided by witnesses. Witness statements are often used in the analysis of fire events to evaluate reliability of information provided by witnesses.

The committee's purpose is to promote fire investigator health and safety knowledge, awareness, discussion, and action among the IAII, its chapters, and the fire investigation community in general. The committee is comprised of 10 fire investigators representing the public and private sectors and is supported by a six-member advisory panel of subject matter experts.

More information on this important subject can be found in the best practice white paper. Please take a moment to read this important message.