



Fire Investigation: Report Writing-Part 2

No. FI-2010-5 September 23, 2010

Learning Objective: The student will be able to describe the elements and importance of each that are to be contained in written investigative reports.

There are several uses for fire investigation written reports. They can be used to compile statistical information, keep others, such as supervisors and other investigative staff, informed, and prepare cases as well as the investigator for court. The investigator must always remember when preparing the document that an investigative report is an official record. The report serves as proof of the fire and/or possible crime. It documents how the investigator collected the facts about the incident and includes not only what, but how and by whom evidence is or was taken.

A report has a definite structure. It is arranged in a way that the reader can easily find the information he or she requires. A structure also makes it easier for the writer to arrange thoughts in a logical flow and to write a readable report. In its simplest form, a report will consist of a beginning, a middle, and an end. When preparing your investigative report it is important to include all pertinent information. The following discusses the information needed.

The first piece of information is a copy of the original fire incident report along with documentation of and any corrections to it. In most situations, the Company Officer will have completed the incident report. There may be omissions on this report because the Company Officer did not have the information at the time the report was prepared. If the investigator makes any corrections or additions to that report, it should be documented as to the reason the changes were made.

It has long been said that a picture is worth a thousand words. This holds true with an investigative report. Scene photographs provide a clear picture of the scene as the investigator observed it. These same photographs document where evidence was found and the procedures used to collect it. Scene diagrams are an additional picture of the incident. The diagram can be used to provide orientation of the scene and locations of specific rooms or evidence found. Diagrams are an excellent tool to bring a jury into the fire scene while the investigator explains findings and opinions about the incident.

Authors: Laura Billon and Robert Gentile

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