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Introduction:

The Newsletter is a quarterly publication of the Alabama Association of Arson Investigators (AAAI).

President's Comments -

As this fall begins and the weather changes, we all begin to prepare for the upcoming events, football and holidays, among a few. With the change in the weather there is an increase in the number of fires.

The A.A.A.I. would like to be your source for information and training for fire investigation and combating arson. At www.alabamaarson.com you can find information about current and upcoming events, links to other related sites. We encourage you to visit the site often and tell friends and others about it and the association.

If you have any questions, suggestions or comments contact me or any of the district directors.



Curtis Dykes,
President.

Report from Denver

I.A.A.I. Annual General Meeting and Training Conference

The I.A.A.I. Training Conference and Annual General Meeting was in Denver, Colorado this year. The trip out and accommodations were great and attendance was in the neighborhood of 500. A Big thanks to Bob Toth, the Colorado Chapter President who headed up the hosting duties for this conference.

Representatives from all over the country (US) and all over the world were present with people from Ireland, England, Sweden, Israel, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Alaska and Hawaii attending. Oh, wait a minute; Alaska and Hawaii are part of the US, although Hawaii is way out near the edge (flat earth). I met many interesting people during this trip.

John Bond, Deputy State Fire Marshal, from Alaska shared some of his experiences with us. He almost did not make it to Denver. It seems that he was ready to make the trip, when at the last minute; he had a fire to investigate. As he usually has to do, he flew to a destination close to the area, and then flew again, this time on a small "bush" plane, to the town where the fire occurred. He investigated the fire, which took most of the day and had to spend the night. Since this was a remote location (ha – as we might expect most of Alaska is) he stayed in a school building and slept on the floor (one of the most common methods of overnight lodging). The next morning he made the return trip home just in time to leave again for Denver. No quality time with wife – she was not happy - good luck when you get home, John. Huh, I don't feel quite so bad about the lackluster snack on my plane trip (some type of peanut / cracker creation coated with a sweet and salty varnish-like glaze). The classes presented at the conference were varied and quite good, as they usually are. During this trip I met Nick Carey, who is with the UK Chapter, London Fire Brigade and we had several interesting discussions.

Most, if not all, investigators with the fire departments in England are formally trained and certified engineers. Nick is an electrical engineer. The fire departments conduct continuous research into fire dynamics, fire protection and fire investigation with many full scale burn tests of all sorts. Nick gave me a

copy of their chapter's newsletter and it was quite interesting to read. However, I soon found that I needed an interpreter. For instance what is a "wheelie bin"? Would you think, setting two of these on fire would get you 20 to life in Great Britain?

Another thing I thought was interesting is they do not have mail boxes in England like we do in the US. Nick bid on, and won, a typical mail box that was decorated with fire designs and paraphernalia. He was intrigued with the "mail box" and when I asked him what they used to receive their mail, he said, "We have slots in the door, which is a great place to pour the petrol into the building and ignite it" (and use your heaviest British accent when reading this sentence).

The last few IAAI conferences have utilized the multi-track system where you can choose to attend one of three different classes at any given time. This works fine for most people as everyone's interests are different, most of the time. It never fails though, that there is always one class you "must" attend and it conflicts with the other class you "jus-haf-to" see. For me this was the Lightning presentation by Dr. Philip Krider from University of Arizona and the Fatal Fire and Explosion Investigation. Then, there is always the sleeper, the class that by its name does not seem too interesting, but turns out to be very good. The class was "Ethics" instructed by Mathew J. Smith an attorney from Ohio. The presentation consisted of short video clips of situations normally encountered during the investigation of fire related incidents. The videos were only about 1 – 2 minutes in length followed by a discussion of "what do you think" and "was there anything wrong with the way this was handled". The situations included public and private sectors' exchange of information, collusion, how to handle mistakes, errors and poor judgment in the investigation and more. Anyone who has been involved in investigations for very long has encountered situations of these types and after each video; there was a lot of very enthusiastic discussion. The discussion had to be cut short each time, so that all video clips could be seen. This was a very enjoyable, entertaining and informative class, probably the best one at the whole conference.

Well, it was good to see friends from other parts of our country and the world at the conference. I enjoyed it very much and highly recommend that everyone attend these conferences, as they are very educational and enjoyable. You have the opportunity to meet and spend time with the full scope of people

involved in fire investigation. I am looking forward to next year's conference in Victoria, British Columbia. Hope to see you there!

Membership Dues information –

The A.A.A.I. dues have been \$10.00 for many years. This year the Board of Directors voted to increase dues to \$20.00 per year. The Board also voted to set a single renewal date for everyone, which beginning in January 2007. Everyone please put this on your calendar to renew your A.A.A.I. dues early next year. A prorated amount has also been considered and agreed upon. From January to June 1, the dues will be \$20.00, from June 2 – December 31, the dues will be \$10.00.

Website - www.alabamארson.com

The Association's website has been updated. New pages will be added for better organization of the information. Please check it out and send any suggestions and comments to jeff@cmifirex.com.

Fall Seminar Tuscaloosa, Alabama

November 8, 9 & 10 - See Insert



Recent court decision -

The Alabama Supreme Court rendered a decision in Board of Water and Sewer Commissioners of the City of Mobile v. Hunter, 2006 WL 2089914 (Ala.), ___ So.2d ___ (Ala. 2006) in which it upheld the constitutionality of the definition of the practice of engineering contained within Ala. Code § 34-11-1(7) (1975), as amended in 1997. The practice of engineering, as defined within the Alabama Code, includes providing testimony. The Alabama Supreme Court held that it was constitutional for the legislature to set forth the requirements an individual must first acquire to qualify as an expert within the engineering field.

Once the Hunter opinion was released, more questions than answers arose regarding whether certain individuals could testify in the State of Alabama without first obtaining a license through the State Board of Licensure for Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors. In an effort to deal with the flood of questions regarding the statute and the Hunter decision, the State Board issued an Advisory Opinion on August 28, 2006, as a guide. The Advisory Opinion clarified that the practice of engineering consisted of those areas which required engineering education, training and experience. The State Board specifically excluded fire investigation and fire analysis within the statute's definition of engineering as such did not require engineering education and training to be performed adequately. However, an exception was noted by the Board. If the fire investigation and/or fire analysis expert based his opinions and conclusions on his engineering education and/or training then an engineering license through the State Board would be required before that expert could provide testimony in court as to those opinions and conclusions.

New Group forming –

A group of law enforcement officials, informally referred to as the Shelby County Fire Marshal's Association, meets the last Friday of each month. The meetings are informal, last for about 1.5 – 2 hours and usually involve discussion about different topics including public education, code enforcement issues, fire investigation and inspections. Traditionally, the meeting place rotates between one of the fire

departments represented, but due to the growing interest and attendance, the meeting places available to accommodate the larger number of attendees are fewer. Tentatively, the group has agreed to meet at Hoover's Public Safety Building, since they have a large conference room.



Meeting in July of 2006, at Pelham's new station 5.

This group began with just a few people from surrounding areas, including Alabaster, Calera, Hoover, Pelham, Vincent and Montevallo, but has now many officials from Jefferson County and other organizations such as the Shelby County Sheriff's office and the Jefferson County Sheriff's office attend. At the last couple of meetings, Assistant District Attorney's Mike Anderton (Jefferson County) and Ms. Lara Ryals with the Shelby County District Attorney's Office were present and provided information concerning legal issues regarding investigations and inspections and have offered support from their respective offices..



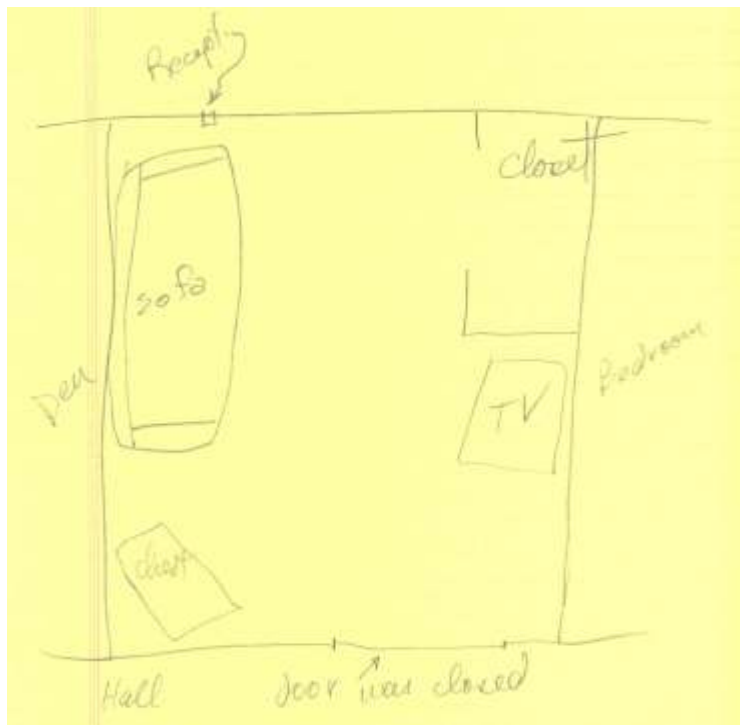
Meeting in July of 2006, at Pelham's new station 5.

I would like to encourage anyone (Public police or fire, Private, Insurance, Legal) who is interested, to attend the next meeting, which will be at the Hoover Public Safety Building on Friday, October 27, 2006 at 8:30 a.m.

Or they can be as refined as you like, with all sorts of details, dimensions and information..



August meeting in Hoover.



Rough sketch on notepad paper. No dimensions and definitely not to scale, but provides valuable information.

ILLUSTRATIONS

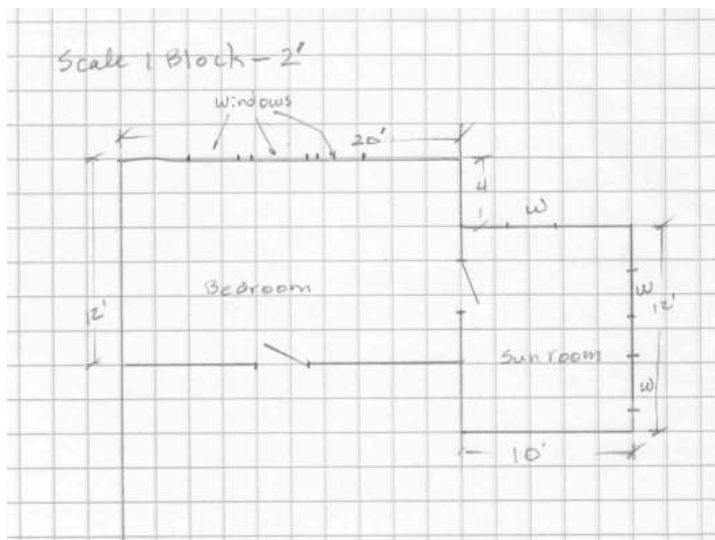
Sketching for Fire Investigators

Sketches, illustrations and drawings are used to assist the investigator in analyzing, documenting, recalling and organizing the fire scene.

Sketches are normally divided into two groups, rough sketches and finished drawings. Each has a purpose; the rough sketch captures details on the scene for later use. The finished drawing expresses that information to individuals and groups that are trying to make decisions, but may not have been able to travel to the scene. To sketch and give meaningful, valuable information does not require any artistic skill, but attention to specific detail is needed.

Rough Sketch –

The rough sketch can be done on any kind of paper. Many times note pad paper is used and at other times graph paper is used. A scale or measurements are necessary to provide the beneficial details. Rough sketches can be just that, rough. Sketches can be intermingled with interview notes indicating / illustrating many details including the location of certain items or paths of exit from the building

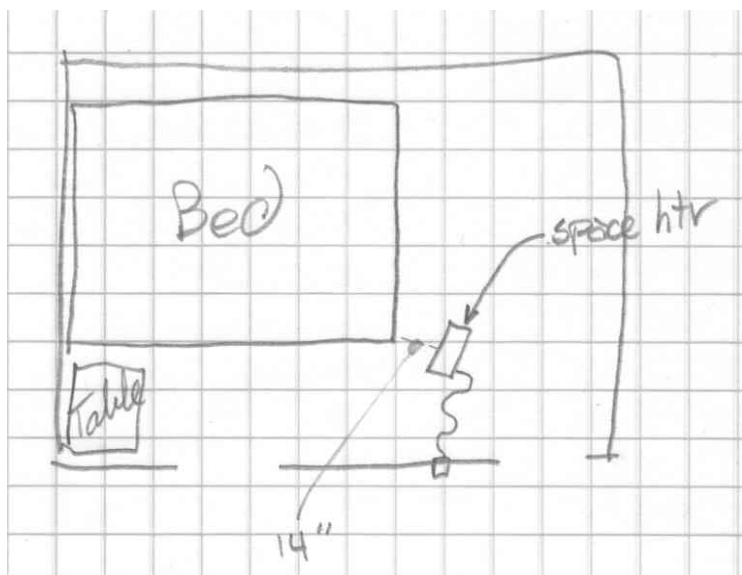


Refined detailed sketch on graph paper with dimensions and measurements.

Finished diagram / drawing –

The finished diagram or drawing is usually computer generated from the field (rough) sketch and as many details, measurements and information can be

included as needed. These can be completed to give general information and / or any level of details or information as needed.



Rough sketch with a very valuable measurement. The investigator who is on the scene right after extinguishment can make this quick measurement, which very likely no one else will have.

The fire investigator in both his/her illustrations will need to determine the amount of detail necessary. However some common features should not be left out or forgotten.

- Features need to include:
- Scale, (but drawing not to scale)
- Legend, all symbols used should be listed in the legend
- Symbols, each should be distinct and represent only one type of item
- Orientation, North, South, East, West
- Incident number
- Date of sketch
- Time of sketch
- Address or location
- Investigator who made the sketch

The degree of detail will usually be decided upon by the investigator making the sketch. A key question is, how will this sketch or sketches be used?

- Will it illustrate the property, the building and its internal structure?
- Does it orient the photographs taken to the scene?
- Does it specifically place where each debris

sample was taken?

- The sketch can illustrate contents before and after the fire.
- Patterns of heavy char, light char and smoke staining can be illustrated.

Many times one rough sketch will suffice, but other times a collection of sketches may be necessary. Different illustrations can be used to add clarity to a report:

- Sketches are freehand drawings of concepts.
- Schematic design drawings are drafted drawings showing a preliminary design layout with little detail.
- Design development drawings are more complete, more defined.
- It may be useful to request copies of Construction drawings and As-built drawings of structures especially if the structure is large and/or complex.
- Architectural or Engineering Schedules can also be helpful. Door schedules indicate the fire resistance that they afford.

As an investigator's ability to sketch the scene improves with practice and will become more detailed with experience. At first, most investigators draw a two dimensional floor plan and populate it with furnishings, but not with the location of interior walls, doors and windows. Great accuracy can be obtained by using three measurement system, straight line, triangulation, and rectangular measurement. Later, the investigator may do three dimensional drawings that allow for the illustration of wall and ceiling details.

Sketching has changed over the years. Rough sketches, normally made on the scene were usually done by the fire investigator. Finish or smooth sketches were usually done by illustrators to make them appear more professional. This has changed; today there are a wide range of graphics packages available to the fire investigator. This allows the investigator to use colors, shading and even to insert photographs into his/her sketch.

In summary, sketches are used to support the investigator's memory of the on-scene-details. Drawings are also helpful when it comes to interlacing the details found in photographs, evidence and witness statements into a comprehensive package for presentation.

NEXT ISSUE

Physical Evidence Chapter 16 pages 122 - 131

This topic will be addressed in the next issue. Please send your comments and thoughts regarding this issue and other topics you would like discussed via email to:

Jeff Crain, Director District III at jeff@cmifirex.com
or

Newsletter Chairperson, Judy Van Heest at jvanheest@beersanderson.com.

CFI Trainer.net reminder –

We would like to remind everyone of the CFI Trainer.net website and the training modules available.

Investigating Motor Vehicle Fires
The IAAI Distance Learning Project has posted a new on-line educational program, Investigating Motor Vehicle Fires on CFITrainer.net.

Alabama Fire College Offers

National Fire Academy Arson Course

The Alabama Fire College offers free training courses through field training. One of the courses is the National Fire Academy course Arson Detection for First Responder.

This training course is designed to provide a clear definition of the role of initial responder organizations and to provide essential knowledge to enable them to recognize the potential of an intentionally set fire, preserve evidence, and properly report the information to appropriate officials.

The training course includes the following basic topics: fire behavior; critical observations of the first responder; fire causes; scene security and evidence preservation; legal considerations and reporting of findings.

The Arson Detection for the First Responder training

course is specifically designed for the firefighter who is inexperienced in arson detection and the preservation of evidence at the fire scene. It is not designed for the arson-experienced firefighter or inspector.

The information and necessary forms needed by fire departments in order to request and schedule courses for their areas can be found on the Alabama Fire College website:

www.alabamafirecollege.org

Course Hours: 12

Prerequisite: None

Reference Text Required: National Fire Academy Student Manual included at no additional charge, when available.

Workshops by the AAAI:

The AAAI will come to you and put on any of the investigation workshops listed below.

Name: Basic Fire Investigation.

Length of class: 3 – 4 hours.

Subjects: Ignition, fire spread and development, fire investigation procedures.

Cost: Free

Name: Basic Electrical Fire Investigation.

Length of class: 4 - 6 hours.

Subjects: Electricity, history of electrical systems, electrical causes, residential and light commercial electrical systems, lightning.

Cost: \$40.00 per person

Name: Intermediate Fire Investigation.

Length of class: 4 - 6 hours.

Subjects: Ignition cont., fire spread and development cont., construction features and fire spread, intro to extensive damage investigations.

Cost: \$40.00 per person

The classes adhere closely to recognized published documents and information and consist of power point presentations given by one of the AAAI officers or District Directors. Contact us for details.

A.A.A.I. Newsletter 3-06

We need a date and time that is convenient for everyone and a facility that can accommodate the attendees. We request a minimum of 4 people for a class and all proceeds go to A. A. A. I.

A.A.A.I. OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

President: Curtis Dykes

1st Vice President: Terry Walker

2nd Vice President: Dennis Bailey

Treasurer: Sue Williamson

Secretary: Angela Taylor

District I Director: Dennis Bailey

District I: Lauderdale, Colbert, Lawrence, Limestone, Franklin, Marion, and Winston

District II Director: Vacant

District II: Madison, Jackson, Morgan, Cullman, Marshall, DeKalb and Blount

District III Director: Jeff Crain

District III: Lamar, Fayette, Walker, Pickens, Tuscaloosa, Bibb and Western half of Jefferson

District IV Director: Teddie Cox

District IV: Cherokee, Etowah, St. Clair, Calhoun, Shelby, Talladega, Clay, Cleburne, Randolph and Eastern half of Jefferson

District V Director: Ryan Pezent

District V: Sumter, Greene, Hale, Perry, Choctaw, Marengo, Dallas, Wilcox, Chilton, Autauga and Lowndes

District VI Director: Lt. Bill Guthrie

District VI: Coosa, Elmore, Tallapoosa, Chambers, Lee, Macon, Russell, Bullock and Montgomery

District VII Director: Larry Hansen

District VII: Baldwin, Clarke, Conecuh, Escambia, Mobile, Monroe and Washington

District VIII Director: Terry Walker

District VIII: Butler, Crenshaw, Covington, Coffee, Pike, Barbour, Henry, Dale, Houston and Geneva

References

1. NFPA 921 Guide for Fire and Explosion Investigations, 2004 Edition, Quincy, MA,
2. Dictionary.com

HELPFUL LINKS IN FIRE INVESTIGATION AND RESEARCH

<http://www.beliefnet.com> Beliefnet

<http://www.interfire.org/> interFire Online (Excellent)

<http://www.nettrace.com.au/resource/investigation/fire.htm> Fire/Arson Links

<http://www.firehouse.com/index.html> FireHouse Mag

<http://www.firearson.com/> IAAI

<http://www.hatecrime.org/index.html> Hate Crimes

<http://www.civilrights.org/index.html> Civil Rights

<http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/ucr.htm> FBI

<http://www.tolerance.org/maps/hate/> Hate Groups

<http://www.splcenter.org/intel/map/hate.jsp> SPLC

<http://www.rickcross.com/groups/hategroups.html> Hate groups Info

<http://www.uis-usa.com/arson.html#scene> Arson Investigations

<http://www.forumworld.com/arson-investigations/list.php?f=1> Fire/Arson Forum (Good)

<http://cfrterrorism.org/home/> Terrorism

<http://www.rcfpi.com/Links.htm>

<http://www.rcfpi.com/default.htm>

Ala FD's & Links

<http://www.cpsc.gov/cpsclist.asp> Recalls

The provider is identified after the website link is listed.

ALABAMA ASSOCIATION OF ARSON INVESTIGATORS

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