

**City of Winter Park Fire-Rescue
Standard Operating Guideline**

410.01

Title: Fire Investigations

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Purpose: To establish a guideline for the investigation of fires within the City limits of Winter Park.

Scope: This procedure is to be followed for all fire investigations. This guideline is applicable to all members of the Department. Authority to deviate from this procedure rests with the Fire Marshal, Fire Chief or their designee, who is solely responsible for the results of any deviation.

General: In order to be consistent and to assure all fire investigations are conducted properly, the Battalion Chief or Incident Commander and the Company Officer shall be the preliminary investigator and will investigate each fire and determine possible cause and origin. If a preliminary cause and origin cannot be determined by the IC, the Office of the Fire Marshal (OFM) shall be notified to respond for cause determination and investigation. The OFM representative shall determine if the State Fire Marshal's Office (SFMO) shall be notified with a request for an investigator to respond to the incident. Later consideration must also be given in the contact of the City's Building Official and Chief Code Enforcement Officer for informational purposes.

The investigator shall work to establish the cause and origin of a fire / explosion incident through careful investigation and analysis of the available evidence.

410.01.01. FIRE CLASSIFICATION

- **Accidental**

Once the investigator has determined the cause and origin of the fire incident to be accidental, it shall be his/her responsibility to obtain the necessary report information to be included in a supplemental follow-up report. This report will contain the findings and outcome of the investigation relating to the fire. A copy of the supplemental report will be placed into a case file with the appropriate assigned case number. All case files will remain on file in the Office of the Fire Marshal. The investigator will advise the IC that a supplemental report has been created. All fire incident reports will reflect that a supplemental report is available in the narrative section of the FirePrograms report. All

supplemental reports shall be maintained in the Office of the Fire Marshal.

- **Incendiary / Suspicious**

Once the investigator has determined the cause and origin of the fire incident to be incendiary or suspicious, the fire scene from that point shall be treated as a crime scene and access into the scene shall be strictly controlled. Winter Park Police Department and the State Fire Marshal's Office will then be requested to respond to the scene by either the Fire Marshal or the Incident Commander. The Department will remain in control of the scene until the arrival of the Police Department. Upon arrival of the Police Investigator and the SFMO Investigator, the scene processing will be conducted as a team effort with all agencies involved through the end of the scene phase of the investigation. Upon completion of the scene investigation, the criminal investigation phase will begin. This phase of the investigation shall be a team effort between the Police Investigator and the SFMO Investigator with the Department's investigator assuming the role as the Department's liaison. Interviews and interrogations shall be conducted with both the Police Investigator and the SFMO Investigator present whenever possible. All interviews shall be conducted with the team concept in mind.

Any supplemental reports generated other than the FirePrograms fire incident report shall be referenced in the narrative of the fire incident report. All supplemental reports shall be maintained in the Office of the Fire Marshal.

410.01.02. FIRE DEATHS

In the event of a fire death, the fire scene will be treated as a crime scene and access to the scene will be strictly controlled. An investigative team to include the Department's investigator, the Police Investigator, and the SFMO Investigator will be formed for this type of investigation. The Department's investigator will maintain overall control of the fire scene while the Police Investigator maintains control over the victim. The investigation will be conducted as a team effort with all Investigators working as a team to determine the cause of the fire and the circumstances surrounding the death of the victims. Once the cause of the fire has been determined, any follow-up actions will be as directed by the Department's investigator.

410.01.03. FIRE SCENE CONTROL (SECURITY)

Once the Department's investigator has determined that there has been a crime committed and has classified the scene as a crime scene, it shall be his/her responsibility to request the Winter Park Police Department Watch Commander or Supervisor to respond to the scene. The investigator will brief the Police representative on the circumstances surrounding the cause of the fire and the classification of the scene as a crime scene. At that time, the Police Department will be given the responsibility of providing scene security.

410.01.04. PUBLIC INFORMATION RELEASES

The Public Information Officer (PIO) shall provide any information released to the press as established in SOG 420.02 if the fire has been determined to be accidental. When the cause of the fire is determined to be incendiary, the PIO shall only provide information relating to the fire. All other information regarding the investigation (crime scene) shall come from the investigators or from the Public Information Officer for the Police Department.

410.01.05. CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Should a problem develop in any phase of the fire investigation and a solution to the problem can not be reached among the investigators and their supervisors, the problem will then be forwarded to the respective department heads for further review and discussion. These department heads include the Winter Park Fire and Police Chiefs, and the SFMO Captain of the Orlando Office.