



# Colorado Springs Police Department Standard Operating Procedure

## DL-1020-21 Arson and Suspicious Fire Investigations

### Section 1000 – Patrol Functions

Effective Date: 7/5/2021

Supersedes Date: N/A

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#### **.01 Purpose**

The purpose of the directive is to provide direction when conducting arson and suspicious fire investigations.

#### **.02 Cross Reference**

[EOD-01 Regional Explosives Unit](#)

#### **.03 Definitions**

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#### **.04 Procedure**

##### **Arson / Suspicious Fire Investigations**

The Colorado Springs Police Department (CSPD) collaborates with the Colorado Springs Fire Department (CSFD) to investigate all arson and suspicious fire incidents in our jurisdiction. CSFD inspectors or engine company supervisors will determine the origin and cause of all fires.

##### *Suspected Arson Cases*

CSFD inspectors may request the assistance of patrol officers with the initial criminal investigation. Patrol officers will initiate a case report and assist the inspectors with collection of evidence, witness interviews, photographs, and other preliminary investigative tasks.

Patrol officers should handle these preliminary investigations as they would any other crime (including making arrests when appropriate). All case reports initiated by patrol officers should indicate the name of the CSFD inspector who was on scene.

When patrol officers respond to a call for service in which they believe arson is the cause and CSFD personnel are not on scene, the officer should establish contact with the on-call fire marshal through the Public Safety Communications Center. The fire marshal will make contact with the officer and determine if a response by CSFD investigators is appropriate.

### *Suspected Arson Resulting in SBI/Death*

The on-call Homicide/Assault Unit supervisor should be notified immediately in all cases of suspected arson resulting in death or serious bodily injury.

CSFD fire investigators will work in conjunction with detectives from the Homicide/Assault Unit, and the bomb/arson unit. The CSPD Homicide/Assault Unit will have primary investigative responsibility and overall command at the scene.

The Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) will be contacted and utilized on all fire investigations involving death and serious bodily injury as they have advanced training in origin and cause determination as well as state of the art laboratory facilities.

Additionally, if the CSFD fire investigator is not available during an arson investigation that does not involve Serious Bodily Injury (SBI) or death the Regional Explosive Unit (REU) may be contacted by the on-call fire marshal to determine the origin and cause of the fire.

The REU will be responsible for follow-up investigation of all arson related cases.

## **Suspicious Vehicle Fires**

CSFD inspectors or engine company officers will typically respond to conduct a preliminary origin and cause investigation involving vehicle fires. If CSFD personnel are unable to respond, patrol officers will be responsible for the preliminary investigation.

The responding officer will be responsible for collecting any/all evidence to include the fire-damaged vehicle. The officer will place the vehicle on an administrative hold for follow up by the CSPD officers of the REU. The officer should treat this as any other preliminary investigation. If the officer encounters a suspect that is physically at the scene of the suspicious fire, the officer should attempt to interview the suspect. The officer will document their investigation in an arson case report. The CSPD officers of the REU will be responsible for follow up on all arson cases unless the CSPD Homicide/Assault Unit has the primary responsibility for the investigation.

*Note:* burn victims injured in vehicle fires resulting from traffic accidents are not considered fire casualties. They are reported as victims of traffic accidents and CSPD officers have jurisdiction over these incidents.