

MESA POLICE Department Policy Manual	Arson Investigations	DPM 2.6.21 Effective 02/18/2014
Approved by: Chief of Police	Chapter: Major Incident Response	Page: 1 of 4

1. PURPOSE

This policy provides Mesa Police Department (MPD) members with guidelines to establish a cooperative effort between the MPD and the Mesa Fire & Medical Department (MFMD) in investigating arson or suspicious fires. It is intended to foster an effective working relationship and provide guidance for Police and Fire members.

2. GENERAL

2.1 Philosophy

- A. It is the policy of the MPD to respond to and investigate all arson and suspected arson incidents.
- B. The intended goal of this policy is to provide for improved public safety through an effective working relationship between the police and fire departments that ensures the successful criminal prosecution of arsonists.
- C. Investigations will be in cooperation with the MFMD.

2.2 Mesa Fire & Medical Department

- A. Direct responsibility for determining the origin and cause of any fire or explosion shall rest with the Fire Incident Commander (IC). Once a MFMD Fire Investigator determines that the cause of a fire is suspicious or if there is a fire related death or significant injury regardless of cause, they will notify the on-call CIU Sergeant.
- B. The origin and cause of every fire shall be documented in writing on each Fire Incident report.
- C. The Fire IC shall request the on-call Origin and Cause Investigator to any fire or attempted fire involving structures, vehicle, or other property when one of the following conditions exists:
 - 1. Any vehicle or structure fire that has an undetermined cause.
 - 2. Any suspicious or incendiary fire or explosion resulting in significant property loss.
 - 3. Any dumpster or field fires that have an identified suspect responsible for starting the fire.
 - 4. Fire incidents involving serious injuries or fatalities.
 - 5. Fire incidents that involve government facilities, schools, churches, and nursing homes.
 - 6. MFMD will notify Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) when required.
 - 7. Any fires that are deemed to be high profile incidents by the Fire IC.
- D. Upon determination that any of these criteria are met, the Fire IC will advise Alarm/Dispatch to notify the on-call Origin and Cause Investigator.

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- E. The on-call Origin and Cause Investigator will notify the on-call Sergeant and provide details regarding the nature of the investigation.
- F. The CIU Sergeant will then assign arson detectives to the investigation.

2.3 Mesa Police Department

- A. The MPD investigators will assume authority and responsibility for any subsequent criminal investigation related to arson, attempted arson, fires of suspicious origins, and suspected explosive incidents.
- B. The MFMD investigators will assist in the subsequent criminal investigation.
- C. The MPD and MFMD will work together to ensure that all aspects of the investigations are adequately addressed.

2.4 Patrol

- A. Provides security for the crime scene and crowd control for fire members and assist in subsequent investigation if needed.

2.5 Primary Patrol Officer

- A. Identify potential witnesses, victims, and/or suspects.
- B. Contact the reporting party (RP) and obtain a statement regarding observations and knowledge of the incident.
- C. Liaison with the Fire IC to determine if the fire is suspicious in nature.
- D. If the fire is deemed to be suspicious by the Fire IC, advise a patrol supervisor of the findings.
- E. Identify and preserve potential evidence that could assist in a criminal investigation.
- F. Initiate a departmental report (GO) on all fires determined to be suspicious.
- G. Obtain the MDMF case number and include in the MPD GO.
- H. Notify Crime Scene Specialist (CSS) for photographs and to collect available evidence.

2.6 Patrol Sergeant

- A. Evaluate the findings provided by the primary officer.
- B. Ensure potential evidence is identified and preserved.
- C. Ensure that victims, witnesses, and/or suspects are identified and interviewed.
- D. Liaison with the Fire IC to ensure the MPD Fire Investigation Technician (FIT) is notified.
- E. Liaison with the Fire IC to determine if the fire is suspicious in nature.
- F. Prepare and deliver major incident case briefing to responding detectives.
- G. Complete MPANS entry.

2.7 Patrol Lieutenant

- A. Maintain close contact with the Fire IC and/or fire investigators.

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- B. Coordinate personnel/resource requirements.

3. MPD INVESTIGATION

3.1 CIU Fire Investigations Technicians and Assignments:

- A. Divisional Criminal Investigations Unit (CIU) will be responsible for conducting investigations related to arson, attempted arson, fires of suspicious origins and suspected explosive incidents.
- B. Ensures the sharing of appropriate data and crime trend information between departments.
- C. Each division will ensure that two CIU detectives are certified as FIT by the International Association of Arson Investigators (IAAI).
- D. When a division has a vacancy for a FIT, the CIU Sergeant will ensure that a detective is identified and receives the proper training for certification to maintain the two certified detectives per division.
- E. Detectives that accept the assignment as a FIT shall remain in the assignment for 24 months before being eligible to transfer to another specialty assignment.
- F. Two CIU Sergeants will be identified and certified as FIT and designated as a CIU Arson Sergeant.
- G. One CIU Arson Sergeant will be responsible for supervising investigations within Central and Fiesta Districts and the second will be responsible for Red Mountain and Superstition Districts.
- H. Operations Lieutenants will designate which CIU Sergeant will fulfill the responsibility of the CIU Arson Sergeant.

3.2 Homicide Detectives

- A. Investigate all suspicious deaths involving fires.
 - 1. Have the responsibility for the disposition of the body and notification of next of kin on cases they investigate.
 - 2. Work closely with the FIT in determining if the fire cause is related to the cause of death.
 - 3. Also be available to provide any additional technical expertise regarding dead bodies when requested by the fire investigator(s).

3.3 Records Section

- A. Provides all information to the Fire Department investigators that is relevant to official fire investigations.
- B. Enters fire incident reports into DMS.

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3.4 Media Relations Office (MRO)

- A. After it is established that MPD has primary responsibility for the investigation, MRO will respond to the crime scene when requested by the on-duty shift lieutenant or on-scene sergeant, after coordination with the Fire IC.

REFERENCES

- [Arson/Fire Investigation Flow Chart](#)