

MESA POLICE Department Policy Manual	<h1>Arson Investigations</h1>	DPM 2.6.21 Effective 02/18/2014 Revised 02/17/2026
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1. PURPOSE

This policy provides Mesa Police Department (MPD) members with guidelines for investigating arson, attempted arson, fires of suspicious origins, fires resulting in death and/or significant property damage, and suspected explosive incidents.

2. POLICY

- A. It is the policy of the MPD to respond to and investigate all arson, attempted arson, fires of suspicious origins, fires resulting in death and/or significant property damage, and suspected explosive incidents.
 - 1. In cases involving suspected explosive incidents, the Tactical Team Lieutenant and the Bomb Squad Commander (BSC) shall be notified for a potential response of the Bomb Team, in accordance with [TAC 2.4 Hazardous Devices Incidents](#).
- B. The intended goal of this policy is to provide improved public safety through an effective working relationship between the MPD and Mesa Fire & Medical Department (MFMD) to ensure successful criminal prosecution.
- C. Investigations will be conducted in cooperation with the MFMD.

3. INTER-DEPARTMENT COOPERATION

- A. Once the MFMD and/or the MPD determines the cause of a fire is suspicious, or if there is a fire-related death or significant injury regardless of cause, notification will be made to the on-call Criminal Investigations Unit (CIU) Sergeant with details regarding the nature of the incident. Examples of incidents that would require notification may include, but are not limited to:
 - 1. Vehicle or structure fire that has an undetermined cause.
 - 2. Suspicious or incendiary fire or explosion resulting in significant property loss.
 - a. In cases involving suspected explosive incidents, the Tactical Team Lieutenant and the BSC shall be notified for a potential response of the Bomb Team, in accordance with [TAC 2.4 Hazardous Devices Incidents](#).
 - 3. 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, or nursing homes.

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6. Fires that are deemed to be high profile incidents by the MFMD and/or MPD.
7. Any other fires that are deemed suspicious to the MFMD and/or MPD.
- B. The CIU Sergeant will assign one or more MPD Fire Investigators (FIs) to all applicable investigations. In cases involving suspected explosives, the CIU Sergeant shall additionally ensure notification of the Tactical Team Lieutenant and the BSC.
- C. The MPD and MFMD will work collaboratively to ensure that all aspects of the investigations are adequately addressed, with priority given to scene safety and hazard mitigation.
 1. It is the responsibility of the MFMD to determine the origin and cause of any fire or explosion. The origin and cause of every fire or explosion shall be documented in writing by the MFMD.
 - a. In incidents involving explosions or suspected explosive devices, no MPD FI or MFMD personnel shall enter or conduct investigative operations within the affected area until the scene has been assessed and cleared by Bomb Technicians for secondary devices, unexploded explosives, or other hazardous components.
 2. The MFMD or MPD FI will notify the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) when needed.
 3. The MPD will assume authority and responsibility for any subsequent criminal investigation related to arson, attempted arson, fires of suspicious origin, fires resulting in death and/or significant property damage, and suspected explosive incidents.
 - a. The MFMD will assist in the subsequent criminal investigation.
 - b. In incidents involving explosions or suspected explosive devices, Bomb Technicians will assist investigators and the Crime Scene Specialists (CSSs) in locating and processing evidence once the scene has been declared safe.
- D. For any fire incident that does not meet the requirements for further investigation by the MPD and MFMD, the incident will be closed as a **909 Agency Assist** with notes explaining why it does not meet the criteria for further investigation.

4. PATROL RESPONSE & RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 Patrol

- A. Patrol shall provide security for the crime scene, maintain crowd control, and assist in subsequent investigation as needed. In incidents involving suspected hazardous devices or explosives, members shall follow the procedures

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outlined in [TAC 2.4 Hazardous Devices Incidents](#), and remain fully mindful of the potential for secondary devices.

4.2 Primary Patrol Officer or Designee

- A. Contacts the reporting party (RP) and obtains a statement regarding observations and knowledge of the incident.
- B. Identifies potential witnesses, victims, and/or suspects.
- C. Liaisons with the MFMD to determine if the incident is suspicious in nature or meets other CIU notification requirements. If the incident qualifies, the member will:
 1. Advise a Patrol Supervisor of these findings.
 2. Identify and preserve potential evidence that could assist in a criminal investigation.
 3. Notify CSS for photographs and to collect available evidence.
 4. Complete a departmental report (GO) and include the MFMD case number in the report.

4.3 Patrol Sergeant or Designee

- A. Evaluates the findings provided by the primary officer or their designee.
- B. Ensures that witnesses, victims, and/or suspects are identified and interviewed.
- C. Ensures that potential evidence is identified and preserved.
- D. Liaisons with the MFMD to determine whether the fire meets the criteria for CIU notification and ensures the CIU Sergeant is notified when necessary.
- E. In incidents involving suspected hazardous devices or explosives, ensures appropriate notifications are made to the Tactical Team Lieutenant and the BSC in accordance with [TAC 2.4 Hazardous Devices Incidents](#).
- F. Prepares and delivers a major incident case briefing to responding detectives. See [DPM 2.6F3 Major Incident Briefing Worksheet](#).

4.4 Patrol Lieutenant

- A. Maintains close contact with the MFMD, Patrol Sergeant, and CIU Sergeant and coordinates required personnel and resources as needed.
- B. Completes a follow-up summary report email pursuant to [DPM 2.6.30 Major Incident Notifications](#)

5. INVESTIGATION

5.1 MPD Fire Investigators (FIs)

- A. The affected CIU is responsible for conducting investigations related to arson, attempted arson, fires of suspicious origin, fires that cause significant property

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damage, and suspected explosive incidents (in conjunction with the Bomb Team).

1. Detectives within CIU that have met minimum training and certification requirements may be designated as MPD FIs.
 2. MPD FIs are assigned and responsible for completing these investigations.
- B. For further information on MPD FI responsibilities, see [DPM 2.10.85 MPD Fire Investigator](#).

5.2 Homicide Detectives

- A. Homicide Detectives are responsible for:
1. Investigating all suspicious deaths involving fires.
 2. The disposition of the body and notification of next of kin on cases they investigate.
 3. Working closely with the MPD FIs in determining if the fire cause is related to the cause of death.
 4. Providing any additional technical expertise regarding dead bodies when requested by the MPD FIs.

REFERENCES

- [DPM 2.6F3 Major Incident Briefing Worksheet](#)
- [DPM 2.10.85 MPD Fire Investigator](#)
- [TAC 2.4 Hazardous Devices Incidents](#)