



**IOWA IAAI
FIRE INVESTIGATION
SEMINAR &
ANNUAL MEETING**

September 12th – 14th, 2023

**Stoney Creek Inn and
Conference Center**
*5291 Stoney Creek Ct.
Johnston, IA 50131*

*Iowa Chapter International Association of
Arson Investigators, Incorporated*

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Stoney Creek Inn and Conference Center 5291 Stoney Creek Ct., Johnston, IA 50131

RESERVATIONS: Deadline August 12, 2023, to guarantee the room rate of \$76.00/night.

Reservations can be completed by utilizing the hyperlink below:

www.stoneycreekhoteis.com Group code: 2309IOWACH

Attendees will need to click on the BOOK NOW link and choose the Des Moines Location. From there, select the nights you will be staying.

REGISTRATION: \$295 for Iowa Chapter members; \$395 for non-members prior to September 1, 2023.

After September 1, 2023, the price is \$395 for all attendees. Single day registration for Wednesday or Thursday is \$150.

Registration includes lunch on Wednesday and/or Thursday.

The seminar registration does not include membership. Iowa Chapter membership is \$30.

You can register for the seminar online at: <https://iowaiaaichapter.org/>

Or you can mail your registration form to:

Iowa Chapter IAAI INC.

PO Box 65101

West Des Moines, IA 50265

***ALL SEMINAR ATTENDEES ARE REQUIRED TO WEAR
THEIR NAME TAGS AT ALL SEMINAR ACTIVITIES.***

Please Print or Type

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone/Cell Number _____

E-mail: _____

Seminar Registration Amount : _____ Iowa IAAI Member? Yes No



2023 Iowa IAAI Conference
September 12th—14th, 2023



TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 12TH, 2023

- 11:00 a.m. - noon IAAI Board Meeting
- Noon - 1:00 p.m. Registration/Display Room Set Up
- 1:00 – 5:00 p.m. Early Registration

- 1:30 – 3:00 p.m. Raymond O’Brocki—American Wood Council, Assistant Fire Chief, Baltimore, MD (retired)—The Dangers of Vacant Dwellings: Challenges and Solutions
- 3:30 - 5:00 p.m.. Officer Mike VanFosson, Altoona Police Department — Leveraging Technology for Fire Investigations

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13TH, 2022

- 7:00 - 8:00 a.m. Registration
- 8:00 - 8:50 a.m. Opening Ceremonies and Annual Meeting with Nominating Committee Report
- 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Raymond O’Brocki—American Wood Council, Assistant Fire Chief, Baltimore, MD (retired)—Wood Construction & the Fire Investigator
- 12:00 - 1:00 pm Lunch (Provided)
- 1:00 - 5:00 pm Motor Vehicle Fires—Trace Lawless

- 5:00 - 5:45 p.m. Sectional Meetings

- 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. President’s Reception / Social Gathering
Bags Tournament

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 14TH, 2022

- 7:00 - 7:45 a.m. Morning Prayer Breakfast with Chapter Chaplain Todd Hartzler (Breakfast Not Provided)
- 8:00 - 11:00 a.m. Trace Lawless and David Bridges—Challenges to Expert Qualifications, Methodology & Opinions
- 11:00 - 11:45 a.m. Reconvene of Annual Iowa Chapter Meeting
- 11:45 - 1:00 p.m. Plated Lunch Banquet and Awards
- 1:00 - 4:00 p.m. Violent Crime Arson Case Studies-ATF—Rick Hankins

SEMINAR TOPICS AND SPEAKERS

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 12TH, 2023

Tuesday Afternoon - September 12th, 2023 from 1:30 - 3:00 p.m.

The Dangers of Vacant Dwellings: Challenges and Solutions—Raymond O’Brocki, CBO

This presentation will review two recent fires occurring in vacant dwellings that killed four firefighters. It will outline the many hazards and the pervasiveness of the vacant dwelling problem in urban centers. The presentation will discuss traditional ways authorities having jurisdiction have dealt with the vacant structure issue with specific focus on fire service solutions. And finally, offer “out of the box” ideas to mitigate the vacant dwelling problem during fire investigations.

Raymond O’Brocki, CBO

Raymond O’Brocki is the Manager of Fire Service Relations for the American Wood Council. Before that he was the Chief Building Official for the City of Rockville, MD. He retired as the Assistant Fire Chief of the Baltimore City Fire Department in 2013. He was appointed fire marshal for Baltimore City in 2008. He has served on the NFPA Urban Fire Safety Task Force and has presented at the National Fire Academy and various venues around the country. He is currently a sitting member of NFPA 1 technical committees, The International Fire Code Committee, NFPA 101 committees and the NFPA 241 committee. O’Brocki is a graduate of the University of Baltimore School of Law and a licensed attorney.

SEMINAR TOPICS AND SPEAKERS

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 12TH, 2023

Tuesday Afternoon - September 12th, 2023 from 3:30 - 5:00 p.m.

Leveraging Technology for Fire Investigations - Officer Mike VanFosson

This presentation will focus on the integration of technology within investigations and how various technologies can be used. Technology is an omnipresent entity in society today, to include scene mapping, cell phone, computer/digital forensics and much more. This presentation will provide attendees with ideas and methods on how to leverage the various technologies within your investigations.

Officer Mike VanFosson - Altoona Police Department

Mike VanFosson was born and raised in the Des Moines, Iowa metro area. He attended Southeast Polk schools K-12, attended DMACC in Ankeny, Grand View College and Iowa State University in Ames, where he obtained his bachelor's degree in Sociology and Criminal Justice. He began his law enforcement career as a reserve officer at the Altoona Police Department in 2001. He served as a reserve officer for 5 years and in April 2006, he was hired as a full time Police Officer with the Altoona Police Department. While being employed with the Altoona Police Department he has served in several different capacities to include patrol officer on various shifts, Task Force Officer with the United States Drug Enforcement Administration from August 2015 to April 2023, and is now an Intelligence Analyst.

Throughout his career, he has always been interested in how technology can enhance the daily tasks associated with law enforcement and investigations in general. Over the last seven and one-half years, he has served as the Technical Officer during his time at the DEA. He was tasked with learning and operating various tools associated with the investigation of narcotics enforcement. Throughout his time at the DEA, he conducted in-depth investigations involving large scale drug trafficking organizations (DTO's) that spanned throughout the United States and Mexico.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13TH, 2023

Wednesday Morning - September 13th, 2023 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Wood Construction & the Fire Investigator—Raymond O'Brocki, CBO

This course is designed for Fire/ Arson Investigators to better know the principals of wood construction and how a thorough knowledge of wood construction can benefit an investigation. It will review key sections of NFPA 921. The program will highlight provisions of the

SEMINAR TOPICS AND SPEAKERS

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13TH, 2023

International Residential Code to call attention to possible code violations that could possibly cause unusual or rapid-fire spread and failure of an assembly. The course concludes with a case study.

Learning Objectives:

1. Review the scientific method as a “systematic approach” to fire investigation and why a knowledge of building construction is required.
2. Identify the 5 types of building construction and wood construction methods. Focus on various wood construction methods.
3. Discuss specific code requirements and how failure to meet the code can result in rapid fire spread or failure.
4. Review the fire performance of wood and wood products including char rate. Changes in housing stock and furnishings that effect flashover times

Raymond O’Brocki, CBO

Raymond O’Brocki is the Manager of Fire Service Relations for the American Wood Council. Before that he was the Chief Building Official for the City of Rockville, MD. He retired as the Assistant Fire Chief of the Baltimore City Fire Department in 2013. He was appointed fire marshal for Baltimore City in 2008. He has served on the NFPA Urban Fire Safety Task Force and has presented at the National Fire Academy and various venues around the country. He is currently a sitting member of NFPA 1 technical committees, The International Fire Code Committee, NFPA 101 committees and the NFPA 241 committee. O’Brocki is a graduate of the University of Baltimore School of Law and a licensed attorney.

Wednesday Afternoon - September 13th, 2023 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Motor Vehicle Fires - Trace Lawless, IAAI-CFI

In the spirit of the live burn cells that were presented a year ago, Trace Lawless will lead an interactive afternoon session featuring hands-on learning with previously burned motor vehicles.

The course will cover the general anatomy of a passenger motor vehicle as it relates to fire causation and progression. With a primary focus on determining the origin of the fire and potential competent ignition sources present. The program will also provide video footage of passenger compartment and engine compartment fire, providing a demonstration of general fire progression.

SEMINAR TOPICS AND SPEAKERS

Trace Lawless, IAAI-CFI, CFEI, CVFI

Grinnell Mutual Reinsurance Company—Grinnell, Iowa

Trace works out of Cincinnati, Ohio, and joined Grinnell Mutual in 2014. Trace began his career in the public sector in 1980. He now has more than 39 years of experience in the fields of fire service, law enforcement, and fire and explosion investigations. Trace is a graduate of the National Fire Academy, as well as the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, in the areas of fire origin and cause determination and investigations. Additionally, he has attended fire investigation courses around the United States, including Federal agencies, in the following areas: origin and cause investigation, evidence collection and preservation, explosive devices, post-blast investigations, motor vehicle fire investigation, ATF accelerant detection and canine courtroom testimony.

Trace is a Certified Fire Investigator and Evidence Collection Technician with the International Association of Arson Investigators, a Certified Fire and Explosion Investigator and Certified Vehicle Fire Investigator with the National Association of Fire Investigators. Trace currently holds the position of Second (2nd) Vice President and Training and Education Chairman with the International Association of Arson Investigators (IAAI) and is Past President of Ohio Chapter IAAI.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 14TH, 2023

Thursday Morning - September 14, 2023 - 8:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Challenges to Expert Qualifications, Methodology & Opinions— Trace L. Lawless and David E. Bridges, Esq.

During both criminal and civil litigation, an expert's qualifications, methodology, and/or opinions may be challenged. The goal of the challenge is to exclude the expert and/or their opinions from trial. These challenges may occur at a *Daubert* or *Frye* hearing or some other motion to exclude the expert or their opinions/testimony. The consequences of the exclusion could impact the case and the expert's viability in the future. Not surprisingly, counsel, experts, and Courts throughout the country are making such expert-challenges a hot topic in the industry.

This interactive block of instruction examines the framework for which such expert-specific challenges arise in both public- and private-sector fire and explosion cases, litigators' arguments to advance them, the public- and private-sector experts' involvement in them, and the Courts' analytical framework to resolve them. We will address all of the participants' knowledge and application of the scientific method. We also address guidelines and standards of care applicable to public and private sector fire and explosion origin and cause investigations, including National Fire Protection Association ("NFPA") 1033, *Standard for the*

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 14TH, 2023

Professional Qualifications for Fire Investigator (2021 Ed.), NFPA 921, *Guide for Fire and Explosion Investigations* (2022 Ed.), and their abilities or inabilities to meet those guidelines and standards of care. We will also take participants through a whole host of public- and private-sector case studies to illustrate the Court's decisions to admit, exclude, or limit expert testimony following the challenges in fire and explosion matters.

Trace L. Lawless, IAAI-CFI, IAAI-ECT

Grinnell Mutual Reinsurance Company, Grinnell, Iowa

Trace works out of Cincinnati, Ohio, and joined Grinnell Mutual in 2014. Trace began his career in the public sector in 1980. He now has more than 39 years of experience in the fields of fire service, law enforcement, and fire and explosion investigations. Trace is a graduate of the National Fire Academy, as well as the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, in the areas of fire origin and cause determination and investigations. Additionally, he has attended fire investigation courses around the United States, including Federal agencies, in the following areas: origin and cause investigation, evidence collection and preservation, explosive devices, post-blast investigations, motor vehicle fire investigation, ATF accelerant detection and canine courtroom testimony.

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David E. Bridges, Esq., IAAI-CFI, IAAI-CI

Meager + Geer P.L.L.P, Dallas, Texas

David E. Bridges is a technically trained attorney in Meagher + Geer, P.L.L.P.'s Catastrophic Loss Practice Group, operating out of the Dallas-Ft. Worth, Texas Metroplex. His practice focuses on complex civil litigation, including fires, explosions, structural failures, fire protection system failures, product failures, and other catastrophic losses and construction-related incidents across the United States. His assignments include forensic investigations of first-property and other catastrophic losses, including fires and explosions involving industrial, commercial, and residential facilities, agricultural and commercial equipment, passenger and commercial motor vehicles, including tractors, trailers, and semi-trucks, motor coaches, and passenger buses, and marine vessels. David brings the science and law together to investigate those incidents and provide representation from the outset of the incident through trial. David also represents and consults with private and public sector fire and

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 14TH, 2023

explosion origin and cause investigators, forensic engineers, and other specialists around the country who are faced with *Daubert*- or *Frye*-related challenges to their qualifications, methodology, and opinions. He is an International Association of Arson Investigators Certified Fire Investigator (“IAAI-CFI®”) and Certified Instructor (“IAAI-CI®”). Prior to law school,

David performed fire and explosion investigations in conjunction with his work as a special agent, certified fire investigator, and accelerant detection K-9 handler with the North Carolina Department of Justice (“NCDOJ”) / State Bureau of Investigation (“NCSBI”). He currently serves on the IAAI-Board of Directors and is Co-Chair of the IAAI’s Training & Education (“T&E”) Committee. David also serves as an adjunct instructor for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, & Explosives’ (“ATF”) and National Fire Academy’s (“NFA”) fire and explosion training programs. Outside the office, David enjoys spending time with his wife, Amy, and daughters, Rowyn and Rylee.

Thursday Afternoon - September 14, 2023 - 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Violent Crime Arson Case Studies—ATF - Rick Hankins

This course presents a review and discussion of recent criminal investigations related to violent crime and arsons, including the response to events during the 2020 riots. The investigative techniques and processes, as well as the lessons learned in these investigations, will be covered.

Rick Hankins—Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco & Firearms

Rick Hankins has a bachelor’s degree in criminal justice and has been employed by ATF since 2001. Agent Hankins became an ATF Certified Fire Investigator (CFI) in 2009 and an IAAI CFI in 2011. Agent Hankins has received over 1600 hours of fire related training and has been an instructor for fire related courses on numerous occasions. Specifically, Agent Hankins was a full-time instructor at the ATF National Academy from August 2015 – August 2016, where he taught new ATF agents the skills to investigate the crime of arson. Agent Hankins is also a member of the ATF National and International Response Teams, and travels to assist with large fire and explosion investigations.