

FIREFAX

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ISSUE 1

FROM THE DESK OF



John Ticer

FIRST VICE PRESIDENT

I want to welcome each of you to a new year with hopes and wishes for a great 2020! In my article for this issue of Firefox, I want to focus on training and certification.

Certifications: Numerous certifications are available to each of us in the field of fire investigation and from a number of different organizations. The Iowa State Fire Marshal's Division offers a National Fire Investigator Certification, along with several other fire service certifications through the Fire Service Training Bureau (FSTB) for those in public service. The International Association of Arson Investigators offers their CFI, which is available to all fire investigators, whether public or private. This certification involves a much greater commitment in time and education concerning the number of fires

worked, as well as hours of training and court experience. The IAAI also offers additional certifications for Fire Investigation Technicians (FIT), a Motor Vehicle Endorsement, Evidence Collection Technician (ECT), and Certified Instructor (CI). Other Associations such as National Association of Fire Investigators (NAFI) offers their versions of certifications to include Certified Fire and Explosion Investigator, Fire Investigation Instructor and Vehicle Fire Investigator.

Regardless of the organization or level of certification, I believe it is important for every professional fire investigator to strive for and obtain some, or multiple forms, of certification. When building your Curriculum Vitae (CV) or resume, it is important to show the number of fires worked and the number of hours training in our profession. How else do you prove to the courts your status as an expert witness? As part of this process, you should include all certifications that you may have related to the work you do. The certification held is just one more step in building that credibility within the courtroom. One note of particular importance gained through my own personal experience and my time working in association with the FSTB and 2 week Fire Investigators School: certifications are generally only good for a certain amount of time and the holder

of the certification must then recertify. The Iowa CFI must be recertified every three (3) years and the IAAI – CFI is every five (5) years. In a perfect world, those organizations that issue the certification would notify us well in advance of the recertification date. That said, things happen within those organizations that may affect their ability to provide that notification, and policies regarding notifications can be vastly different between organizations. Therefore, at the end of the day, it is our own responsibility to ensure that we continue to meet the requirements for certification, as well as initiate the process for that recertification. I personally allowed my own IAAI certification to lapse and the International's policy is that once lapsed, regardless of your ability to meet the requirements at the time you lapsed, you must retake the written test to regain certification. Needless to say, I am again studying in preparation to retake the exam. We should always seek to learn from others and as such, I want you to learn from my mistake. Know when each of your certifications is due to expire, know what the requirements are for recertification, and do not wait for the certifying organization to tell you how or when to submit for recertification. Training is not only an essential ingredient in performing our job properly, but also in qualifying as an expert witness and in obtaining certi-

fications. The annual conference is always a great time and location to obtain much of that training, and we hope to see everyone in September. That being said, there are also multiple opportunities for training that you should all consider. The Iowa Chapter's "Lunch and Learns" are a good example. Our Lunch and Learn recently held in Harlan was attended by approximately 18 investigators. A carbon copy Lunch and Learn will be held in Cedar Rapids on April 14. Watch for an upcoming email reference registering for that class. The Fire Service Training Bureau has several training opportunities listed on their web site to include State Fire School to be held February 29-March 1, 2020 and the 2 Week Fire Investigation School to be held March 23-April 3, 2020. There are also numerous regional fire schools scattered around the state throughout the year. Finally, the International Training Conference is being held in Las Vegas April 26 to May 1. I will be attending the conference for my first time, as your Iowa Chapter's representative. I would encourage as many as are able to attend. If you do plan on attending let me know. I would love to connect with each of you and experience all that the conference has to offer together. Again, Happy 2020 and I truly hope that for each of you, this year is one of your best!

FROM THE DESK OF



Lucas Ossman

DIRECTOR OF INVESTIGATION

I want to start out by introducing myself. I was elected to the position of Director of Investigation at the conference this past September. I am currently a Special Agent assigned to the State Fire Marshal Division (SFM) and work out of the Cedar Rapids area. I have been with the SFM since 2008. Prior to that, I worked as a career firefighter in Marion from 2000 to 2008. I also spent some time with the Rock-ford Illinois Fire Department in the late 1990s. Over the past several years, I have been teaching at the two week Fire Investigation School and also at CITA Fire School. Please reach out to me if you have questions or want to know more about the SFM. I want to cover an issue that seems to plague the fire service.

Since I have been assigned to the Arson and Explosive Bureau, I have investigated numerous fires involving individuals from the fire service, EMS or law enforcement, both career and volunteer. With this, I have charged three individuals with arson

related crimes. There have been many more we have investigated and charged. We had no real way of tracking these fires until July of 2019, when we had a new case management system go online. This is a wide spread problem, not just in Iowa, but across the United States. I wanted to also point out this is not just a public sector problem. The private sector also has this issue, but I am going to talk about the public sector since it seems to get more media attention. There are numerous reasons why these crimes happen. Some are for monetary reasons, some are just trying to show their worth, some can give no true reason, some have a "Hero Complex," and some seem to have no reason other than having a serious problem.

These particular arson crimes are a black eye to the public safety agencies to which these members belong. The public trusts these members of the fire service, EMS, and law enforcement to enter their residence when emergencies happen. This is a very difficult type of case to investigate. We sometimes run into hostile individuals, who do not want to cooperate since it may cause problems for their department. I do understand this, but we are all trying to complete our job, which in the end will help all parties involved. If you have or think you have a member of your agency setting fires, please get our office and local law enforcement involved early. This will make our job easier and we can hopefully stop the problem early before it gets too big and individuals get hurt. This also will make your agency look better to the public, indicating that you are not trying to cover anything up, but are instead fully investigating all cases.

FROM THE DESK OF



Mark Dooley

SECRETARY/TREASURER

Spring is approaching, does that change our approach to fire investigations?

While thinking of a subject to write about for this edition of the Firefox, I just returned from wiping down the interior of my truck. I conducted an investigation yesterday and found that I had stained the interior of the door getting into and out of the truck at the scene. It was frustrating because I like to keep my vehicle clean. It's my office and my means of transportation; I spend a lot of time in my truck. So, out I went to clean out my truck and realized that at 22 degrees, it's still cold out. I also noticed that I have a couple of coffee cups in my truck and didn't see many empty water bottles, which led me to this article. As the season is changing, do we change our approach to fire investigations? I believe that the answer is both yes and no. Another dichotomy in the world of fire investigations. Yes, as the weather changes there will be some changes to our investigations. We will wear less bulky clothing while conducting the investigation. We will not have to worry about ice and snow at our scenes and the difficulty that is presented with both ice and snow. Being warmer, I know I will have a better disposition because I won't have to climb into my truck just to warm up. As for the coffee and water, we must remain diligent in our health and remember the

importance of proper hydration. This becomes more prevalent as the weather warms up. Additionally, there will be a possibility of an increase in grass and timber fires, a threat not very prevalent in the winter months. Also, we will see a greater increase in the possibility of lightning being a competent ignition source for the fires we investigate.

However, in my opinion, there are certain aspects of the fire investigation process that will not change with the change of season. First and foremost, our safety. One benefit of the additional layer of bulky clothing present in the colder months is the ability to provide an additional layer of protection for the investigator. As the weather warms please continue to protect your skin from the carcinogenic properties of soot and fire debris. Also, it doesn't matter the season, always protect your respiratory system with an approved device.

With the absence of snow and ice those risks of slips and falls reduces, yet we must always remain diligent of hazards that are present at fire scenes. We can't complete an investigation if we become injured and must leave. Finally, being thorough in your investigation never changes with the season. The change of the season may present different scenes, but the professionalism that we display in our thoroughness never changes.

So, allegedly, we will see spring early this year according to Punxsutawney Phil. I personally know that I am looking forward to the end of winter. There will be some changes to our approaches to fire scenes with the changes of weather. However, the tenants of protecting ourselves, maintaining scene safety, and being thorough in our investigations never change.

Enjoy the spring and I hope that you can attend our Lunch and Learn in April. Be safe and take care of yourself.



LUNCH AND LEARN
by Ed Bull
**Social Media & the
Impact on
Witness Credibility**
APRIL 14, 2020
**CEDAR RAPIDS FIRE
DEPARTMENT**

**Iowa IAAI
Fire Investigation
SEMINAR &
Annual Meeting**
September 8-10, 2020
CEDAR RAPIDS MARRIOTT

RECALLS

Product recalls
(<https://www.cpsc.gov/Recalls>)
and Underwriter Laboratories
(<https://www.ul.com/>) detailing a
variety of faulty products that are a
fire hazard, to name a few.

RECALLED:
Thompson's WaterSeal
Aerosol Wood and Masonry Pro-
tectors



Name of product:

Thompson's® WaterSeal® Waterproofing Wood Protector and Masonry Protector in Aerosol Cans

Hazard:

The contents of the cans can react with the package, causing rust to form along the can seam, which could spread to other areas of the can and create pinhole leaks. Leaking propellant poses a fire hazard when it comes into contact with sources of ignition. Leaking sealer can also result in property damage.

Remedy:

Refund

Recall date:

January 14, 2020

Units:

About 852,000

RECALLED:

Boston Warehouse Trading Corp mugs sold at Meijer Stores



Name of product:

Holiday Travel Mugs

Hazard:

The mugs are mislabeled as microwave safe. If microwaved, the metallic print on the mug can spark, posing a fire hazard.

Remedy:

Refund

Recall date:

January 9, 2020

Units:

About 2,400

Consumer Contact:

Boston Warehouse Trading Corp. toll-free at 888-923-2982 from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday, email customer.service@bwtc.com, or online at

www.bwtc.com and click on recall at the top of the page for more information.

RECALLED

Frosted balsam jar candles



Name of product:

Frosted balsam jar candles

Hazard:

When the candle is lit, the glass jar can break, posing fire and laceration hazards.

Remedy:

Refund

Recall date:

December 20, 2019

Units:

About 4,500

Date code 9211D, SKU code XKT1747 and UPC code 763795556991 appear on the candle's underside.

IN MEMORIAM



William N. Buxton
1936-2020

William “Bill” Buxton, IAAI past president and life member died January 4, 2020, at the age of 83. Bill was a long-time supporter of the International Association of Arson Investigators and served for many years as chairman of the Training and Education Committee. He also served on or chaired many other IAAI committees over the years. He was elected to the board of directors and served as President from 1985-1986. He first joined the IAAI in 1973. He was also an active member of the Illinois Chapter IAAI.

Bill was a longtime friend and supporter of the Iowa Chapter IAAI and was an Iowa Chapter seminar speaker on several occasions. In later years, he would attend the chapter installation dinner and swear in the new officers.

He was in the army during the Korean War and from 1966 – 1989, was on the Cahokia, Illinois Volunteer Fire Department rising to the rank of Fire Chief. From 1973 – 1983 he was an Investigator with the Illinois State Fire Marshals office. In 1976, he started Pyr-Tech Fire Investigation Company and served as President and Co-owner until his retirement in 2013.

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L.J. ROTH RESTORATION

GRINNELL MUTUAL

**THE CHAPTER WOULD ALSO LIKE TO RECOGNIZE AND THANK THE IOWA FIRE SERVICE
TRAINING BUREAU FOR THEIR CONTINUED SUPPORT IN PROVIDING ALL OF THE
AUDIO/VISUAL EQUIPMENT AND SUPPORT AT THE SEMINAR.**

The opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the IAAI or the Iowa Chapter IAAI.

**This edition of Firefax was presented by
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