

FIRE FAX

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ISSUE 1

FROM THE DESK OF



John Ticer
FIRST VICE PRESIDENT

All, I hope this issue of Fire Fax finds you all well and enjoying what we all hope is a better year than the one we are leaving behind. I have had a couple of cases recently that have highlighted the importance, and the ever changing data collection area of electronic evidence. I wanted to take a few minutes of your time to stress the importance of this type of evidence, particularly in the area of arson investigation.

I recently had a case where the scene was very easy to document from the origin and cause aspect. A young witness at the scene even provided information concerning

watching the suspect pour something from a gas can on the front of a garage and then trail it across the yard to the front of a camper. Based upon the general description provided by a young witness, a single suspect was quickly identified. The suspect was supposed to be out of state at the time of the incident so placing him at the scene was the challenge. Due to the age of the witness we did not want to rely on their testimony alone. A cell phone number was identified belonging to the suspect and a search warrant for phone activity and cell site information was sent to the carrier. I think this would be a standard investigative technique for most of the public investigators. A note to any newer investigators out there, cell phone search warrants are unique in their wording concerning what you are looking for. Carriers will only give you what is specifically asked for in the warrant. The industry has very specific vocabulary and abbreviations, so don't rely on what you personally call something. If you have never written one before, make sure to get with an investigator or prosecutor skilled in this area, who already has this type of warrant established on a template.

In my case, the former felon knew enough to dispose of his phone prior to committing the crime and had no other electronic equipment with him at the scene. Suspects not taking their phones with them to commit a crime is increasing in regularity as more of them learn that this information can be used against them. The suspect's confirmation of guilt in this case came from jail house telephone calls made by the suspect after he was arrested on an unrelated charge. The important calls came immediately after two events. The first occurred when I contacted his closest relative questioning her about what knowledge she had concerning the fire. It happened again after I went to the jail where he was being held and directly questioned him about the fire and knowledge that other specific individuals had about the crime. Within hours, and then for several days immediately following those two interviews, the suspect spoke repeatedly on the phone concerning what he had done and even why he did it. This obviously made the case. This does not work all the time, and the time spent listening to these recordings can be excruciating, but on those rare times when it provides the slam

dunk you are looking for, it is worth it.

In a more recent case, I learned of a new source of electronic data. Again in this case, the defendant was smart enough to leave the cell phone at home and tracking him that way was of no use. I have learned that when a vehicle is utilized by the suspect to drive to the scene, the vehicle's infotainment system may be accessed and can provide data valuable to the investigation. This data may be available despite the driver's non-use of apps such as Sirius Radio or On Star. It should be noted that, as with many types of electronic data, the amount of time an investigator has to recover the data may be limited. Those familiar with cell phone investigations know that some companies store no data and others have short time periods before the data is lost. The vehicle's infotainment system is no different. A lot of older vehicles do not have computers that gather or store this information. Some vehicles gather different information than others and internal memories of those computers can vary between vehicle types. It should also be noted that if this type of data is needed in your case, it will almost always require a forensic specialist with greater training and equipment than what the local dealership can offer.

Many of our investigations require us to think outside the box for how and where to access data important to the investigation. Not all data important to the investigation comes directly from the fire scene. Investigations are becoming increasingly more complicated and as investigators, we need to stay current in our training, always being inquisitive, always wanting to

learn and in knowing and networking with other subject matter experts that we can rely upon.

I am praying for everyone to have a great 2021 and look forward to seeing each of you at lunch and learns and the annual conference at the Cedar Rapids Marriott in September.

FROM THE DESK OF



Lucas Ossman

DIRECTOR OF INVESTIGATION

I hope that everyone had a great holiday season and have gotten off to a healthy start to 2021. I think we all can agree that 2020 was a difficult year, but as usual, we always seem to get through the tough times.

I want to spend a little bit talking about our health and well-being. Still being a paramedic, this hits home even though on the investigation side you may not see it. This does not matter if you work in the Private or Public Sector, you need to take care of your mental health. I have had discussions with some colleagues in the Private Sector that have the same issues. It has been an interesting conversation and I never really thought much about it until now. When it comes

to fatality fires, I never realized that these could affect the Private Sector. On the Public side we typically are involved with the removal and documenting the scene with the victim usually still present. If you say this does not bother you, then you are not being honest ~~with~~ yourself. This affects all of us just maybe in a different way. Until recently, I never realized that it affected those of you on the Private side. You may not have to deal with the decedent being at the scene, but you still deal with it. This was something new for me to comprehend, but you still know there was a fatality.

All of us need to look out for each other and if we see colleagues are having issues, then we need to talk to them and help them get the help they need or just listen to them. I will be honest, I am not a therapist, but if you are having problems, please feel free to contact me.

On a second note, I participated in all the 921 virtual classes that the IAAI had in 2020 and found these very interesting and learned something from all of them. They are having more in 2021 and I would encourage you to sign up for them. The first one is on February 18th and it is on giving a Stronger Deposition and Trial Testimony. I also have helped some co-workers get signed up for the IAAI-FIT. If you have not completed this, I would strongly encourage you to do so.

I hope to see you at the 2021 Iowa Chapter Conference in September.

FROM THE DESK OF



Mark Dooley
SECRETARY/TREASURER

Plans vs Planning

There is a meme going around the social media platforms that has a quote from Mike Tyson, which is, “Everyone has a plan until they get punched in the mouth.” Jeffrey Prather stated on a podcast of his that a plan is worthless, but planning is invaluable.

How does all that affect us as fire investigators? I want to cover how it affects us in our professional lives and then I want to discuss how it is affecting our chapter.

Chapter 15 of NPFA 921 (2017 ed.) is titled **Planning the Investigation**. **Chapter 15.1 Introduction** states, “The intent of this chapter is to identify basic considerations of concern to the investigator prior to beginning the incident scene investigation.” The chapter then defines the basic considerations that the investigator should consider, such as, type and use of structure, nature and extent of damage, purpose of investigation, PPE, tools and equipment and

specialized personnel. Not once in Chapter 15 does it state the exact plan of how to conduct a specific examination.

How does that relate to our chapter? Planning is invaluable and I know that I am planning to not run for reelection for the position of secretary/treasurer after the 2022 conference. So, I am reaching out to the members and asking if there is a member who is interested in serving on the board and would like to begin to learn about the position now, rather than having the computer and checkbook handed over to you in September 2022. It is my feeling that having a member on the board, who desires to have the position of secretary/treasurer, will allow the chapter to continue its tradition of providing quality education and networking through professionals. It is an important position, yes. There is some detailed work involved, but it is not overwhelming for the detail-oriented person.

Otherwise, the plan would be to search for a person in the fall of 2022, or worse yet, not have a nomination and place the responsibilities onto an unwilling board member.

Please help me, our board, and Chapter 30 of the International Association of Arson Investigators. Let’s work through the invaluable planning process and identify someone to help move the chapter into the future; it’s much better than just having a plan to see what happens in September 2022.

If you have any questions about the roles, responsibilities and time commitment, reach out to me through the chapter email iowachapteriaai@gmail.com or my work email mhdooley@dmgov.org



**Iowa IAAI
Fire Investigation
Seminar &
Annual Meeting
September 8-10, 2021
CEDAR RAPIDS MARRIOTT**

IN MEMORIAM



Richard D. Ward
1930 – 2020

Richard G. Ward, 90, passed away Saturday, Dec. 26, 2020, at Mechanicsville Specialty Care Center. Richard "Dick" Ward was born Aug. 9, 1930, to Richard and Mattie Rena (Granger) Ward in Marshalltown, Iowa. He married Lora Mae (Morris) Ward on June 25, 1950. They made their home in Green Mountain, Iowa, until Dick joined the Iowa State Patrol in 1953.

He was assigned to District 12 in Davenport, so the Ward's made their home in Tipton, where they lived until he had his strokes in 2008. He made many, many life-long friends as an Iowa State Patrolman. He was one of the first state troopers to work Interstate 80 when the Eastern Iowa section was finished and opened in 1966. As a trooper, he found an interest in firearms and competitive shooting. He was on the national winning pistol team and won individual championship trophies. Being a farm boy at heart, he loved helping some of the area farmers on his days off and of course found time to hunt and fish. Some of his hobbies were searching for unusual glass insulators, assorted barbed wire and loading his own ammunition. He loved

the Iowa Hawkeyes, football and basketball. Whether working a game directing traffic or listening to the radio or watching on the television, he never missed a minute of their action. When the children were in high school, he enjoyed watching them in their respective interests of football, swimming, singing, acting and playing music in the high school bands. In 1968, he was immensely proud to learn that the Tipton Tigers selected Dick Ward as fan of the year.

In 1977, he transferred to the Iowa State Fire Marshall's office and was one of the several agents in Iowa to investigate arson fires. He was a state fire marshal until his retirement in 1990. When he was not hard at work, he enjoyed going on trips to visit friends and family with his wife, the love of his life. They celebrated 64 years of marriage before she passed away. He never knew a stranger and enjoyed nothing more than gathering with his friends and family. He was known as 279 to some, 704 to others, but a true to friend to all.

Dick was made a Life Member of the Iowa -Chapter of the International Association of Arson Investigators in 1992 and was active in the Chapter for many years even after his retirement from the Iowa State Fire Marshal's Office.

He is survived by his daughter, Linda (Bob) Van Nostrand, Fairfield; sons, Robert (Judy) Ward, Marion, and Richard (Kay) Knoxville, Tenn.; seven grandchildren; 13 great-grandchildren; a family friend, Gary Sulzner, also known as the "4th"; several nephews and

nieces; and so many friends.

His wife, parents, brothers and sister and oldest grandson, Sean Hanes, passed before him. Chapman Funeral Home has Richard and his family in their care. Memories and condolences may be shared at www.chapmanfh.com. Cards may be sent to Linda K. Van Nostrand, 201 E. Hempstead, Fairfield, IA 52556.

IN MEMORIAM



John L. McMahon
1942-2020

John L. McMahon, 78, of Newton died on Thursday, December 17, 2020, at Unity Point Iowa Methodist Medical Center. A celebration of John's life will happen in the spring with a fishing and picnic day. In lieu of flowers, memorials to the Animal Rescue League of Iowa or the HERO (Healing at English River Outfitters) camp in southeast Iowa, a camp created by veterans for veterans. Memorials may be left at the Wallace Family Funeral Home and Crematory. John, the son of Guy and Verna (Schaffner) McMahon, was born

on October 5, 1942 in Boone. He grew up in Boone and graduated from Boone High School. John served his country in the U.S. Navy from 1962-1966 and completed two tours in Vietnam. John was a man of many talents and his passion led him to various career moves through his life. Following his time in the service, John worked in law enforcement. First in Boone as a Sergeant for the Iowa Police Department, and then after a short stint as a Claims Representative and District Supervisor for Grinnell Mutual in Northwest Iowa, as a Reserve Deputy, Magistrate Judge, and Civil Defense Director in Ida County. Following that, John moved to Wyoming where he would serve as a Municipal Judge, Sheriff, and Chief of Police in Newcastle. John's love has always been the outdoors and during his time in Wyoming he was able to be a hunting guide for 15 years. In 1991, John returned to Iowa and once again worked for Grinnell Mutual as the Director of Special Investigations, specializing in Arson Investigation, and then as the Director of Security. During his time at Grinnell Mutual he was able to speak and instruct fire departments, law enforcement, and insurance groups around the Midwest.

John was united in marriage with Gail Geery in June of 2007 at the Little Brown Church in Nashua. After his retirement in 2009, John never planned on sitting still so he continued to work part-time at Bass Pro, Hy-Vee, and the Jasper County Sheriff's Office.

At Bass Pro, he was on the pro staff where his passion for kids and teaching allowed him to be involved in many seminars and events on the correct and ethical

approach to hunting, fishing, and conservation.

John was continuously active and walked every day of the year up until three weeks before his death. The dogs on his walking route will miss him dearly as he knew each by name and had a treat for them in his pocket. He was also an active senior sportsman; enjoying hunting and fishing. John loved to smile and make people laugh with a good joke.

John served President of the Iowa Chapter of the International Association of Arson Investigators 2002-2003.

John is survived by his wife, Gail McMahon of Newton; son Michael (Debbie) McMahon of Butte, MT; daughter, Michelle (Marc) Hein of Sioux City.

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 Rechargeable Rapala Fillet Knife Battery, shown with white ETL label, and shown missing white ETL Label

Name of product:
Rapala® Rechargeable Fillet Knives (Item No. RRFN)

Hazard:
The battery can overheat and catch fire if non-Rapala chargers are used to charge the battery.

Remedy: Replace
Recall date: January 19, 2021
Units: About 128,000



Name of product:
Sea to Summit Alpha and Sigma camping pots
Hazard: The nylon latch can disengage from the pot and cause the handle to detach, posing burn and scald hazards.

Remedy: Repair
Recall date: January 13, 2021
Units: About 16,200 (In addition, about 2,050 were sold in Canada)



Name of product:
SMART Connect Mini Devices
Hazard:
The device's power supply can overheat while charging, and cause the plastic enclosure to fly off, posing fire and injury hazards.

Remedy: Replace
Recall date: December 31, 2020
Units: About 2,750



Name of product:
Belkin "Portable Wireless Charger + Stand Special Edition"
Hazard:
A manufacturing defect in the power supply unit can cause the charger to malfunction and overheat, posing fire and shock hazards.

Remedy: Refund
Recall date: January 13, 2021
Units: About 2,280

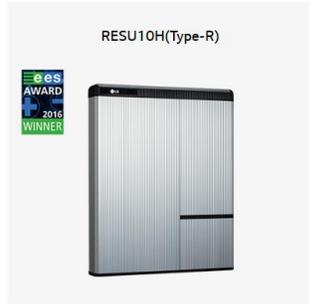


Name of product: Massage Guns
Hazard: The lithium-ion battery system can overheat, posing a fire hazard.
Remedy: Refund
Recall date: January 6, 2021
Units: About 12,360



Name of product:
Swirled Taper and Sofia Taper Candle Holders
Hazard:
The candle holders can catch on fire if they come in contact with the candle's flame, posing a fire hazard.

Remedy: Refund
Recall date: December 23, 2020
Units: About 5,300 (In addition, about 300 in Canada)



Name of product:
LG Chem "RESU 10H" Lithium-Ion Residential Energy Storage System
Hazard: The home batteries can overheat, posing a risk of fire and emission of harmful smoke.
Remedy: Replace
Recall date: December 16, 2020
Units: About 1,815



Name of product:
Camp Chef portable stoves

Hazard: An internal part of the gas regulator component can have a sharp edge that can wear or tear a hole in the seal causing gas to leak out of the top of the regulator, posing a fire hazard.
Remedy: Replace
Recall date: December 16, 2020
Units: About 20,600



Name of product:
Crua Tri, Crua Loj, and Crua Cottage tents in the Mór Series
Hazard:
The tents are incorrectly labeled as being fire retardant (FR), posing a fire hazard.

Remedy: Label
Recall date: December 10, 2020
Units: About 260



Name of product: Scentsy Luminary Jack Warmer and Scentsy Bless This Home Warmer
Hazard: Corrosion of electrical components in Scentsy Luminary Jack Warmers and Scentsy Bless This Home Warmers due to fumigation required to eradicate a cockroach infestation in one of Scentsy's shipping containers poses a fire hazard.
Remedy: Refund
Recall date: December 10, 2020
Units: About 7,805 in the U.S. (6,940 Luminary Jack and 865 Bless This Home Warmers) (In addition, about 200 Luminary Jack and about 60 Bless This Home Warmers in Canada.)



Name of product:
Children's flashlights

Hazard:
The batteries in the flashlight can overheat, posing burn and fire hazards.

Remedy: Refund
Recall date: December 9, 2020
Units: About 6,100 (In addition, about 380 units were sold in Canada)



Name of product:
Yeti 25A Fast Charge Power Supplies

Hazard:
The connection between the power supply module and the output cord can be loose, causing the electrical connections to overheat, posing a fire hazard.

Remedy: Repair
Recall date: December 9, 2020
Units: About 4,500



Name of product:
Su-VGun and GrillGun propane torch guns

Hazard: Propane gas can leak from the GrillBlazer torch, posing a fire hazard to consumers.
Remedy: Repair

Recall date: December 9, 2020
Units: About 10,000



Name of product:
allen + roth 62-inch Electric Fireplaces

Hazard:
Wiring connectors in the fireplace can overheat, posing a fire hazard.

Remedy: Repair
Recall date: December 9, 2020
Units: About 48,000



Name of product:
Delta UV EA-4H-10 ultra-violet generators installed in swimming pools and swim spas

Hazard: Water can leak within the generator, causing excessive heat build-up in the area where the power cord connects to the body of the generator unit, which can pose a fire hazard.

Remedy:
Replace
Repair
Recall date:
December 9, 2020
Units:
About 4,560



Recalled Sure Scents 2-1 Peaceful Stream/Moonlit Waves Candle



Recalled Sure Scents 2-1 Peaceful Stream/Moonlit Waves Candle

Name of product:
Sure Scents 2-1 Peaceful Stream/Moonlit Waves Candles
Hazard:
The candles' high flames can ignite the surface of the wax or cause the glass to break, posing fire and burn hazards.

Remedy:
Refund
Recall date:
December 2, 2020
Units:
About 142,740



Name of product:

3-in-1 Qi wireless chargers, power banks and travel wall chargers

Hazard:

The chargers and power banks can overheat, posing a fire hazard.

Remedy: Replace

Recall date: November 25, 2020

Units: About 1,500



Name of product:

Wine Barrel Chandeliers

Hazard:

Hardware parts used to hang the chandeliers can break causing the chandelier to fall from the ceiling, posing an injury hazard.

Remedy: Replace Repair

Recall date: November 25, 2020

Units:

About 7,800 (In addition, about 600 were sold in Canada)



Name of product:

Crock-Pot® 6-Quart Express Crock Multi-Cookers

Hazard:

The recalled Crock-Pot multi-cooker can pressurize when the lid is not fully locked. This can cause the lid to suddenly detach while the product is in use, posing burn risks to consumers from hot food and liquids ejected from the product.

Remedy: Replace

Recall date: November 24, 2020

Units: About 914,430 (In addition, about 28,330 were sold in Canada.)

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

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