

Fred Herrera Fire Investigations

Investigative Update

Issue No 2

Summer 2007

Current Events

In 2005, Ford Motor Corp recalled over four million vehicles equipped with cruise control switches that are starting fires.

One of the significant aspects of the switches is that they are energized even when the vehicle is off, making the potential for injury and deaths much higher.

A Cozen O'Connor Alert authored by John Reis, Esq.

provides a very detailed explanation of the problem, recall, and recent litigation results.

Go to www.fredherrera.com to download a copy of the report. It is worth the time.



Memberships

Professional organizations for fire investigators offer training, codes of ethics, certification programs, and publications. The following organizations are widely recognized and supported by the investigative community.

The International Association of Arson Investigators (IAAI), at 9,000, has the largest membership. IAAI offers annual 5-day training seminars and also offers the IAAI-CFI certified fire investigator program.

There are many state branches of IAAI. The California branch is the California Conference of Arson Investigators (CCAI). The IAAI website is www.firearson.com

CCAI has a membership of 1100 and offers semi-annual three-day seminars in January and July. CCAI offers a CCAI-CFI program. The CCAI website is www.arson.org

The National Association of Fire Investigators (NAFI) was founded in 1961. NAFI holds several training seminars throughout the year.

There are three certification programs available at NAFI; the Certified Fire & Explosion Investigator (CFEI), the Certified Vehicle Fire Investigator (CVFI), and the Certified Fire Investigation Instructor (CFII). The NAFI website is www.nafi.org

NFPA 1033

NFPA 1033 Standard for Professional Qualifications for Fire Investigator, which specifies the job performance requirements for the job of fire investigator, is sometimes the forgotten

document, being overshadowed by NFPA 921. This is interesting, because NFPA 1033 is a Standard, which contains mandatory provisions. A Standard is suitable for adoption into law.

Contrast that with a Guide (NFPA 921), which is an advisory document containing only nonmandatory provisions.

In 1977, *NFPA 1031 Professional Qualifications for Fire Inspector, Fire Investigator, and Fire Prevention Education Officer* was created.

In 1987, the first *NFPA 1033 Standard for Professional Qualifications for Fire Investigator* was created. The 2003 Edition is the most current.

NFPA 921

Each issue of this newsletter will address and discuss the functions and operations of the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), as well as chapters of *NFPA 921 Guide for Fire and*

Explosion Investigations. Many of you are already familiar and understand the importance of this document. By discussing the organization and the essence of each chapter, you will become more

familiar with investigative issues and methodology. You should certainly see these components in the origin and cause reports that you receive.

NFPA 921, like most other NFPA documents, is scheduled to publish every three years. The first NFPA 921 was published in 1992. In 1995, sections on electrical fire causes, motor vehicle fires, major incidents, incendiary fires, and appliances were added. The 1998 Edition added the fuel gas systems section. The 2001 Edition added sections on building systems, human behavior, failure analysis, fire deaths, and wildland. The 2004 Edition added analysis of cause and responsibility. The next edition is scheduled for 2008.

NFPA 921, 2004 Edition, Chapter 4 Basic Methodology

The basic methodology of any course of inquiry involves the systematic collection and evaluation of facts. Although not required, the recommended systematic approach is the Scientific Method. The Scientific Method is not new; scientists have used it for a long time. The Scientific Method involves seven systematic steps;

Recognize the Need:	A fire has occurred. The origin and cause must be determined.
Define the Problem:	The fire scene needs to be examined and documented to determine the origin and cause.
Collect Data:	Examine and document the fire scene, interview involved parties.
Analyze the Data:	The data is analyzed using knowledge, training, experience, and expertise. Subjective information must not be considered.
Develop a Hypothesis:	Based on the collected data, a hypothesis or series of hypotheses of the origin and cause of the fire are developed.
Test the Hypothesis:	The hypotheses are tested using the collected data. Tests can be an evaluation of occurring fire behavior and influencing factors, but must always withstand an opposing challenge.
Select Final Hypothesis:	The hypothesis is consistent with the collected data and can withstand an opposing challenge.

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