


Haverford Township Police Department Operations Manual		
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Accreditation Index:		Rescinds: Directive 6.1.13 of November 2019
Chapter: Six – General Procedures		Section: One – Organization and Management Role
Chief of Police: <i>John F. Viola</i>		

SUBJECT: FIRE AND ARSON INVESTIGATIONS

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Directive is to provide officers with guidelines for the efficient investigation of all fires (accidental, incendiary or undetermined), when the fire results in property damage, serious bodily injury or death within the township.

POLICY

It is the policy of the Haverford Township Police Department that all fires, regardless of cause (accidental, incendiary or undetermined), shall be investigated by this department when the fire results in property damage, serious bodily injury or death.

II. DEFINITIONS

- A. Incendiary Fire (Arson) - A fire that is intentionally ignited under circumstances in which the person knows that the fire should not be ignited.
- B. Undetermined Fire - Any fire which the origin is not immediately known.
- C. Accidental Fire - Any fire which is not intentionally set.
- D. Fire Investigator - Detectives who have received specialized training in arson/fire investigations.

III. PROCEDURES

- A. The Patrol Officer's basic responsibilities are:
1. The basic responsibility of law enforcement and fire service personnel at the scene of any fire is the protection of life and property.
 - a) Police and fire service personnel have different functions.
 - (1) Firemen engage in fire suppression and in related rescue operations.
 - (2) The police function at the scene of a fire is traditionally defined as supportive to the fire service.
 - (a) The role of the police includes providing crowd/ traffic control as well as providing any other assistance to the fire suppression effort, victims and/or the general public as may be required, as well as preliminary and follow up investigation of the fire itself.
 - (b) Officers shall assist at the scene in regulating crowd control, completion of the Crime Scene Entry log or in any other manner, as directed by the supervisory personnel.
 2. Patrol officers should be aware that evidence at a fire scene may take many forms, some of which is transient.
 - a) It is important that officers on scene preserve any potential evidence and document the location.
 - b) All officers on scene shall document their observations on arrival at the fire scene.
 - c) Officers shall also document any injuries to any fire victims and when possible photograph the injuries.
- B. The on duty supervisor who is on a fire scene shall contact a fire investigator if any of the following occurs:
1. A fire where a death has occurred; or
 2. A fire which serious bodily injury has occurred; or
 3. Arson is suspected; or
 4. Cause cannot be determined; or

5. Any fires involving Township owned property; or
 6. Any fire at State regulated facilities; or
 7. Any fire at public or private schools; or
 8. Any fire that results in property damage; or
 9. Any other fire related incidents that need to be investigated further.
- C. The on duty supervisor shall:
1. Ensure the scene is secured until the investigation is complete.
 2. Contact the Watch Commander and the Commanding Officer of the Detective Division.
 3. The Shift Supervisor will advise what additional personnel may be required at the time.
 4. The on-scene supervisor will be responsible for the overall command until relieved by the Watch Commander.
- D. When requested the fire investigator will respond to the fire scene and attempt to determine the following:
1. The extent of the fire scene
 2. Point of origin.
 3. Cause of the fire.
- E. If the fire investigator determines that the fire is incendiary, a serious injury has occurred, or a death occurred as result of the fire, the fire investigator will:
1. Contact the State Police Fire Investigator.
 2. Contact the Delaware County DA's Criminal Investigation Department.
 3. Contact the On Call duty District Attorney.
 4. Contact the Medical Examiner if necessary.
 5. Complete consent search paperwork.
 6. Prepare search warrant for property if consent is not granted.
 7. Photograph and sketch the scene.
 8. Photograph and collect all evidence.

9. Interview all relevant fire personnel.
 10. Interview the property owner, victims and witnesses.
 11. Prepare all reports.
- F. The fire investigator will handle all follow up investigations concerning any fire related incidents which serious bodily injury or death occurred and any case which arson is suspected to be the cause of the fire.
 - G. The fire investigator is responsible for the handling and submitting any evidence to the State Police Crime Lab for analysis.
 - H. The fire investigator will work in conjunction with the State Police Arson Investigation and detectives from the Delaware County Criminal Investigations Division when the fire is determined to be criminal in nature.
 - I. The fire investigator will report to the Detective Division Commander any and all developments concerning any fire investigation.
 - J. Prior to any criminal charges filed in an arson case, the criminal complaint will be forwarded to the District Attorney's Office for approval prior to being filed in district court.

BY ORDER OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE