

Fire Safety Act

Fire Investigator

Training Standard



Office of the
Fire Commissioner



Second Edition: September 5, 2024

Table of Amendments

Description	Date
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Updates made to Regional District section on page 7 to clarify copy. See highlighted section for newly added copy.	September 5, 2024

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Background

Under section 23(1) of the *Fire Safety Act*, a local authority (municipal council, regional district board or any authority prescribed by regulation) must designate fire investigators for the purpose of conducting fire investigations. Under section 23(2), an individual who is designated as fire investigator must meet the standard established by the Fire Commissioner.

The standard established in this document is based on some of the applicable job performance requirements in the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1033 Standard on Professional Qualifications for Fire Investigator (2022) and (NFPA) 1021 Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications (2020). These requirements have been modified to establish an appropriate minimum standard for a designated fire investigator.

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to establish the minimum standard for a fire investigator designated by a local authority under section 23(1) of the *Fire Safety Act*.

Fire investigator standard

A fire investigator designated under the *Fire Safety Act* must, at a minimum, have the knowledge, skills and abilities to meet the job performance requirements described in the table below.

These requirements are a subset of the job performance requirements for a fire investigator and fire investigations from NFPA 1033 (2022) and NFPA 1021 (2020). These are selected to provide the minimum requirements for a fire investigator in B.C. For each requirement, the chapter and paragraph number from NFPA 1033 (2022) or NFPA 1021 (2020) has been included in brackets after the requirement, e.g., [NFPA 1021 4.5.3].

Category	Job Performance Requirement
General Knowledge	General knowledge of the BC <i>Fire Safety Act</i> and specific familiarity with Part 7, Division 1 – Fire Investigations. Fire investigator responsibilities.
Introduction to Fire Science and Fire Behavior	Fundamentals of fire science Fire behavior and fire dynamics Fire classification and types Fire scene safety

Category	Job Performance Requirement
Investigation of cause origin and circumstance	Inspecting and evaluating the fire scene, or evidence of the scene, and/or conducting a comprehensive review of documentation generated during the examination(s) of the scene if the scene is no longer available, so as to determine the area or point of origin, source of ignition, material(s) ignited, and act or activity that brought the ignition source and materials together and to assess the subsequent progression, extinguishment, and containment of the fire. [Modified from NFPA 1033 (2022) – 4.2]
Secure a Fire Incident Scene	Secure the fire ground, so that unauthorized persons can recognize the perimeters of the investigative scene and are kept from restricted areas and all evidence or potential evidence is protected from damage or destruction. [Modified from NFPA 1033 (2022) - 4.2.1, NFPA 1021(2020) - 4.5.3]
Documenting the scene	Diagram the scene so that the scene is accurately represented and evidence, pertinent contents, significant patterns, and area(s) or point(s) of origin are identified. [Modified from NFPA 1033 (2022) - 4.3.1]
Documenting the scene	Photographically document the scene so that the scene is accurately depicted and the photographs support scene findings. [Modified from NFPA 1033 (2022) - 4.3.2]
Evidence Collection and Preservation	Duties shall include using proper physical and legal procedures to identify, document, collect and preserve evidence required within the investigation. [Modified from NFPA 1033 (2022) - 4.4]
Interview	Duties shall include obtaining information regarding the overall fire investigation from others through verbal communication. [Modified from NFPA 1033 (2022) - 4.5]
Post Incident	Formulate an opinion concerning origin, cause, or responsibility for the fire, given all investigative findings, and submission requirements for reports and forms. [Modified from NFPA 1033 (2022) - 4.6.5]

Application of the standard

The Office of the Fire Commissioner (OFC) fire investigator standard is intended to be the minimum standard that must be met by any person who is designated as a fire investigator under the *Fire Safety Act*. A local authority may establish its own standard for the fire investigators that it designates, provided that its standard meets or exceeds the OFC fire investigator standard.

The intent of this standard is to set the minimum standard that would allow for a person designated by the local authority to investigate a fire in a basic manner.

Training for the OFC fire investigator standard

The OFC will provide fire investigator training and evaluation to the established standard in the OFC Basic Fire Investigator Fundamentals online course that will follow late 2024. A designated fire investigator is not required to complete this training if they have obtained the required competencies, meeting the standard through other training and experience.

While the OFC Basic Fire Investigator Fundamentals online course is being developed, a local authority may determine the required or acceptable training for its designated fire investigators against this standard. The local authority can confirm via the Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition form (PLAR) that the designated investigator meets the fire investigator training standard. It is the responsibility of the local government to ensure the PLAR is signed off accurately and that the PLAR stays in the personnel file of the designated fire investigator. The investigator standard PLAR form can be located here: [Fire Safety Act reference documents - Province of British Columbia \(gov.bc.ca\)](#)

Regional districts

The below provides clarity on the requirement for local authorities under the Fire Safety Act. While this document pertains to the fire investigator standard, information on the fire inspector role has also been included below to ensure a full explanation of regional district responsibilities.

- Under the Fire Safety Act (FSA), it is a requirement for local authorities (municipalities and regional districts (RDs)) to designate local fire inspector(s) and fire investigator(s).
- As in the Fire Services Act, the FSA continues the requirement for all fires to be investigated and reported to the fire commissioner. Locally designated fire investigators will fulfil this requirement.
- As RDs are not monitoring entities, they will operate within a reactive (complaint based or owner requested) inspection framework. Upon request from a RD, the Office of the Fire Commissioner (OFC) Fire Service Advisors, will conduct fire inspections and fire investigations.
- The RD has the discretion to use their own designated fire inspector(s) and fire investigator(s), or to request the OFC to support the inspection or investigation requirements.
- The process for how the OFC will support RDs can be found in the “Fire Safety Act: Regional District Inspections and Investigations Procedures” document located, [here](#).