

Fire Safety Act

Fire Investigator Training Standard



Office of the
Fire Commissioner



Table of amendments	
Description	Date
Document issued	August 19, 2024
Updates made to regional district section on page 7 to clarify information.	September 5, 2024
Job Performance Requirements (JPRs) were updated to exactly mirror specific sections of applicable National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) criteria	December 2024

Please find all current and available fire safety legislation, regulations, codes, bulletins and reference documents online here:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/public-safety/fire-safety/legislation-regulations-codes>

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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) of the Act, an individual who is designated as fire investigator must meet the training standard established by the fire commissioner.

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

Purpose

The Office of the Fire Commissioner (OFC) developed this document, the Fire Safety Act Fire Investigator Training Standard, as required by the Fire Safety Act section 4(1)(d)(ii) to establish the minimum standard for a fire investigator designated by a local authority under section 23(1) of the Fire Safety Act.

The fire investigator training 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 [Table 1](#), below.

When a job performance requirement has been adopted and modified from NFPA 1033 (2022) or NFPA 1021 (2020), the chapter and paragraph number is noted in

brackets after the skill requirement is described; for example, “[modified from NFPA 1021 (2020) - 4.5.3]”.

Note: the requirements in the general knowledge category are not taken from NFPA standards. Therefore, no citation is provided.

Table 1. Fire investigator job performance requirements	
Category	Job performance requirement
General knowledge	Have general knowledge of the Fire Safety Act and specific familiarity with Part 7, Division 1 – Fire Investigations Have general knowledge of fire investigator responsibilities
Introduction to fire science and fire behaviour	Understand the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Fundamentals of fire science▶ Fire behaviour and fire dynamics▶ Fire classification and types▶ Fire scene safety
Investigation of cause, origin and circumstance	Duties shall include inspecting, evaluating, and analyzing the fire scene, or evidence of the scene, and 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 [NFPA 1033 (2022) – 4.2]
Secure a fire incident scene	Secure the fire ground, given marking devices, sufficient personnel, and special tools and equipment, so that unauthorized persons can recognize the perimeters of the investigative scene and are kept from restricted areas, and

Table 1. Fire investigator job performance requirements

Category	Job performance requirement
	<p>all evidence or potential evidence is protected from damage or destruction [NFPA 1033 (2022) - 4.2.1]</p> <p>Direct unit level personnel to secure an incident scene, given rope or barrier tape, so that unauthorized persons can recognize the perimeters of the scene and are kept from restricted areas, and all evidence or potential evidence is protected from damage or destruction [NFPA 1021 (2020) – 4.5.3]</p>
Document the scene	<p>Make a diagram of the scene, given standard tools and equipment, so that the scene is accurately represented and evidence, pertinent contents, significant patterns, and area(s) or point(s) of origin are identified [NFPA 1033 (2022) – 4.3.1]</p>
Document the scene	<p>Photographically document the scene, given standard tools and equipment, so that the scene is accurately depicted and the photographs support scene findings [NFPA 1033 (2022) – 4.3.2]</p>
Collect and preserve evidence	<p>Duties shall include using proper physical and legal procedures to identify, document, collect, and preserve evidence required within the investigation [NFPA 1033 (2022) – 4.4]</p>
Interview witnesses	<p>Duties shall include obtaining information regarding the overall fire investigation from others through verbal communication [NFPA 1033 (2022) – 4.5]</p>
After the incident	<p>Formulate an opinion concerning origin, cause, or responsibility for the fire, given all investigative findings, so that the opinion regarding origin, cause, or responsibility for a fire is supported by the data, facts, records, reports, documents, scientific references, and evidence [NFPA 1033 (2022) – 4.6.5]</p>

Applying the standard

The OFC's Fire Safety Act fire investigator training 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 Fire Safety Act fire investigator training standard, as established by the fire commissioner.

Training for fire investigators to meet the standard

The OFC will provide fire investigator training and evaluation to the established standard in the OFC Basic Fire Investigator Fundamentals online course (to be released in late 2024). A designated fire investigator who has obtained the required competencies and meets the standard through other training and experience is not required to complete this training.

While the OFC Basic Fire Investigator Fundamentals online course is being developed, a local authority may wish to determine the required or acceptable training for its designated fire investigators against this published standard. The local authority can do this via the online Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) form to ensure the designated investigator meets the fire investigator training standard. It is the responsibility of the local authority to ensure the PLAR application form is accurate, signed off, and is retained in the personnel file of the designated fire investigator.

The fire investigator training standard PLAR form is available online [here](#).

Local authority responsibilities

The Fire Safety Act requires local authorities (municipalities and regional districts) to designate local fire inspector(s) and fire investigator(s).

As in the Fire Services Act, the Fire Safety Act continues the requirement for all fires to be investigated and reported to the fire commissioner. Locally designated fire investigators may fulfil this requirement.

Regional districts

For regional districts under the Fire Safety Act.

- It is a requirement for regional districts to designate a local fire investigator.
- The Fire Safety Act places the requirement for all fires to be investigated and reported to the fire commissioner on the local authority (regional district).
- The regional district has the discretion to use their own designated fire investigator(s), or to request the OFC to conduct the fire investigation.
- The process for how the OFC will support regional districts can be found in the [Fire Safety Act: Regional District Inspection and Investigations Procedures](#) document.