

INSTRUCTIONAL ORDER

August 2017

Immediately

V.5:21

Distribution: All Employees

Subject: **ARSON INVESTIGATIONS**

Index as:	Arson Arson Investigations	Criminal Mischief, Fire-Related Fire and Arson Investigations	Structure
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Accreditation Standards: 42.1.4
 Cross Reference: G.O. III-21, Bomb Threats and Explosive Devices
 Chapter 806, F.S.S.
 Replaces: I.O. V.5:21, Arson Procedures (April 5, 2000)

This Order establishes procedures for handling arson cases and intentionally set (criminal mischief) fires. It consists of the following sections:

- I. Definitions
- II. Arson Investigations
- III. Criminal Mischief Investigations
- IV. Notifications

I. DEFINITIONS

A. Arson – Any willful and intentional fire or explosion that causes damage to a structure or dwelling, whether occupied or not. (Note: If personal property is set afire and subsequently causes smoke or fire damage to a *structure*, it is also considered ARSON. Damage to *any other property constitutes a criminal mischief.*)

B. Criminal Mischief – Willful and malicious injury or damage by any means, to real or personal property of another. Examples include trees, brush, dumpsters etc., provided the property set afire DOES NOT cause damage to a structure. (See structure).

C. Structure – Any building, any enclosed area with a roof over it, any tent, any portable building or any conveyance; i.e., vehicle, vessel, water-craft, or aircraft, etc.

II. ARSON INVESTIGATIONS

A. Arson investigations should be handled in the same manner as any other major crime.

B. Officers assigned to the incident shall complete the original police report, interview victims, witnesses, suspects, etc. and, where possible, make the appropriate arrests.

1. The following information will be documented in the original report:
 - a. Severity of any injury sustained;
 - b. Approximate dollar loss; and
 - c. Whether the structure was occupied or not occupied.
2. A copy of the police report shall be sent to the Arson Investigator.

3. Forensic technicians, if summoned by the Arson Investigator, will:
 - a. Gather potential evidence at major crime scenes;
 - b. Take photographs.
4. Fire debris evidence to be sent for analysis will be secured by the Fire Inspector at the scene.
5. Follow-up investigation will be handled by the Arson Investigator or appropriate investigative Unit.

III. CRIMINAL MISCHIEF INVESTIGATIONS

- A. Fire-related criminal mischief should be handled as any other criminal mischief case.
- B. Officers assigned to the incident shall complete the original report, interview victims, witnesses, suspects, etc. and, where possible, make the appropriate arrests.
 1. A copy of the report shall be routed to the Arson Investigator.
 2. If the damage constitutes a fire-related felony or misdemeanor, the follow-up will be handled by the Arson Investigator.
 3. If the suspect is a juvenile, Officers shall complete a *Juvenile Referral* form.

IV. NOTIFICATIONS

- A. The on-call Fire Inspector shall contact the Arson Investigator when additional investigation is needed.
- B. The Supervisor, **Major Crimes**, and the Arson Investigator shall be notified of any fire-related death or serious injury.
- C. The Arson Investigator shall be notified of any suspicious fire or explosive device at a place of worship or at an abortion clinic.
- D. The Arson Investigator will notify the Intelligence **Unit** when an arson has caused an interruption of communications, public services, water, etc.

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