



Coffee Break Training - Fire Investigation Series

Fire Investigation Health and Safety

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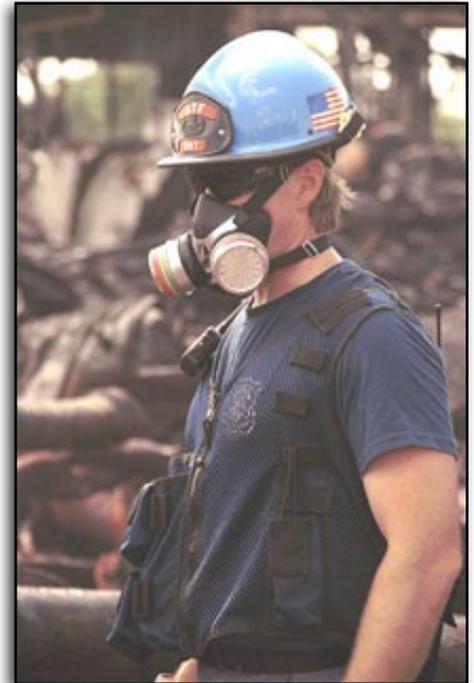
Learning Objective: The student shall be able to define and explain the essential health and safety principles associated with fire investigations.

Fire investigation health and safety covers a wide variety of issues that are too often ignored or not practiced within the investigative community. All fire investigative personnel should define safety as “attitude and behavior.” The number one threat to personnel at a scene is “complacency,” which should never occur, with the number one priority of everyone being “your personal safety.” The only one responsible for your personal safety is “you.” To ensure this from the outset, the basis for selection of personal protective equipment (PPE) at a scene is “hazard and risk assessment.”

Consistent use of PPE at scenes reduces the level of exposure most common via “inhalation.” Respiratory protection at fire scenes is critical. Employer and employee responsibilities can be found in Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Regulation 29 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Section 1910.134. Air purifying respirators (APRs) should be used at all times with self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBAs) affording the highest level of respiratory protection.

No scene is totally safe. The old adages of “I’ve always done it that way,” or “I’ll remember to wear my PPE next time,” or “I don’t have time for that now,” all lead up to a lack of attitude and poor behavior that could cost you your life. Often times, fire scenes are hazardous materials (hazmat) incidents. Fear and respect for the unknown can dramatically increase your probability of staying safe and reducing injury. Your primary goal should always be to go home safe at the end of the day. No action may be the best action, especially where hazmats are involved. Clandestine drug labs are essentially a hazmat situation.

As a general rule, if the specific hazards are unknown, always assume the scene to be hazardous until proven otherwise and use the highest levels of PPE and equipment. If you find that the incident is missing an Incident Command System (ICS) or an Incident Commander (IC), cease all activities until you can locate or create one. The only time you can relax is after you leave the scene safely. You should never conduct scene investigations by yourself. Always use a partner.



REMEMBER: PROACTIVE ATTITUDE + PROPER ACTIONS = SAFE BEHAVIOR