

San Mateo County Fire Service POLICIES AND STANDARDS MANUAL

Title: Fire Investigation Unit Call Out

Policy No. 2001-01

Adopted 07/02/01

Revised 03/03/03

- Title:** Call-Out of the San Mateo County Fire Investigation Unit
- Purpose:** The purpose of this policy is to adopt a standardized procedure for San Mateo County fire agencies when they call on the San Mateo County Fire Investigation Unit to assist in fire investigations.
- Policy:** It is the policy of the San Mateo County Fire Chiefs that the county fire agencies will use this call out procedure when requesting support from the San Mateo County Fire Investigation Unit for a fire and/or arson investigation. This policy is based on the premise that the originating agency "owns" the incident and will provide the lead investigator, will prepare the report, and will oversee all documentation and evidence collection. The agency's request for the County Fire Investigation Unit's support is to provide supplemental Fire Investigation personnel and resources to assist the host agency. It is not the intent of this policy for the County Fire Investigation Unit to take over or supplant the owning agency's responsibility for the investigation, but rather to provide necessary support services to assist the owning agency in the successful completion of a demanding investigation.
- NOTE: In the event that the owner agency cannot provide investigative services, they will contract with a neighbor agency or with a private enterprise for such services. Such contract agency will then take the lead in the investigation and may use this call-out policy as deemed necessary.
- Background:** There is a benefit in a complex or challenging investigation or one with a large fire loss or loss of life to enlist the support of the County Fire Investigation Unit. These resources include both experienced investigators and specialized equipment. This policy establishes the procedure for such a resource call-out and also reconfirms the requirement that the "owner" agency retains the ultimate authority, responsibility and accountability for the investigation. This policy requires that in such a case, the agency have a prior contractual arrangement or an understanding with another agency to act in that capacity.

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Standard:

I. CALL OUT PROCEDURE:

- a. Upon request for activation of the Fire Investigation Task Force by an Incident Commander or Lead Investigator, Public Safety Communications (PSC) shall send a group alpha page to all county investigators with the name of the lead investigator and his/her cell phone number.
- b. The "all Page" will be repeated every ninety (90) seconds until the Lead Investigator calls to cancel the page.
- c. Investigators will contact the Lead Investigator to report they are responding.
- d. The lead investigator will notify PSC as to which investigators are responding (by unit number i.e., F8B). PSC will then send a page stating that no further investigators are needed.

II. DUTIES:

a. Fire Investigation Unit Investigator:

1. Upon direction from the lead investigator, respond to the incident. Bring available equipment as requested
2. Report to the Command Post – Incident Commander or Lead Investigator and carry out duties as assigned
3. Advise and assign tasks to investigator trainee, if assigned
4. Provide safety equipment as needed
5. Bring T-cards or get spare T-card
6. Submit summary of your investigation findings on county forms as requested or provide verbal reports to the lead investigator/incident commander

NOTE: County Fire Investigators are not to write formal investigation reports for the incident

b. Fire Investigation Unit Investigator – Trainee:

1. Complete tasks as assigned by supervising investigator(s).
2. Take advantage of every learning opportunity by asking questions and doing assigned tasks
3. Appraise co-chairs of requested types of investigations
4. Update training status and experience to co-chairs

c. Incident Lead Investigator:

1. Provide refreshments at incident
2. Attend next investigators' sub-committee meeting for a critique on the coordination efforts
3. Inform co-chairs of task force investigation at the earliest convenience.

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d. Fire Investigation Unit Co-Chairs:

1. Maintain a database, available to any San Mateo County requesting agency, with the following information:
 - a. Name of investigator
 - b. Work phone
 - c. Home phone
 - d. Cap code number
 - e. Investigator level, as provided by the Fire Marshal
 - f. Home city
2. Maintain a database of task force investigations available to the Fire Prevention Officers' Executive Board.
3. Maintain a list of county equipment needed, repaired, or replaced.