



**Monterey County Fire Investigators Association
Monterey County Fire and Arson Task Force**

Date: January 14, 2008

To: Chris Orman, Fire Chief
President, Monterey County Fire Chiefs Association

From: Daniel Gearhart, Division Chief
President, Monterey County Fire Investigators Association

Subject: 2007 MCFIA Annual Report

Outlined in this report is an overview of the activities conducted by the Monterey County Fire Investigators Association in 2007.

Membership:

We ended the year with 21 active members representing 9 different public safety agencies. Membership is divided into three different categories including active member, associate member, and honorary member.

Active members are from public safety agencies whose primary duties include the investigation of fires and explosions, or the investigation of criminal acts. Active members must be designated in writing by the head of the public safety organization for which they are employed.

Associate membership is open to representatives of the private sector industry or organizations who can contribute to the overall effectiveness of the Association.

Honorary members are open to any person who is elected by the active membership to receive such an honor.

Monterey County Fire and Arson Task Force:

With the revision of our by-laws in 2005, the Monterey County Fire and Arson Task Force was established as a subsidiary organization within in the Association. Members of the Fire Investigators Association assigned to the MCFATF are placed on the Fire Investigator Rotational Call-Out List and are available for call-out throughout Monterey County. For designation on the Rotational Call-Out List, members must have obtained Fire Investigation 1A, 1B, 2A, and 2B, PC 832, and have been assigned to investigate fires or explosions for at least one year within their agency. Call-out Investigators must also have approval from the head of their agency for inclusion on the list.

We currently have 9 Investigators, and 1 Investigator Trainee on the Rotational Call-Out List. These Investigators and Trainee represent 5 different fire service agencies. The rotational call-out list is on file with County Communications and is updated as new contact information becomes available. During the calendar year 2007, we received 7 official requests for a Call-Out Investigator. The requests for a Call-Out Investigator are as follows:

1. January 15, 2007 . Structure Fire: 2488 Sloat Rd. Pebble Beach. 0504 hours
Requesting Agency: Pebble Beach CSD
Single-family dwelling with fully involved attached garage that spread to attic.
Determined area of origin and submitted investigative report.
Assigned Investigator: Pilotte / Freitas, SRFPD
2. March 3, 2007 . Structure Fire: 3113 Flower Circle, Marina. 0851 hours
Requesting Agency: Marina Department of Public Safety
Single-family dwelling structure fire confined to room of origin. Determined area of origin, cause of fire, and provided investigative report.
Assigned Investigator: Wenger, SRFPD
3. May 18, 2007 . Structure Fire: 1350 Dayton Street, Salinas. 2045 hours
Requesting Agency: Salinas Fire Department
Commercial building fire with multiple areas of origin and fire extending to adjacent businesses. Provided investigative support and turned over to Salinas FD investigators.
Assigned Investigator: Williams, CAL FIRE BEU
4. May 27, 2007 . Structure Fire: 140 West Street #T-24, Soledad. 1101 hours
Requesting Agency: Soledad Fire Department
Structure fire that destroyed two storage sheds being used as living units, 20q feet of wooden fence, and the 25% of a house trailer. Conducted scene investigation, determined area of origin, and provided written investigative report.
Assigned Investigator: Gearhart, SSFD
5. July 7, 2007 . Structure Fire: 3046 Lexington Court, Marina. 2300 hours
Requesting Agency: Marina Department of Public Safety
Single-family dwelling structure fire that caused damage to exterior of attached garage. Cause of fire due to the discarding of fireworks in trash container next to garage. Conducted scene investigation and determined area of origin and cause.
Assigned Investigator: Reade. MFD
6. September 2, 2007 . Structure Fire: Santa Lucia, 3 NW of Rio Road, Carmel.
Requesting Agency: Carmel by the Sea Fire Department
Interior garage fire that spread into attic and roof. Determined area of origin. Cause undetermined. 1210 hours
Assigned Investigator: Reade, MFD

7. December 29, 2007 . Structure Fire: 249 11th Street, Greenfield 1840 hours
Requesting Agency: Greenfield Fire Department
Fire in an unoccupied single-family dwelling with two areas of origin. Determined area of origin, cause of fire, and turned over to Greenfield FD.
Assigned Investigator: Pilotte, SRFPD

Call-Out Investigation Summary:

Requesting Agency

Marina DPS	(2)
Pebble Beach CSD	(1)
Salinas FD	(1)
Soledad FD	(1)
Carmel by the Sea	(1)
Greenfield	(1)

California Conference of Arson Investigators:

From March 26-28, 2007, CCAI conducted their Spring Training Seminar in San Luis Obispo. A total of seven personnel from Monterey County fire agencies attended the seminar. During the seminar, Dan Gearhart was elected to the Board of Directors and received the Presidential Award for outstanding service to the organization in 2006.

From November 4-7, 2007, several members from Monterey County Fire Agencies attended the CCAI training seminar in San Luis Obispo.

Prior to the seminar, the Monterey County Fire Investigators Association donated \$400.00 to CCAI for the partial sponsorship of a coffee break.

Fire Chiefs Association Website:

Being provided with a tab on the Fire Chiefs Association Website, the Monterey County Fire Investigators Association submitted information that is currently posted on the Chiefs Association website. The information includes a description of the MCFIA and the MCFATF, the current association officers, the 2005 and 2006 annual report, useful investigative links, a press release on %Change your clock, change your battery,+ and a press release on fireworks enforcement. The Monterey County Fire Investigators Association has registered a domain name of www.mcfia.org and www.mcfia.com with future plans of developing an association specific website.

Arson Related Legislation:

After a review of several pieces of arson related legislation proposed in 2007, the MCFIA supported the following proposed bills. Letters of support were sent to the legislative authors of each proposed bill.

HR 1759 ~~%MATCH Program+~~. Provides for a national arson registration program.

AB 419 . PERS benefits for peace officers with request to include arson investigators as defined in PC 830.37.

AB 416 . Makes Arson registration information available to the public

AB 565 . Makes failing to register as an arson offender a felony rather than a misdemeanor.

SB 828 . Provides standards for arson canines and handlers.

SB 839 . Makes possession of an agricultural fireworks illegal and establishes a State Fire Marshal Fireworks Enforcement Fund.

AB 476 . Increases fines for violating the State Fireworks Law.

Fireworks Enforcement:

Prior to the retail fireworks season, the MCFIA issued a press release with supporting information to local media outlets with information concerning the sale and use of ~~%safe~~ and sane+fireworks in Monterey County. A copy of the press release is included in this packet. Along with the Press Release, posters were distributed to jurisdictions that allow the sale and use of ~~%safe~~ and sane+fireworks that stated where fireworks were allowed / not allowed in Monterey County.

Following the fireworks season, representatives from the State Fire Marshal's Office picked up approximately 21 boxes of confiscated fireworks provided by several fire service and law enforcement agencies in Monterey County.

The MCFIA is also working on developing a set of countywide standards for the retail sale of safe and sane fireworks for those areas that allow the sale of these fireworks.

Juvenile Firesetters Referral Program:

Early in 2007, the MCFIA started working on developing a countywide Juvenile Firesetters Referral Program. The proposed program was designed to be a division of the MCFIA and would embrace the team approach to addressing the issue of juvenile firesetting. The initial concept was to involve interested members of the fire service, law enforcement, juvenile probation, the school system, and juvenile intervention

specialists. The proposal was to have a Juvenile Firesetters Referral Program available to all public safety agencies within Monterey County. Due to a lack of interest from the majority of fire service agencies in Monterey County, pursuit of this proposal was discontinued.

“Change Your Clock – Change Your Battery”:

Prior to the end of daylight savings time on November 4, 2007, a press release was sent to the Monterey County media outlets urging residents to change the batteries in their smoke detectors on the same day they change their clocks ending daylight savings time. The %Change Your Clock . Change Your Battery+program is a national campaign sponsored by Energizer Batteries and the International Association of Fire Chiefs. Our support of this program comes from the seven fatalities we have experienced in the past several years due to residential structure fires where smoke detections were either not present, not working, or had the batteries removed.

The MCFIA continues to urge the Fire Chiefs Association to make having operating smoke detectors in every residential property within Monterey County a priority by renewing the emphasis of smoke detector programs and supporting national campaigns such as %Change Your Clock . Change Your Battery.+ Please refer to our letter dated February 14, 2004 to the Chiefs Association concerning this matter.

Presentation by 1-800-BoardUp:

During the MCFIA meeting of October 9, 2007, Jennifer Filzen, the Marketing Director for the local 1-800-BoardUp franchise, and Dave Wasson, owner of Wasson\$ Construction gave a presentation to the group on the services that 1-800-BoardUp could provide in support of fire agencies and fire investigative activities in Monterey County. Since the presentation, Wasson\$ Construction / 1-800-BoardUp requested membership in the MCFIA as an associate member. During the meeting of December 11, 2007, and by a majority vote, Wasson\$ Construction / 1-800-BoardUp were approved as an associate member in the MCFIA.

Goals for 2008:

- Provide opportunities for fire and arson investigator training for local investigators through class sponsorships, funding allocation, and cooperation with the California Conference of Arson Investigators and other fire investigative training outlets.
- Support the countywide efforts in the enforcement and disposing of confiscated fireworks involved in criminal acts.
- Continue with the effort to have a county wide ban on whistling type fireworks along with the development of countywide standards for the retail sale of safe and sane fireworks.

- Begin the process for the development of an association specific website.
- Support the %Change your Clock . Change Your Battery+Program by providing timely information to local media outlets.
- Work towards increasing membership with the overall goal of having every fire service agency represented in the MCFIA.
- Extend membership opportunities to law enforcement agencies recognizing that nearly all fire departments in Monterey County turn their fire investigations over to police agencies once the cause of a fire is determined to be arson.
- Establish an effective working relationship with the Monterey County District Attorney's Office with the common goal of supporting arson prosecution in Monterey County.
- Monitor and support legislation that impacts fire investigation activities in the State of California and Monterey County.