

The International Association of Arson Investigators Condemns Shooting of Chicago Fire Investigator

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(CROFTON, MD) The International Association of Arson Investigators (IAAI) condemns the recent indiscriminate shooting of a Chicago Fire Investigator. "The thoughts and prayers of our membership are with Investigator Donald Cox and his family," said IAAI President Ken Finley (Brenham, TX), "We wish him a swift and complete recovery from the injuries he sustained in the line of duty."

The shooting of Investigator Cox, an 18-year veteran of the Office of Fire Investigation, Chicago Fire Department, occurred while he was working in uniform alone at the site of an apparent firebombing of a residential structure.

Working at a fire scene alone is a situation faced by many fire investigators in both the public and private sectors. In light of this tragedy, the IAAI is urging all fire investigators to use safe work practices when working at fire scenes, particularly when working alone. NFPA 921, Guide for Fire and Explosion Investigation states: "Fire scene investigations should not be undertaken alone. A minimum of two individuals should be present to ensure that assistance is at hand if an investigator should become trapped or injured."

However, if an investigator is faced with a situation where working alone is unavoidable, NFPA 921 makes the following recommendations:

- Have clear communication protocols between the investigator at fire scene and a responsible off-site contact person.
- Establish an investigative plan with estimated start and end times, as well as the exact location and address of the fire scene.
- The off-site contact should make periodic safety checks with the scene investigator.
- A reliable means of communication must be available at the fire scene in order to summon emergency assistance if required.

The IAAI also applauds the decision of Chicago Fire Commissioner, Raymond Orozco to suspend the practice of investigating fire scenes alone. Assuring investigative personnel work in pairs will increase the level of personal safety for all investigators.

IAAI President Finley urges anyone who may have information related to this violent attack on Investigator Donald Cox to contact the Chicago Police Department, or by calling the Cook County Crime Stoppers tip-line at 1-800-535-7867.

Founded in 1949, The International Association of Arson Investigators (IAAI) represents nearly 7000 professional fire and explosives experts from over 30 countries worldwide. The IAAI membership includes private investigators, law enforcement officers, fire service personnel, researchers, educators, and insurance industry representatives. Our membership is unified by our strong commitment to the suppression of the crime of arson through the application of accepted and proven investigative techniques and practices.

Contact Jason Campbell, Executive Director at 410-451-3473.