

# Grand Forks Fire Department

## Standard Operating Procedures

<b>SOP#</b> <b>901.02</b>	<b>Section</b> <b>Fire Prevention</b>	<b>Title</b> <b>Determination of Cause and Origin</b>
<b>Authored by:</b>		<b>Michael K. Flermoen,</b> <b>Deputy Fire Chief</b>
<b>Reviewed by:</b>		<b>Michael K. Flermoen,</b> <b>Deputy Fire Chief</b>
<b>Authorized by:</b>		<b>Peter D. O'Neill,</b> <b>Fire Chief</b>
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### I. Scope

This standard establishes that every fire and explosion incident in our jurisdiction be investigated by the department to determine its origin and cause. It was promulgated to:

- A. Establish guidelines for the safe and systematic investigation or analysis of fire and explosion incidents.
- B. Assist in the compilation of data.
- C. Prevent similar events from occurring in the future.

### II. General Policies

- A. It shall be the policy of the department to determine the origin and cause of fires and explosions that occur within the response area.
- B. Investigations and analysis of fires and explosions shall be conducted in accordance with the recommendations contained in NFPA 921, Guide for Fire and Explosion Investigations.
- C. Fire cause will be classified in one of the following categories:
  - 1. Accidental: Not the result of a deliberate human act.
  - 2. Natural: Without human intervention-e.g. lightning.
  - 3. Incendiary (arson): Deliberately set.
  - 4. Undetermined: The cause cannot be proved.

### III. Responsibilities

#### A. The incident commander shall:

1. Ensure that an accurate determination of the origin and cause of a fire or explosion has been made prior to conducting overhaul operations or concluding operations and returning to service.
2. Request that an investigator be dispatched to an incident in the following circumstances:
  - a. The on-shift investigator is unable to accurately determine the origin and cause of a fire or explosion.
  - b. There is evidence to suggest that the fire was deliberately set,
  - c. A civilian or firefighter was injured (burns or by products of combustion) or killed.
  - d. An automatic fire detection or suppression system failed to activate properly.
3. Maintain custody of the scene and shall not allow evidence to be disturbed until the investigator authorizes the incident commander to remove debris or other materials from the incident site or authorizes suppression personnel to leave the scene.

#### B. Members shall:

1. Observe the conditions on arrival and report anything out of the ordinary to the incident commander or investigator.
2. Preserve any evidence that they discover and not disturb any debris or other materials until so ordered by the incident commander.

#### C. The investigator shall:

1. Conduct a thorough investigation of each incident to which he/she is dispatched and make a determination as to origin and cause in accordance with Section II C, above.
2. Prepare investigation reports and maintain case files as required.
3. Testify in court or provide deposition, as required, after notifying the Fire Chief.