



Basic Fire Investigation (2022)

Course Plan

Course Details

Certification:	Fire Investigator
CTS Guide:	Fire Investigator (2022)
Description:	This course provides the skills and knowledge needed for the Fire Investigator to safely, effectively, and competently secure the fire ground, conduct an exterior and interior survey, analyze and interpret fire patterns, discriminate the effects of explosions, examine and remove fire debris, reconstruct the area of origin, and inspect building system performance.
Designed For:	Personnel preparing to pursue Fire Investigator certification or anyone who performs the duties of a Fire Investigator within their agency.
Prerequisites:	Basic Electricity (CFITrainer.net) Ethics and the Fire Investigator (CFITrainer.net)
Standard:	Complete all activities and formative tests. Complete all summative tests with a minimum score of 80%.
Hours (Total):	40 hours (26.5 lecture / 13.5 application / 2.5 testing)
Maximum Class Size:	30
Instructor Level:	SFT Fire Investigator Registered Instructor
Instructor/Student Ratio:	Lecture: 1:30 Application: 1:15
Restrictions:	See Facilities, Equipment, and Personnel
SFT Designation:	CFSTES

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Required Resources

Instructor Resources

To teach this course, instructors need:

- One of the following textbooks and accompanying tool kits and test banks:
 - *Fire Investigator: Principles and Practice* (Jones and Bartlett, 6th edition, 2022)
 - or
 - *Fire Investigator* (IFSTA, 3rd edition, 2021)
- NFPA 470: Hazardous Materials/Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) Standard for Responders (current edition)
- NFPA 921: Guide for Fire and Explosion Investigations (current edition, Safety chapter)
- NFPA 1033: Standard for Professional Qualifications for Fire Investigator (current edition)
- NFPA 1403: Standard on Live Fire Training Evolutions (current edition)
- Fire Investigator Health and Safety Best Practices (IAAI, current edition)
- Applicable local, state, or federal occupational safety and health regulations
- Fire scene scenarios
- Personal protective equipment
 - Structural firefighter turnout gear, including bunker pants and coat, helmet with chin strap, particulate-blocking hood, boots (steel toe, puncture-resistant sole), and gloves
 - Work duty coveralls or similar (preferably disposable with hood) that completely cover the arms and legs

Online Instructor Resources

The following instructor resources are available online at

<https://osfm.fire.ca.gov/what-we-do/state-fire-training/professional-certifications>

- Fire Investigator 1A Activities (2022)

Student Resources

To participate in this course, students need:

- Required textbook chosen by instructor
- Access to a computer and printer
- A device capable of taking photographs (e.g., camera, tablet, cell phone)
- An electronic device for developing and delivering a presentation
- Personal protective equipment
 - Structural firefighter turnout gear, including bunker pants and coat, helmet with chin strap, particulate-blocking hood, boots (steel toe, puncture-resistant sole), and gloves
 - Work duty coveralls or similar (preferably disposable with hood) that completely cover the arms and legs

Facilities, Equipment, and Personnel

Facilities

The following facilities are required to deliver this course:

- Standard learning environment or facility, which may include:
 - Writing board or paper easel chart
 - Markers, erasers
 - Amplification devices
 - Projector and screen
 - Laptop or tablet with presentation or other viewing software
 - Internet access with appropriate broadband capabilities
 - Standard learning environment or facility

Equipment

- Marking devices, tools, and equipment used by a fire investigator
- Evidence collection materials
- A device capable of taking photographs (e.g., camera, tablet, cell phone)
- Graph paper and note pad
- Air Quality Management District permit (if required)
- Burn cubicles sufficient to accommodate the 1:15 instructor/student ratio
- Fire suppression equipment
- Multi-gas area monitoring equipment (to monitor VOCs, oxygen enrichment/deficiency, carbon monoxide, formaldehyde, and hydrogen sulfide)
 - One per burn cubicle recommended

Personnel

- Fire suppression personnel to manage live fire burn cubicles in accordance with NFPA 1403 and AHJ policy and procedures
- All instructors counted toward student ratios, including application components, must be SFT Registered Fire Investigator 1A Instructors

Time Table

Segment	Lecture	Application	Unit Total
Unit 1: Introduction			
Topic 1-1: Orientation and Administration	0.50	0.0	
Topic 1-2: Fire Investigator Certification Process	0.25	0.0	
Topic 1-3: Foundational Knowledge and Skills for a Fire Investigator	2.0	0.0	
Unit 1 Totals	3.0	0.0	3.0
Unit 2: Scene Examination			
Topic 2-1: Securing the Fire Ground	0.5	0.0	
Topic 2-2: Conducting an Exterior Survey	3.5	0.5	
Topic 2-3: Conducting an Interior Survey	3.5	0.5	
Unit 2 Totals	7.5	1.0	8.5
Unit 3: Origin and Cause			
Topic 3-1: Interpreting and Analyzing Fire Effects and Patterns	8.0	2.0	
Topic 3-2: Discriminating the Effects of Explosions	2.0	0.0	
Topic 3-3: Examining and Removing Fire Debris	2.0	*	
Topic 3-4: Reconstructing Potential Areas of Origin	2.0	8.0	
Topic 3-5: Inspecting and Analyzing Building System Performance	2.0	0.0	
Unit 3 Totals	16.0	10.0	26.0
Formative Assessments			
Determined by AHJ or educational institution	0.0	0.0	0.0
Summative Assessment			
Determined by AHJ or educational institution	0.0	2.5	2.5
Course Totals	26.5	13.5	40.0

* The 8 hours identified for application in Topic 3-4 covers both Topic 3-3 and 3-4.

Time Table Key

1. The Time Table documents the amount of time estimated to deliver the content included in the course plan.
2. Time is documented using the quarter system: 15 min. = .25 / 30 min. = .50 / 45 min. = .75 / 60 min. = 1.0.
3. The Course Totals do not reflect time for lunch (1 hour) or breaks (10 minutes per each 50 minutes of instruction or assessment). It is the instructor's responsibility to add this time based on the course delivery schedule.
4. Application (activities, skills exercises, and formative testing) time will vary depending on the number of students enrolled. The Application time documented is based on the maximum class size identified in the Course Details section.
5. Summative Assessments are determined and scheduled by the authority having jurisdiction. These are not the written or psychomotor State Fire Training certification exams. These are in-class assessments to evaluate student progress and calculate course grades.

Unit 1: Introduction

Topic 1-1: Orientation and Administration

Terminal Learning Objective

At the end of this topic a student will be able to identify facility and classroom requirements and identify course objectives, events, requirements, assignments, activities, skills exercises, resources, evaluation methods, and participation requirements in the course syllabus.

Enabling Learning Objectives

1. Identify facility requirements
 - Restroom locations
 - Food locations
 - Smoking locations
 - Emergency procedures
2. Identify classroom requirements
 - Start and end times
 - Breaks
 - Electronic device policies
 - Special needs and accommodations
 - Other requirements as applicable
3. Review course syllabus
 - Course objectives
 - Calendar of events
 - Course requirements
 - Student evaluation process
 - Assignments
 - Activities
 - Required student resources
 - Class participation requirements

Discussion Questions

1. Determined by instructor

Application

1. Determined by instructor

Topic 1-2: Fire Investigator Certification Process

Terminal Learning Objective

At the end of this topic a student will be able to identify the courses and requirements for Fire Investigator certification and be able to describe the certification task book and testing process.

Enabling Learning Objectives

1. Identify the levels of certification in the Fire Investigator certification track
 - Not applicable
2. Identify the prerequisites for Fire Investigator certification
 - Not applicable
3. Identify the course work required for Fire Investigator certification
 - Fire Investigator 1A (2017 **or** 2022) (SFT)
 - Fire Investigator 1B: Interview, Evidence, and Documentation, and Wildland (2022)
or
Fire Investigator 1B: Evidence and Documentation (2017) **and** FI-110: Wildland Fire Observations and Origin Scene Protection for First Responders (NWCG) **and** Fundamentals of Interviewing (CFTITrainer.net) **and** Introduction to Evidence (CFTITrainer.net)
or
Fire Investigator 1B: Evidence and Documentation (2017) **and** Wildland Fires Investigation (CFITrainer.net) **and** Fundamentals of Interviewing (CFTITrainer.net) **and** Introduction to Evidence (CFTITrainer.net)
 - Fire Investigator 1C (2017 **or** 2002) (SFT)
 - PC832: Arrest (POST #80102)
 - Must be completed within two years of applying for certification unless candidate is employed as a peace officer
4. Identify the exams requirements for Fire Investigator certification
 - Not applicable
5. Identify the task book requirements for Fire Investigator certification
 - Fire Investigator Certification Task Book (2022)
6. Identify the experience requirements for Fire Investigator certification
 - A minimum of two (2) years' full-time paid experience with a recognized California fire or law enforcement agency
 - Investigate 25 fires as the lead investigator (verified in chief's, sheriff's, or equivalent's letter)
7. Identify the position requirements for Fire Investigator certification
 - None
8. Describe the certification task book process
 - Complete all prerequisites and course work
 - Submit application and fees to request certification task book
 - Complete all job performance requirements included in the task book
 - Must have identified evaluator verify individual task completion via signature

- Must have Fire Chief, Police Chief, Sheriff, or equivalent or authorized representative verify task book completion via signature
 - Must be employed by a California fire or law enforcement agency in the position prior to submitting completed task book to State Fire Training
9. Describe the certification testing process
- Not applicable
 - All formative and summative testing is completed in individual courses

Discussion Questions

1. Determined by instructor

Application

1. Determined by instructor

Topic 1-3: Foundational Knowledge and Skills for a Fire Investigator

Terminal Learning Objective

At the end of this topic a student, given NFPA 1033 and AHJ policies and procedures, will be able to describe the roles and responsibilities of a Fire Investigator in accordance with NFPA standards.

Enabling Learning Objectives

1. Describe the roles and responsibilities of a Fire Investigator
 - Apply all elements of the scientific method as the operating analytical process throughout the investigation and for determining both origin and cause
 - Recognize need
 - Define problem
 - Collect data
 - Analyze data
 - Develop hypothesis
 - Inductive reasoning
 - Test hypothesis
 - Deductive reasoning
 - Select final hypothesis
 - Conduct a scene site safety assessment
 - Maintain necessary liaisons
 - Adhere to all applicable legal and regulatory requirements
 - Understand AHJ organizational and operational protocols
 - Remain current in subjects related to fire investigations, including:
 - Fire science
 - Fire chemistry
 - Thermodynamics
 - Fire dynamics
 - Explosion dynamics
 - Fire investigation
 - Fire analysis
 - Fire investigation methodology
 - Fire investigation technology
 - Evidence documentation, collection, and preservation
 - Failure analysis and analytical tools
 - Fire scene safety
 - Hazard recognition, evaluation, and basic mitigation procedures
 - Hazardous materials
 - Safety regulations
 - Building systems
 - Types of construction
 - Fire protection systems
 - Electricity and electrical systems
 - Fuel gas systems

- Scene examination
 - Inspect, evaluate, and analyze fire scene or evidence of scene
 - Conduct a comprehensive review of documentation and media generated before, during, or after the incident if the scene is no longer available
 - Determine area or point of origin, source of ignition, material(s) ignited, and action or activity that brought ignition source and materials together
 - Assess subsequent fire progression, containment, and extinguishment
- Scene documentation
 - Sketch, photograph, and take field notes to use to document scene findings or prepare a written report
- Evidence collection and preservation
 - Use proper physical and legal procedures to identify, document, collect, and preserve evidence
- Interviewing
 - Obtain information regarding overall fire investigation from others
- Post-Incident investigation
 - Investigate all factors associated with fire incident
- Presentations
 - Present findings to individuals not involved in actual investigations

Discussion Questions

1. How do you apply the scientific method to both origin and cause?
2. How does a fire investigator work within the incident management system?
3. What forms of media are available to a fire investigator?

Application

1. Determined by instructor

Instructor Notes

1. None

CTS Guide: CTS 1-1

Unit 2: Scene Examination

Topic 2-1: Securing the Fire Ground

Terminal Learning Objective

At the end of this topic a student, given marking devices, sufficient personnel, and special tools and equipment, will be able to secure and survey the fire ground to protect all evidence or potential evidence from damage or destruction and ensure unauthorized persons recognize the perimeters of the investigative scene and are kept from the restricted areas.

Enabling Learning Objectives

1. Identify fire ground hazards
 - Exterior
 - Interior
2. Describe how to use marking devices, tools, and equipment for securing the scene
 - Establishing perimeters
 - Coordinating with other stakeholders, as needed
3. Describe the importance of establishing and maintaining fire scene security
4. Identify types of physical evidence
5. Describe evidence preservation
6. Describe issues relating to spoliation

Discussion Questions

1. What are some common hazards at a fire scene?
2. How is the perimeter of an incident determined?
3. What are some common ways to secure a fire scene?
4. What are ways of minimizing scene destruction?
5. How many people do you need to secure and survey a scene?

Application

1. Determined by instructor

Instructor Notes

1. Reference aerial images of fire scenes

CTS Guide Reference: CTS 2-1

Topic 2-2: Conducting an Exterior Survey

Terminal Learning Objective

At the end of this topic a student, given standard tools and equipment, will be able to conduct an exterior survey to identify hazards to avoid injuries, determine accessibility to the property, identify and preserve evidence, and interpret and analyze fire damage, including all potential means of ingress and egress.

Enabling Learning Objectives

1. Identify types of building construction
 - Single-family homes
 - Multi-family dwellings
 - Commercial structures
 - High-rises
2. Identify effects of fire on construction materials
3. Identify ventilation openings
4. Identify unique components of urban vs. rural environments
5. Identify potential exterior ignition sources
6. Identify types of evidence commonly found in the perimeter
7. Discuss potential media sources and their importance
8. Identify evidence preservation methods
9. Identify effects of fire suppression
10. Identify fire behavior and spread
11. Identify, interpret, and analyze fire effects and patterns
12. Identify dangers of hazardous materials
13. Identify weather conditions at the time of the fire
14. Assess fire ground
15. Evaluate the damage from and effects of the fire

Discussion Questions

1. What details might an exterior survey uncover?
2. How could weather affect exterior burn patterns?
3. What are potential media sources, and how might a fire investigator recover them?
4. What are types of ventilation openings?

Application

1. Divide students into small groups. Ask each group to establish a perimeter and conduct an exterior survey of a building that includes photographs of evidence. Have each group select a spokesperson to present their group's findings.
2. Final Activity: Conducting an Origin and Cause Fire Investigation

Instructor Notes

1. None

CTS Guide Reference: CTS 2-2

Topic 2-3: Conducting an Interior Survey

Terminal Learning Objective

At the end of this topic a student, given standard tools and equipment, will be able to conduct an interior survey to identify hazards to avoid injuries and identify and preserve areas of potential evidentiary value requiring further examination.

Enabling Learning Objectives

1. Assess structural conditions
2. Identify types of interior finishes
3. Identify fire behavior and spread
4. Identify evidence preservation methods
5. Identify fire effects and patterns
6. Document potential interior ignition sources
7. Recognize effects of building contents on fire growth
8. Identify relationship of building contents to the overall investigation
9. Identify the impact of fire suppression efforts on fire dynamics
10. Identify areas to determine the presence and/or absence of contents

Discussion Questions

1. In what ways does fire suppression affect an interior scene?
2. Why is it important to be familiar with the types of furnishings inside a structure?
3. Why is a lack of building contents significant?
4. Why is it important to know the position of contents prior to the fire?
5. Why is it important to understand the condition of windows and doors at the time of the fire?
6. What are some questions to ask suppression personnel?

Application

1. Display a variety of pictures and ask students to:
 - Identify the types of interior finishes and describe fire effects on them
 - Identify potential interior ignition sources
 - Describe fire behavior and spread
 - Discuss the effects of building contents on fire dynamics
 - Evaluate areas to determine the presence and/or absence of contents
2. Final Activity: Conducting an Origin and Cause Fire Investigation

Instructor Notes

1. None

CTS Guide Reference: CTS 2-3

Unit 3: Origin and Cause

Topic 3-1: Interpreting and Analyzing Fire Effects and Patterns

Terminal Learning Objective

At the end of this topic a student, given standard tools and equipment and structural or content remains, will be able to interpret and analyze fire effect(s) and pattern(s) to determine fire dynamics, development, and involved materials, using sequential pattern analysis; analyze the methods and effects of suppression and ventilation, recognize and interpret fire patterns to determine hypothetical areas of origin, and eliminate false or refuted hypothetical areas of origin; and test all fire effects and patterns against data to correctly identify the area(s) of origin.

Enabling Learning Objectives

1. Describe fire dynamics, including stages of fire development
2. Describe fire dynamics, including compartment fire development
3. Describe fire development and spread based on fire chemistry
4. Describe methods of heat transfer
5. Describe fire effects
6. Describe fire patterns
7. Describe fire pattern generation
 - Plume
 - Hot gas layer
 - Ventilation
 - Suppression
 - Full room involvement
8. Analyze variations of fire patterns on different materials with consideration given to HRR, form, ignitability and burning characteristics of the fuels involved, and the effects of ventilation
9. Describe building construction
10. Describe fuel gas systems
11. Describe electricity and electrical systems

Discussion Questions

1. What are some examples of fire patterns?
2. What are some examples of fire effects?
3. What are the stages of compartment fire development?
4. How are hypothetical areas of origin identified and eliminated?

Application

1. Activity 3-1: Interpreting Fire Dynamics

Instructor Notes

1. None

CTS Guide Reference: CTS 2-4, 2-5

Topic 3-2: Discriminating the Effects of Explosions

Terminal Learning Objective

At the end of this topic a student, given standard equipment and tools, will be able to discriminate the effects of explosions from other types of damage to identify an explosion and preserve its evidence.

Enabling Learning Objectives

1. Describe different types of explosions and their causes
2. Describe characteristics of an explosion
3. Explain the difference between low-order and high-order damage
 - Deflagration
 - Detonation
4. Identify explosive effects on glass, walls, foundations, and other building materials
5. Analyze damage to document blast zone and seat
6. Describe how to establish the perimeter at a post-blast incident

Discussion Questions

1. What is the difference between a positive and negative blast pressure?
2. At a fire scene, what can cause an explosion?
3. How far out would a perimeter be at an explosion scene?
4. How might an explosion scene differ from a fire scene?

Application

1. Determined by instructor

Instructor Notes

1. Clarify the differences in the applications of the terms “low-order” and “high-order” in fire investigation and explosives communities.
2. For assistance with this topic, reference Explosion Dynamics (CFITrainer.net).

CTS Guide Reference: CTS 2-9

Topic 3-3: Examining and Removing Fire Debris

Terminal Learning Objective

At the end of this topic a student, given standard or, if necessary, specialized tools, and equipment, will be able to examine and remove fire debris to discover and analyze fire patterns and fire effects concealed by debris, check all debris within the potential area(s) of origin for fire cause evidence, identify potential ignition source(s), and preserve evidence without investigator-inflicted damage or contamination.

Enabling Learning Objectives

1. Describe delayering techniques for debris removal
 - Gridding
 - Sifting
2. Discuss the use of tools and equipment during the debris search
 - Common
 - Specialized
3. Demonstrate and document search techniques that further the discovery of fire cause evidence and ignition sources
4. Describe the ignitability of various fuels
5. Describe characteristics of ignition sources
6. Describe ignition sequence
7. Identify types of fire cause evidence found
8. Describe evidence spoliation and techniques to avoid it
9. Describe evidence collection, preservation methods, and documentation

Discussion Questions

1. What should a fire investigator be looking for when removing fire debris?
2. What are the characteristics of an ignition source?
3. What is the purpose of removing debris in layers?

Application

1. Final Activity: Conducting an Origin and Cause Fire Investigation

Instructor Notes

1. None

CTS Guide Reference: CTS 2-6

Topic 3-4: Reconstructing Potential Areas of Origin

Terminal Learning Objective

At the end of this topic a student, given standard and, if needed, specialized tools and equipment, and sufficient personnel, will be able to reconstruct potential areas of origin to identify and correlate all protected areas and fire patterns to contents or structural remains, return items potentially critical to cause determination to their pre-fire location as a means of hypothesis testing to discover the area(s) or point(s) of origin.

Enabling Learning Objectives

1. Describe the importance and uses of reconstruction
2. Describe the reconstruction process
3. Examine the fire effects to determine pre-fire location
 - Protected areas
4. Identify potential area(s) of origin
5. Return materials to their original position using protected areas and fire patterns

Discussion Questions

1. What are different techniques for reconstructing a fire scene?
2. How do you determine the location of the contents?
3. How do you determine a potential area of origin?

Application

1. Final Activity: Conducting an Origin and Cause Fire Investigation

Instructor Notes

1. None

CTS Guide Reference: CTS 2-7

Topic 3-5: Inspecting and Analyzing Building System Performance

Terminal Learning Objective

At the end of this topic a student, given standard and special tools, and equipment, will be able to inspect the performance of building systems to determine the need for expert resources, consider an operating system's impact on fire growth and spread in identifying origin areas, identify defeated and/or failed systems, and recognize the system's potential as a fire cause.

Enabling Learning Objectives

1. Recognize different types of building systems
 - Detection
 - Suppression
 - HVAC
 - Electricity and electrical
 - Fuel gas
 - Compartmentation
2. Describe reporting features
 - Inspection, Testing, and Maintenance (ITM)
 - Activation history of the monitoring systems
3. Identify the types of expert resources for building systems
4. Describe the impact of fire on various systems
5. Determine the system's operation and its effect on the fire
6. Identify alterations to, and failure indicators of, building systems
 - Fire doors propped open
 - Sprinkler systems shut down
 - Detection systems disabled
 - Compartmentation or fire doors that do not confine a fire
 - Sprinkler systems that do not control a fire
 - Smoke control systems that do not function correctly
 - HVAC systems that do not perform adequately
 - Alarm bells that fail to provide prompt notification
7. Evaluate the impact of suppression efforts on building systems

Discussion Questions

1. What are some fire control structures and systems?
2. How can a fire investigator tell if a building system was functioning properly at the time of the event?
3. How does a fire investigator tell if the fire protection system is appropriate for the building's current use?
4. In what ways could an HVAC affect fire patterns?

Application

1. Determined by instructor

Instructor Notes

1. It is always important to consider the system's design and intention. Investigators should keep in mind the possibility that systems might not have failed to function, but rather, might have been overcome by the fire development.

CTS Guide Reference: CTS 2-8

How to Read a Course Plan

A course plan identifies the details, logistics, resources, and training and education content for an individual course. Whenever possible, course content is directly tied to a national or state standard. SFT uses the course plan as the training and education standard for an individual course. Individuals at fire agencies, academies, and community colleges use course plans to obtain their institution's consent to offer courses and provide credit for their completion. Instructors use course plans to develop syllabi and lesson plans for course delivery.

Course Details

The Course Details segment identifies the logistical information required for planning, scheduling, and delivering a course.

Required Resources

The Required Resources segment identifies the resources, equipment, facilities, and personnel required to deliver the course.

Unit

Each Unit represents a collection of aligned topics. Unit 1 is the same for all SFT courses. An instructor is not required to repeat Unit 1 when teaching multiple courses within a single instructional period or academy.

Topics

Each Topic documents a single Terminal Learning Objective and the instructional activities that support it.

Terminal Learning Objective

A Terminal Learning Objective (TLO) states the instructor's expectations of student performance at the end of a specific lesson or unit. Each TLO includes a task (what the student must be able to do), a condition (the setting and supplies needed), and a standard (how well or to whose specifications the task must be performed). TLOs target the performance required when students are evaluated, not what they will do as part of the course.

Enabling Learning Objectives

The Enabling Learning Objectives (ELO) specify a detailed sequence of student activities that make up the instructional content of a lesson plan. ELOs cover the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills students must master to complete the TLO.

Discussion Questions

The Discussion Questions are designed to guide students into a topic or to enhance their understanding of a topic. Instructors may add to or adjust the questions to suit their students.

Application

The Application segment documents experiences that enable students to apply lecture content through cognitive and psychomotor activities, skills exercises, and formative testing. Application experiences included in the course plan are required. Instructors may add additional application experiences to suit their student population if time permits.

Instructor Notes

The Instructor Notes segment documents suggestions and resources to enhance an instructor's ability to teach a specific topic.

CTS Guide Reference

The CTS Guide Reference segment documents the standard(s) from the corresponding Certification Training Standard Guide upon which each topic within the course is based. This segment is eliminated if the course is not based on a standard.

Skill Sheet

The Skill Sheet segment documents the skill sheet that tests the content contained within the topic. This segment is eliminated if the course does not have skill sheets.