

**FIRE INVESTIGATION TEAM
OF
CORTLAND COUNTY**

BY LAWS

NAME

The name of this unit shall be known as the "Fire Investigation Team of Cortland County" (FITCC)

MISSION STATEMENT

It shall be the mission of the Fire Investigation Team of Cortland County to provide emergency management officials with professional assistance in determining the cause and origins of fires covered by the fire departments within Cortland County; to integrate resources of the fire service and police agencies of Cortland County and to cooperate, for mutual benefit with those officials engaged in the investigation of fires.

TEAM

All members shall have equal status. The team shall:

1. Investigate fires and explosions when called upon by the senior fire official on the scene.
2. Provide a comprehensive training program for all members
3. Assist all members of the team in furthering their knowledge and expertise and cooperate fully with all members
4. The team will use the codes and recommendations of the National Fire Protection Association, American Standards for Testing, Underwriter's Laboratories, Factory Mutual, and the International Association of Arson Investigators.
5. Upon determining the cause to be of suspicious origin, shall immediately notify the appropriate law enforcement agency of that area as well as any other necessary investigative agencies.

COUNTY RESPONSIBILITY

1. **All members of the team shall be fully protected legally and medically by the Cortland County self-insurance plan while performing their assigned duties as approved in Resolution 143 of 1977, revised in Resolution 211 of 1983 and Resolution 230 of 2005.** This shall include participating in official capacity during training, travel to and from the scene of a fire, and while attending any meetings, conferences, seminars, or other official function.
2. All funding for training materials shall be funded by the County together with the necessary prescribed equipment as determined to accomplish the mission by the investigating personnel. Determination of necessary prescribed equipment shall be done through the normal operating procedures the of department head, legislative committee and through the normal budget process. Exceptions shall be made for the purchase of emergency equipment when deemed necessary.
3. All County government agencies shall cooperate fully with the Investigation Team when called upon for technical assistance and specialized equipment.
4. County transportation shall be made available to members of the team when requested by a team member to fulfill his/her duties. If County transportation is not available, the County shall compensate the investigator for mileage at the current rate at the time of occurrence.
5. It shall be the responsibility of Cortland County to furnish laboratory back-up assistance through procedures presently in effect through the appropriate law agency and all materials

and evidence to be forwarded to the laboratory shall be the responsibility of the law enforcement agency.

6. The Cortland County Director of Emergency Response and Communications / Fire Coordinator shall be responsible for all administrative duties between the County Legislature and the team.
7. All protective equipment, i.e. turnout coat, pants, boots, helmet, gloves, and County Identification tags shall be provided as available by the County for all investigators. If no gear is available, their sponsoring fire or police department shall supply it. All turnout gear shall comply with NFPA and OSHA regulations.

MEMBERSHIP

1. The FITCC shall consist of a maximum of 15 full members and 5 apprentice members. All members must pass a state and federal criminal and arson background check.
2. Full Members shall be an active member of a Cortland County based Fire Department or Law Enforcement agency with a minimum of five years of experience have completed the courses necessary for NYS level I Fire Investigator certification.
3. Apprentice members shall be an active member of a Cortland County based fire department with a minimum of five years of experience.
4. Members of the team shall accept the code of ethics of the International Association of Arson Investigators and shall perform their duties accordingly.
5. A quorum shall be constituted by 50% of team members in good standing. All present members shall have one vote.
6. No person shall be denied membership on the basis of color, race, creed, sex or religion.
7. No Team member shall conduct an independent investigation of any fire which the FITCC has been called to investigate.
8. All Team members are encouraged to become members of the International Association of Arson Investigators.
9. No member shall investigate a fire in their own fire department's district unless the officer in charge of said department grants permission.
10. No person shall conduct any investigation or participate on the team who has a previous conviction other than a traffic violation and shall notify the team of any conviction that occurs after appointment.

3. Upon activation of the team, the members shall notify the Communications Center that they are responding. Upon arrival at the incident, team members shall confer with the Chief Officer in charge, evaluate that situation and determine the plan of action. This could include calling for additional help, police agencies, specialized tools, or outside agencies.
4. If no response is obtained from the team, the communication center will reactivate for any available investigators to respond.
5. It is encouraged that a minimum of 2 investigators respond to all alarms.

TRAINING OBJECTIVES

1. It is the objective of the Assistant Team Coordinator to establish a comprehensive training program for all Team members. It is essential to the overall program that Team members avail themselves to this type of training and attend all of the training sessions. Continued absence of a member from training sessions will constitute a lack of training on their part and therefore they will not be able to perform the task of investigator to the best of their ability and may result in disciplinary action from the team.
2. Training sessions shall be scheduled after consultation with team members.
3. Training sessions shall be for team members, current County Chiefs, County Fire Coordinators and invited guests only.

CRITIQUE

1. A determination of the overall investigation by the members present will be finalized at general critique. At this time, all gathered information and evidence shall be examined and until such time as this critique is held, no probable cause shall be discussed.
2. The critique findings as determined by all members involved shall be considered to be the final determination of cause.
3. The critique shall be considered confidential. Team members and invited persons only shall be present.
4. No member shall make statements, either publicly or privately regarding an open investigation. All news releases and media contacts shall be made by the fire ground commander or his designee. No team members shall issue information to the news media except at the request of the Incident Commander.

REPORTS

1. A preliminary report for the IC will be given at the completion of the initial investigation, whether complete or incomplete. This report should be written.
2. Completed reports will be filed along with any picture or diagrams in the files maintained by the team. These reports shall be filed in a timely manner and no later than 21 days following the incident. Should the case remain open, a preliminary report shall be filed within the same 21 day time frame.
3. Any requests for reports and pictures produced by the Team from any interested outside agencies (i.e. insurance companies, attorney's, etc...) shall be forwarded to the Director of Emergency Response and Communications. A fee may be charged for said reports and pictures as determined by Cortland County policies.
4. All reports shall be completed on one form only, with said form provided by the Team.
5. Delinquent reports or personnel issues shall be referred to the Director to be managed at his discretion.

BYLAWS

1. The bylaws shall be reviewed annually the Fire Investigation Team members.
2. Thirty days notice shall be provided to all team members before voting on any bylaw changes.
3. To be adopted by the team, changes shall require a two-thirds (2/3) majority of those present.
4. After adoption by the team and before any changes become official, they shall be approved by the Cortland County Fire Coordinator's Office.

ADOPTED BY THE FITCC



JOHN TRAPHAGEN
TEAM COORDINATOR

DATE: 6/26/17

APPROVED BY THE FIRE COORDINATOR



SCOTT ROMAN
CORTLAND COUNTY FIRE COORDINATOR

DATE: 6/10/17