

Polson City/Rural FIRE DEPARTMENT Operating Guidelines

Issued By: Chief John Ed Fairchild
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312.00 Fire Investigations

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Purpose:

To provide a policy for the timely and efficient activation of the Polson Fire Department Origin and Cause Team in fire investigations. To ensure that a proper fire investigation is completed and documented.

Determining Need:

The Incident Commander will investigate all fires with the Polson Fire Department response area for origin and cause. Examples of incidents that will require investigations but not limited to all structure fires, any injury or fatality related to fire, any fire that is suspicious in nature, and any large dollar lost fire,

312.01 Activation of the Team:

At the request of the incident commander the team will be dispatched. The investigation team can also be dispatched through mutual aid if requested. Please refer to policy 311.00 for further details.

312.02 Called Out:

The team will call the dispatch and advise they are enroute to the incident and confirm directions. At this time, they will be told if the incident is secure and safe if at all possible.

Once on scene the lead investigator will contact the officer in charge and get updated and shown around the area of the fire.

At this time, the team leader will record that they are being requested to investigate the incident from the incident commander. This can be done through Lake County Dispatch or in the notes of the incident.

The lead investigator will all obtain a written or verbal consent to be on the property.
(Before leaving the incident a written consent will be obtained for the file)

312.03 Working The Fire Scene:

The team will do a size up.

Safety will be the most important part to ensure that nobody gets hurt during the investigation.

They will determine if they have proper lighting and may require a engine company to stand by during the investigation.

They will determine if there is proper ventilation for working the fire and is safe to be in there.

312.03 The investigation of the fire:

The team will use and will be guided during the investigation by the NFPA 921 Guide For Fire And Explosion Manual. Remember this is only a guide to assist you in completion of the investigation and at any time, the team may employ other outside assistance to complete the investigation.

312.04 The documentation of the fire:

The lead investigator will assign parts of the investigation to each member and will be so noted on the investigation package. It will show who is doing what part of the investigation.

The Investigation Package Will Contain The Following:

- A. The Narrative
- B. The Consent
- C. The Sketch/Diagrams/ Measurements
- D. Interviews
- E. Any Fact Findings
- F. Photographs:
 - Photos will be taken from the time you get out of the vehicle.
 - From all four corners of the fire scene. Photos will be taken from up close and away from the scene from all angles that are necessary. They may need the use of a ladder company to take pictures and one will be afforded to the team.
- G. Evidence Log
- H. The Investigation Package is Located On: Each Engine, each Staff Vehicle and Investigation Containers.

312.05 Evidence Handling:

All evidence seized will be given to the fire chief or incident commander of the incident for safekeeping (To be placed in secure containers and location. On Mutual Aid Fires, it will be the responsibility of the Host Agency). Evidence shall be handle per the policy of Polson Police Department or the Lake County Sheriff's to ensure its integrity for use at trial if necessary.

The lead investigator will prepare any evidence that is needed to be sent to the Montana State Crime Lab. He will call the crime lab and get all information they may need prior to sending and fill out the crime lab sheet and retain a copy of the form for the case file.

Pictures will be taken of the evidence prior to being removed and during packaging.

312.06 Report

The completed report will be given to the chief of the fire department. The lead investigator may retain a copy for his records.

Any costs obtained during the investigation will be the burden of the agency requesting the team.

They will not hold evidence for anybody unless it is from a fire in the Polson Fire Department response area.

No report will be released without written permission from the fire chief. It will be then documented who received the report and when. The requesting person will not receive any of the photos taken at the scene except through discovery motion.

312.07 Notification of the Montana State Fire Marshal's Office

The Fire Marshals Office will be notified and requested to respond to all fatal fires and any fire with an estimated fire dollar loss of \$200,000. All other fires will be at the discretion of the Incident Commander.

If the determination is made for the Fire Marshals office to respond to the scene, the investigators will assist the fire marshal on scene in helping investigate the incident.

It will be the lead investigators duty to make sure all forms are completed and a complete report is turned into the fire chief. A complete package will be filled out on all working fires.

A working fire is one that requires an engine company to go to work and put out the fire. Small brush/grass fires do not require a package to be completed unless set by an arsonist. Nor will a package be done on calls of a controlled fire or motor vehicle crashes (unless the crash results in a fire and causes serious injury or a fatality occurs. The Incident Commander may request the investigation team).

The Incident Commander regardless of the circumstances may request at the Investigation Team anytime. This policy will be followed for all investigations. All team members will be notified for each investigation. (No Exceptions)

312.08 Team Members

Team members may be notified by using the pager tones of the Polson Fire Department. In the event of Mutual Aid Request Polson Fire Department 311.00 Fire Investigation Team Activation will activate the team. Contact in order listed all members will be notified.

Name	Home Phone	Work Phone	Cell Phone	Pager
John Fairchild (OIC)	883-3977	883-8220	212-0042	
Martin Glasson (AOIC)	883-8021	883-1886	250-4733	
Greg Goldberg	883-1482	253-8719	253-8719	
Steve McCoy	849-5312	885-2788	471-9347	
Chris McGuinness	883-5622	883-4819	250-3467	

OIC – Officer In Charge

AOIC – Assistant Officer In Charge