

When It Comes to Fire Investigation, Credentials Matter, But Experience Matters More.

There's a growing trend of relying on fire engineers or fire behavior experts to analyze fire loss, origin, and cause. While those professionals bring valuable technical knowledge, they often lack something critical: real-world fireground tactical experience. An actual fire department fire investigator brings a fundamentally different perspective. There are five key areas that someone with actual fire department and fireground experience can be more beneficial.

Scene-Based Experience

They've worked fires in real time—seeing how conditions evolve, how structures fail, and how fire spreads under unpredictable, uncontrolled conditions. This isn't theory, it's actual lived experience.

Understanding of Fireground Operations

Fire department investigators understand tactics, suppression efforts, ventilation, and how firefighting activities impact fire patterns. That context is essential when interpreting burn indicators and determining origin and cause.

Cause & Origin Rooted in Reality

While engineers may rely heavily on modeling and post-incident analysis, fire investigators from the field know how fires actually behave versus how they're expected to behave in controlled or theoretical environments.

Credibility in Court

Juries and attorneys often connect more with experts who have "been there". Testimony grounded in firsthand experience carries weight—especially when explaining complex fire dynamics clearly and practically.

Holistic Perspective

A fire department investigator doesn't just analyze the aftermath, they understand the full lifecycle of a fire event: ignition, growth, suppression, and overhaul. This isn't to diminish the role of engineers or fire behavior experts; they absolutely have their place. But when the question is what really happened, there's no substitute for someone who has stood on the fireground and investigated the scene firsthand in the immediate aftermath, and understands that spoolation does sometimes occur, as well as how the scene presented as prior to overhaul and the efforts/actions of fire department personnel.

In high-stakes fire loss, injury, or wrongful death cases, that difference can be everything.