



The First Responder's Role in Fire Investigation Instructor's and Supervisor's Guide

This Instructor's and Supervisor's Guide accompanies the DVD "The First Responder's Role in Fire Investigation." This video demonstrates how first responders can contribute positively to the fire investigation by making observations at the fire scene, preserving the scene, documenting their observations and actions, and communicating them to command.

The goals of this Instructor's and Supervisor's Guide are:

- To provide instructional materials that support the video
- To help departments integrate the best practices into their response protocols
- To assist instructors and supervisors in showing department members what the specific observe, preserve, document, and communicate protocols are for their unit
- To stimulate discussion and information-sharing within the department's members about the video's best practices

Major Teaching Points

- First responders are in a unique position to contribute positively to the fire investigator through making observations, taking preservation actions, documenting these observations and actions, and communicating these observations and actions to a superior or the fire investigator.
- The fire investigator interprets the patterns and evidence s/he sees at the scene to make his/her determination. Those patterns and items of evidence must be available to be used.
- The scene should be maintained as close as possible to its original form
- Each scene should be treated as a crime scene and each item as a piece of evidence.
- The major categories of observations to be made are:
 - **F**ire characteristics and behavior
 - **I**ndividuals
 - **R**esponse actions (attack, suppression, overhaul)
 - **E**nter and exit points
 - **S**trange (things that are out of the ordinary)
- Evidence and burn patterns can be preserved through:
 - Limiting scene access
 - Using less destructive fire attack methods
 - Minimizing overhaul
 - Refraining from moving objects or changing positions on controls
 - Protecting fertile evidence areas



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- Observations and actions should be verbally relayed to investigators and, as warranted, documented in writing; they may be needed years later in a court proceeding
- It is critical to report your observations and actions to your supervisor or the fire investigator
- Implementing the best practices in the DVD and the accompanying materials requires a sustained effort

Lesson Plans

35 Minute Lesson Plan for Supervisors

“The First Responder’s Role in Fire Investigation” DVD was designed to be shown at roll call or training meetings both to teach best practices and to stimulate discussion about how your unit implements these best practices. If you have a limited amount of time, this 35 minute lesson plan will cover the most important topics. If needed, this lesson plan can be split into two 15 minute sessions.

Overview and Purpose	To educate first responders on the best practices in making observations at the fire scene, preserving the fire scene, documenting observations and actions, and communicating those observations and actions to the supervisor.
Topics Addressed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observations at the fire scene • Preservation of the fire scene • Fire suppression tactics • Overhaul • Documentation • Reporting
Materials Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The First Responder’s Role in Fire Investigation” DVD • A/V Equipment (tested prior to the session) to play the DVD • Handouts (sufficient quantities for all attendees): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ User’s Guide ○ Quick Reference Card ○ Fire Incident Response Data Sheet
Learning Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State why it is important to make observations and the scene and take actions to preserve that scene • List major categories of what to



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	<p>observe at the fire scene</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List best practices in preserving the scene • Describe fire suppression and overhaul tactics that help preserve the scene • Name specifically who to report observations and actions to at the scene
<p>JPRs from NFPA 1001: Standard for Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications</p>	<p>Fire Fighter I — 5.1.1; 5.3.4; 5.3.8; 5.3.10; 5.3.13;5.3.14 Fire Fighter II — 6.2.1; 6.2.2; 6.3.4</p>
<p>Content Presentation</p>	<p>2 minutes: Give quick introduction of overview, purpose, topics addressed, and learning objectives (all listed above). 15 minutes: Play “The First Responder’s Role in Fire Investigation” DVD 10 minutes: Group Discussion (see below) 5 minutes: Reinforcement (see below) 3 minutes: Distribute supporting materials (see below), summarize, and encourage use of other resources (see below)</p>
<p>Group Discussion</p>	<p>Discussion questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why should you report your observations and preserve a fire scene? • What questions do you have about specific best practices described in the video? • What can we be doing better in our unit’s response? • How are we going to make and record observations in our unit? • What, if any, changes should we make to our scene preservation actions based on what we saw in the video? • What, if anything, can we be doing differently in suppression and overhaul to better preserve the scene? • Who, specifically, do we



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	communicate our observations and actions to?
Reinforcement	Outline how your unit divides up the responsibilities in the video.
Distribution of Supporting Materials	Distribute the handouts and discuss how they are to be used: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • User's Guide • Quick Reference Card • Fire Incident Response Data Sheet
Summary	Summarize how your unit is implementing the best practices discussed.
Other Resources	Make the attendees aware of the expanded module available for free at CFITrainer.Net® (see section below for more information).

1 Hour Lesson Plan for Instructors

A classroom-based presentation of the material in “The First Responder’s Role in Fire Investigation” allows for an expanded lesson plan with additional academic content. A template PowerPoint has been provided for the classroom 1 hour lesson plan. This PowerPoint has two parts: 1) delivery of expanded academic content that reinforces and contextualizes the DVD video; and 2) a practical “fill in the blank” exercise where specific details pertaining to an individual unit or company can be covered. If the classroom session has a mixed, rather than a single department, audience, Part 2 of the PowerPoint can be skipped.

Overview and Purpose	To educate first responders on the best practices in making observations at the fire scene, preserving the fire scene, documenting observations and actions, and communicating those observations and actions to the supervisor and/or investigator.
Topics Addressed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observations at the fire scene • Preservation of the fire scene • Fire suppression tactics • Minimizing Overhaul • Documentation • Reporting
Materials Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The First Responder’s Role in Fire Investigation” DVD • A/V Equipment (tested prior to the



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	<p>session) to play the DVD and PowerPoint presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PowerPoint presentation with, if desired, red text replaced with details for your unit • Handouts (sufficient quantities for all attendees): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ User's Guide ○ Quick Reference Card ○ Fire Incident Response Data Sheet ○ PowerPoint slide printout
<p>Learning Objectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State why it is important to make observations and the scene and take actions to preserve that scene • List major categories of what to observe at the fire scene • List best practices in preserving the scene • Describe fire suppression and overhaul tactics that help preserve the scene • Name specifically who to report observations and actions to at the scene
<p>JPRs from NFPA 1001: Standard for Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications</p>	<p>Fire Fighter I — 5.1.1; 5.3.4; 5.3.8; 5.3.10; 5.3.13;5.3.14 Fire Fighter II — 6.2.1; 6.2.2; 6.3.4</p>
<p>Content Presentation</p>	<p>2 minutes: Give quick introduction of overview, purpose, topics addressed, and learning objectives (all listed above). 15 minutes: Play “The First Responder’s Role in Fire Investigation” DVD 15 minutes: Reinforce and expand on points covered in the DVD using the PowerPoint. (Distribute PowerPoint slide handouts at this point) 15 minutes: Group Discussion (see below) 10 minutes: Distribute Supporting Materials (see below) and discuss how to use them 3 minutes: summarize, and encourage use</p>



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	<p>of other resources (see below)</p> <p>Note: An excellent addition to this content presentation would be discussion with a fire investigator on specifically what first responders can do to assist him/her the most. If possible, the investigator should be one who typically investigates fires in the area served by the unit taking the training.</p>
Group Discussion	<p>Discussion questions (adapt as necessary to reflect the needs of the audience):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Why should you report your observations and preserve a fire scene?• What questions do you have about specific best practices described in the video?• What can we be doing better in our response?• In what ways can your unit make and record observations?• What, if any, changes should be made the scene preservation actions you are currently taking at the scene?• What, if anything, can you be doing differently in suppression and overhaul to better preserve the scene?• Who, specifically, do we communicate our observations and actions to?
Distribution of Supporting Materials	<p>Distribute the other handouts and discuss how they are to be used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• User's Guide• Quick Reference Card• Fire Incident Response Data Sheet
Summary	<p>Summarize the session and discussion.</p>
Other Resources	<p>Make the attendees aware of the expanded module available for free at CFITrainer.Net® (see section below for more information).</p>



Burn Integrated Lesson Plan

When conducting training that involves a live burn, the content from “The First Responder’s Role in Fire Investigation” can be integrated into the live burn experience. As part of the debrief after the live burn, this lesson plan will directly relate the best practices in “The First Responder’s Role in Fire Investigation” DVD to the live burn. It is an excellent way to practice what is taught in the DVD and link it to the unit’s specific implementations.

<p>Overview and Purpose</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To educate first responders on the best practices in making observations at the fire scene, preserving the fire scene, documenting observations and actions, and communicating those observations and actions to the supervisor. ● To link those abstract concepts to a specific fire burn experience, thus improving cognitive integration and retention.
<p>Topics Addressed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Observations at the fire scene ● Preservation of the fire scene ● Fire suppression tactics ● Minimizing Overhaul ● Documentation ● Reporting
<p>Materials Needed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “The First Responder’s Role in Fire Investigation” DVD ● A/V Equipment (tested prior to the session) to play the DVD ● Handouts (sufficient quantities for all attendees): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ User’s Guide ○ Quick Reference Card ○ Fire Incident Response Data Sheet
<p>Learning Objectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● State why it is important to make observations and the scene and take actions to preserve that scene ● List major categories of what to observe at the fire scene



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List best practices in preserving the scene • Describe fire suppression and overhaul tactics that help preserve the scene • Name specifically who to report observations and actions to at the scene • Relate concepts taught in the video to the specific burn experience • Foster group dynamic by following a burn with a group debrief in the context of observing and preserving
JPRs from NFPA 1001: Standard for Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications	Fire Fighter I — 5.1.1; 5.3.4; 5.3.8; 5.3.10; 5.3.13;5.3.14 Fire Fighter II — 6.2.1; 6.2.2; 6.3.4
Content Presentation	<p>BEFORE the burn: 2 minutes: Give quick introduction of overview, purpose, topics addressed, and learning objectives (all listed above). 15 minutes: Play “The First Responder’s Role in Fire Investigation” DVD 10 minutes: Group Discussion 1 (see questions below) 2 minutes: Summarize and distribute Quick Reference Card.</p> <p>AFTER the burn: 15 minutes: Activity — Break into pairs and interview each other about the burn using the Fire Incident Response Data Sheet. 10 minutes: Pairs report back on the interview results as recorded in their Fire Incident Response Data Sheet. 10 minutes: Group Discussion 2 (see below). 5 minutes: Reinforcement (see below), Distribute supporting materials (see below), Summarize, and encourage use of Other Resources (see below).</p>
Group Discussion 1	Discussion questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why should you report your



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	<p>observations and preserve a fire scene?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What questions do you have about specific best practices described in the video?• What can we be doing better in our unit's response?• How are we going to make and record observations in our unit?• What, if any, changes should we make to our scene preservation actions based on what we saw in the video?• What, if anything, can we be doing differently in suppression and overhaul to better preserve the scene?• Who, specifically, do we communicate our observations and actions to?
Group Discussion 2	<p>Discussion questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How difficult was it to implement the best practices in the video during an actual burn? What made it difficult, if it was, and what can be done to make it easier?• What, if any, discrepancies were there in observations recorded or preservation actions taken? What explains these differences?• How did what you saw in the video enter into your thinking and/or change your actions?• As a unit, what can we be doing better to improve our observation, preservation, documentation, and communication?
Reinforcement	<p>Outline how your unit divides up the responsibilities in the video, how well this worked in the burn, and what changes you can make.</p>
Distribution of Supporting Materials	<p>Reinforce the handouts and discuss how they are to be used in the field:</p>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • User's Guide • Quick Reference Card • Fire Incident Response Data Sheet
Summary	Summarize what was learned from this exercise.
Other Resources	Make the attendees aware of the expanded module available for free at CFITrainer.Net® (see section below for more information).

Ongoing Reinforcement

To keep these topics at the forefront of first responders' minds, periodically reinforce the concepts taught in the video. Here are some ideas for how to do this:

- Re-watch the video with the entire unit preferably every 3-6 months, but annually at a minimum. Discuss any changes that have been made in your unit regarding how the best practices are implemented. Discuss how your unit has improved its interaction with the fire investigation unit since you've last watched the video or had the training.
- When debriefing incident responses to fires your unit has worked, devote a few moments to discussion of the points on the Quick Reference Card and the Fire Incident Response Data Sheet as they pertain to that fire.
- Support your first responders' efforts to place the Quick Response Card in prominent locations.
- Implement the Fire Incident Data Sheet and attach it to your unit's reports.
- When new members enter your unit, as part of their orientation and/or as part of their on-the-job training requirements, have them watch "The First Responder's Role in Fire Investigation" DVD and then explain to them the practices and policies of your unit as it relates to the best practices taught in the video.
- Schedule a time for one of the fire investigators in your jurisdiction to come in and discuss their needs with your unit. Foster a collegial relationship and open communication between all parties.
- Host a "summit" where the firefighters, police officers, EMS, trauma teams and other emergency response professionals in your jurisdiction meet for refreshments. Watch the DVD together, or work one of the lesson plans, and then have a discussion about how you can work together to implement these best practices without duplication. Discuss how to divide the duties among the different services.
- Integrate this video into your fire academy or police academy's training using one of the provided lesson plans or one designed specifically for your jurisdiction's needs.



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Visit CFITrainer.Net® for Additional Training

For an expanded training opportunity in observing, preserving, documenting, and communicating, visit CFITrainer.Net®. CFITrainer.Net® is a free training resource for the fire service. A free module called “How First Responders Impact The Fire Investigation” is available. It contains additional information on these topics. You may choose to earn a certificate of completion for the module that can confer Continuing Education Unit credit.

Appendices: Resources

PowerPoint Presentation for instructors to teach the content in “The First Responder’s Role in Fire Investigation.”

Quick Reference Card for distribution to first responders.

Fire Response Data Sheet for use by supervisors, Incident Commanders, and fire investigators.



“The First Responder’s Role in Fire Investigation” Quick Reference Card

OBSERVE

Fire characteristics and behavior:

- Color of smoke and flames
- Velocity of smoke
- Light push or heavy push
- Height and level of flames
- Any odors
- Fire behavior

Individuals, including the demeanor, dress, location, injuries, smells, behavior, and statements of:

- Victims
- Witnesses
- Crowd members
- People leaving the scene

Response:

- Whether burglar and smoke alarms were sounding
- Fire attack pattern
- Suppression tactics
- Overhaul actions
- Moving furniture and contents
- Changing the position of any items

Entry and exit points:

- Condition of doors and windows upon arrival
- Were doors closed/open? locked/unlocked?
- Whether or not door had to be forced to make entry
- Condition of utilities upon arrival
- Who or what broke windows

Strange:

- Any item, condition, or absence of an item or condition that seems unusual, out of the ordinary, unexpected, or out of place
- Poor housekeeping
- Evidence of a possible crime

PRESERVE

Suppression:

- Tactics that preserve walls, contents, and patterns, including combination fog nozzles and hitting ceiling above fire instead of base of fire
- Only use as much water as necessary

Overhaul:

- Use thermal cameras to pinpoint hotspots
- Leave objects in place or as close to in place as possible
- Do not throw contents out of the room
- Do not break windows unless absolutely necessary
- Extinguish furnishings in place
- Do not remove sheetrock unless absolutely necessary
- Refrain from flooding floor with water
- Stop overhaul when reach a non-burned section
- Avoid using gasoline-powered tools

Control:

- Establish a perimeter
- Establish one point of ingress and egress and log in and out
- Limit scene access to only necessary personnel
- Keep civilians out of the fire scene
- Cordon off deceased victims

DOCUMENT

- Witness contact information
- Observations
- Written report preservation

COMMUNICATE

- To supervisor or fire investigator



Fire Incident Response Data Sheet

The responses on this data sheet can be attached to your standard fire report and/or communicated verbally to the fire investigator. They will provide additional important detail for the fire investigator.

1. Incident address:
2. Date and time of incident:
3. Weather:
4. Incident Commander:
5. First-In Unit Members:
6. Engineer:
7. What was the condition of doors and windows upon arrival? Was the entry door closed and/or locked? Which doors, if any, had to be forced?
8. What door was used for entry?
9. What door was used as secondary egress?
10. Were smoke or burglar alarms sounding?
11. Describe the smoke and fire conditions upon arrival.
12. How did the fire react to the application of water?
13. What, if any, smells were noted?
14. What fire suppression tactics were employed?
15. What, if any, objects were moved and where were they moved to during suppression and overhaul?
16. What individuals were noted (victims, witnesses, crowd members) and what were their conditions? Please list any contact information taken.
17. What, if any unusual items or conditions were noted or expected and absent?
18. What safety concerns were observed/noted during the suppression? Relay this information to the fire investigator(s) and/or command.