



# OFFICE OF INSURANCE AND SAFETY FIRE COMMISSIONER

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## FIRE INVESTIGATION CRITERIA

- a. Arson investigation assistance to local communities is one of the most critical services provided by the Department of Insurance and Safety Fire through the State Fire Marshal's Office Investigations Division. The purpose of these services is to determine the cause and origin of the fire and to assist local officials in the collection and analysis of evidence that may lead to prosecution of an arsonist. The Arson Unit also utilizes specially trained canines, available to communities to aid with evidence collection. A fire investigation may be requested by:
  - The mayor, fire chief, fire marshal or police chief of a municipality in which a fire occurs
  - A county or district judge, sheriff, county commissioner, county fire chief or fire marshal, chief or fire marshal of a fire department in an unincorporated area.
  - Officials of a state or federal law enforcement agency.
- b. Georgia experiences thousands of fires each year. Due to this immense potential need for fire/arson investigative services, the Department has adopted an investigation protocol as a guide for allocation of its resources.
  1. Fires that result in a fatality or serious bodily injury of one or more persons in
    - a. Residential
    - b. Commercial
    - c. Auto (Excluding auto accidents)
  2. Fires that are catastrophic in nature, which seriously affect the operation of an institution
    - a. Churches, Jails, Schools, Hospitals, library, police station, sheriffs office, fire station, jail, prison, airport, bank, courthouse or city hall, etc.
  3. Fires that pose a serious threat to public health and safety.
  4. Structure Fires:
    - a. Commercial Structure loss \$100,000.00 or more in value.
    - b. Occupied Dwellings
    - c. Un-occupied dwellings > \$ 100, 000
    - d. A fire or explosion which placed a member of the general public at risk of serious injury or death.
  5. Fires where the fire is believed to be the work of a serial arsonist or groups.

6. A fire/arson investigation in which there clearly is created a conflict of interest for local authorities.
7. Fires related to hate crimes
8. Other structure including barns, storage building, outbuildings etc, will be considered based upon the following criteria;
  - a. The aggregate of the loss exceeds \$ 100, 000.00
9. A suspicious fire where allegations of misconduct by a law enforcement officer, firefighter, or other key official has occurred.
10. Vehicle\Equipment fires > \$ 100,000
11. Other investigations assigned by the Commissioner of Insurance or State Fire Marshal.

Generally, an investigation will not be conducted by this agency if the one of the following three conditions exist.

1. Hazards of the investigation site clearly compromise the safety of the investigator and the risk outweighs the benefits.
2. The fire scene has been altered, or issues exist that would compromise any evidentiary value at the fire scene.
3. Known accidental fire causes.