

FIREFAX

VOLUME 27

AUGUST 2014

ISSUE 1



FROM THE DESK OF:



Becky Nelson

2ND VICE PRESIDENT and FIREFAX EDITOR

I hope this edition of *Firefax* finds everyone doing well and enjoying summer as it is quickly winding down. I also hope each of you have taken the time to register for the upcoming seminar. The seminar will be September 9-12, 2014 at the West Des Moines Marriott. The lineup is all arranged and the Officers and Board are hoping each of you find something during the seminar to help you with your continuing education needs.

You can go online and register and pay by visiting the website www.iowaiaaichapter.org. You can also fill out the registration and submit it via snail mail to:

Iowa Chapter IAAI Inc.
PO Box 65101
West Des Moines, IA 50265

We are extending the scholarship deadline to September 1, 2014, so if you have a student in college please go to the website and have them apply for the RC Hentges Scholarship.

Remember also during the annual meeting we will be holding elections. It is vital for the stability and growth of the Chapter to have member involvement and again I would encourage each of you to consider holding office. If you would like to be nominated for a position or know someone who is interested in holding an office please pass that information along to the Nominating Committee. The Chairperson is Director at Large East, Kurt Blackburn and he can be reached at f615@ci.davenport.ia.us

There is a proposed change to the Bylaws, which will be voted on during the annual meeting. This is a reprint of the proposed changes, which were originally sent by e-mail on August 9, 2014, by Secretary/Treasurer O'Connell.

PROPOSED BYLAW CHANGES

ARTICLE III

ELECTION, TERMS AND OFFICES

Section 1. Requirements to Hold Office.

- A. Must have been an active member of the Iowa Chapter for at least the previous 24 months.
- B. Must be a member of the IAAI, Inc..

ELECTIONS

- President
- 1st Vice President
- 2nd Vice President
- Secretary/Treasurer
- Director of Prosecution
- Director of Insurance



FROM THE DESK OF:

Mark Crooks

PRESIDENT

As I sit here writing this, summer is coming to a close and soon school will be starting. This has been a very busy year for me so far, both at work and at home. I have accomplished several goals and nearing completion of a few more. I'm looking forward to fall along with Friday night football games.

We are looking forward to seeing you at the annual seminar September 9 - 12th. The board has put together another great seminar at the West Des Moines Marriott. On Wednesday we will again be having a break out session for Basic Cause Determination. If you know anyone that would benefit from this class please let them know. The West Des Moines Marriott has been a really good venue for our training seminar and annual meeting and they have treated us well. However the board decided late last year to make a move to the eastern side of the state for 2015 (Davenport) and the western side for 2016 (Council Bluffs). We are excited for a change of scenery and look forward to visiting those cities.

The chapter has sponsored several training opportunities this year. These have included an Expert Witness Class in May, Lunch & Learns, and Burn Cell training. These sessions have been well attended and I want to thank those that planned and instructed at these events. You can find out about these training sessions on our web site at www.iowaiaaichapter.org. For those that are International members, CFITrainer.net is also a great way to keep up on training. The chapter also maintains our partnership with Columbia Southern University for higher education programs. I encourage all of our members to take advantage of this training and educational opportunities.

Two of our long time chapter members either have or will be retiring soon. Dennis Chapman recently retired from the Iowa DCI Crime Lab after a 40 plus year career. Alan Clark will be retiring from Grinnell Mutual Reinsurance Company with 33 years of service. Both of these gentlemen have served the Iowa Chapter in many capacities and continue to be active today. I want to personally thank them for their years of service and dedication to the chapter and also wish them well in their retirement.

Finally, I want to thank all of you for allowing me to serve as your Chapter President for the past 2 years. I have really enjoyed working with and being a part of the Iowa Chapter Officers and Board of Directors. I have been able to meet many people and learn many things and I am much better off because of it. Again, thank you for your support and I look forward to seeing you in September.



FROM THE DESK OF:

Kurt Blackburn

DIRECTOR AT LARGE, EAST

It has been over 20 years since the congressional study "America Burning." From those studies, one of the recommendations for preventing future fires is to investigate all fires as a part of fire prevention. Back then the problem was estimated at roughly 11 billion dollars a year in losses. In the 70's gas prices were 42 cents per gallon and a hamburger was 55 cents. That could put the amount for fire damage in the trillions with today's dollars if the problems were not addressed in the 70's. One fire chief estimated that half of the fires in the United States were arsons. So how much are arsonists costing your community if your investigator-prosecutor team is not strong?

One of the aspects that is not readily talked about is the importance of having a strong fire investigator-prosecutor team. As investigators we can perform

DIRECTOR AT LARGE *Cont'd*

excellent investigations and hand-in well written reports, but it does little good if we don't have a strong relationship with a prosecutor willing to try the case. Our job as investigators does not end after handing in our reports; we need to help our prosecuting attorney's with understanding the details and facts of the fire. What may appear as obvious to us is Greek to the general public, untrained attorneys and some Judges!

In the coming year, my goal is to hold multiple classes taught by the Scott County Attorney's Office on how Davenport's Fire Marshal has built a strong investigator-prosecutor team, developed over thirty years. If you have attended the Iowa Fire Marshal's Origin and Cause or an Iowa IAAI seminar in the last ten years, you have probably had a class taught by, or sat in the same classroom as the Scott County Attorney's Office. County Attorney Mike Walton and his assistant attorneys are deeply committed to the prosecution of arson crimes. The average arson conviction rate for arson crimes in the United States is estimated fewer than 10%. In Davenport, the one arson case has been lost in the last 30 years.

Per a report by FEMA, "Arson in the United States," the crux of the problem is that while physical evidence at the scene can directly prove incendiarism, the evidence linking the crime to the suspect is usually largely circumstantial. Thus, arson has been tagged "the most difficult crime to prove".

In the last year, I went through the Expert Witness Testimony Class and was told a story by a fellow classmate. He told me of a 1st Degree Arson Case that occurred in his county that involved a flammable pattern set in the living room by the husband while his wife was asleep in the bedroom. From interviews, the husband confessed to intentionally setting the fire, recorded in the interview room of the police department on video and audio. However, the county prosecutor was unwilling to take the case because it was an arson case. The husband was set free after committing and aggravated crime. This case haunts me and a result of not have a strong fire investigator-prosecutor relationship.

A few things your county attorney's office can do includes:

- Writing search warrants
- Trial preparation
- On scene legal advice
- Advice on the quality of the case or evidence from the court's point of view

Remember, firefighters enter a private residence under exigent circumstances and the fire investigator can enter the fire scene to investigate the fire under a reasonable amount of time. Once the investigator starts to suspect the fire is criminal, items outside of plain view are off the table without a search warrant. As the lines get blurred of the legality of collecting evidence, being able to talk to your prosecuting attorney's office will help prevent evidence being thrown out in court. The attorney's perspective is that of the courtroom. Investigators may not be concerned with how things appear in court because they tend to concentrate on just the facts. However, the attorney has to care because appearances in court are vital in getting convictions.

In a publication by the Jefferson Institute for Justice, eight steps are given to improve relationships with your county attorney's office:

- The first step starts with an agreement between the prosecutor, the local fire department's fire marshal, and the local police department or sheriff's department to work together in controlling arson crimes and better protecting the public.
- The second step examines ways in which this agreement is made into policies that lead to workable procedures to educate both the investigator and the prosecutors about the needs and limits of two different perspectives.
- The third step presents some techniques for improving the quality and timeliness of investigator reports.
- The fourth step examines ways to make investigator contact with prosecutor's office easier and more effective. Being able to call your prosecutor while on scene of the investigation is valuable for the investigator in attaining legal advice and where the

DIRECTOR AT LARGE *Cont'd*

investigation can be strengthened from the court's perspective. From the attorney's perspective, being able to get in contact with fire investigators with ease, helps develop their case. Assistant Scott County Attorney Kim Shepherd says the ease of contacting the Davenport Fire Marshal's Office helps. More specifically, Mrs. Shepherd being able to get a hold of any of the fire investigators, at any time, by contacting the Fire Marshal, makes her job easier. The Davenport Fire Marshal also assists in serving subpoenas for witnesses and any other task the prosecutor may need assistance with. No task is too bit or too small; this helps with the investigator-prosecutor relationship.

- The fifth step looks at how law enforcement can help the prosecutor as their case moves toward trial and disposition. Remember, the investigators are the fire experts and can give expert opinions on evidence regarding fire patterns, fire behavior and fire chemistry.
- The sixth step promotes sharing successes with investigators and developing long-term relationships between investigators and prosecutors. An easy thing to do is to take the prosecutors out to lunch after their closing arguments while the jury meets to discuss the case. If they are too busy, bring them lunch. Everyone needs to eat and after a case, the prosecutor's mind is consumed with the case. This is a perfect time to talk about the case.
- The seventh step addresses the power of joint investigator-prosecutor operations.
- The eighth and final step focuses on the improvements that investigators and prosecutors together can make in the community if they reach beyond their traditional duties.

Please join us for lunch and learns in the upcoming months as we discuss the investigator-prosecutor teamwork.



FROM THE DESK OF:



Jeff Haler

DIRECTOR OF DETECTION

I was recently on a scene examination of a condo that was built within the last ten or fifteen years. The fire originated in the kitchen area. When I was in the basement looking up at the hole in the floor directly below the area of origin I started to look at the building material and thinking about the structural integrity of the floor above. This made me think that we need to be careful during our scene exams. With the new lightweight construction being used it does not take much to compromise these structures.

For those who investigate fire only in a certain jurisdiction if possible try to get out to some of these new construction sites and look at how these building are constructed and visit with the contractors to get information. If you do examinations in all kinds of jurisdictions maybe if you can get out in your own community and see what is being used in construction.

The construction industry is using lightweight building materials on most residents these days. Most floor joist you will see are the wood I-beam which is constructed of 2x4 or even 2x2 cords and a 3/8 inch wooden web which is made of particle board. Particleboard is no more than wood chips and glue compressed together. These wooden webs usually have knockouts for running the plumbing, electrical, ductwork and what else needs to be run in the area. Sometimes these knockouts are not exactly where someone wants to run something so they may cut holes in the wooden web where there are no knockouts this will compromise the structure.

Laminated beams are being used for structural strength in some structures. Laminated beams are just multiple thinner boards glued together. Most of the rafters are held together with gusset plates, which are

DIRECTOR OF DETECTION *Cont'd*

metal plates of different sizes with spikes punched out of the metal to be driven into the wood joints to hold them together. I saw an article awhile back about out in NJ some rafters were being built that were just finger jointed together with some glue and held in place by the weight of the structure. Then there are some structures that may have steel trusses and even steel framing used.

With all this in mind we need to remember that it does not take much heat to compromise steel needless to say that it takes less to affect glue. With all this in mind we need to think about the structure that we are examining. What has been compromised and what was the strength before the fire to start out with. Another thing we need to keep in mind is if firefighting activities compromised the structure also. The extra weight of the water or in the winter ice on the roof or floors or both. With all of this information and other things that may affect the structural integrity we need to be careful. If you are on a site by yourself let someone know where you are when you arrived and when you plan to be done and that you will contact them when you are finished. In this day and age with our cell phones we should always be able to contact people, as we need to.

MINUTES FROM THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ARSON INVESTIGATORS IOWA CHAPTER

April 11, 2014

I. Call to Order

The monthly meeting of Officers and Directors of the Iowa Chapter of the International Association of Arson Investigators was called to order by President Crooks at 10:34 AM at the DCI Crime Lab, Ankeny, Iowa.

II. Roll Call

Roll call of Officers and Directors:

Mark Crooks – President –Present

John Grier – 1st Vice President –Conference Call

Becky Nelson- 2nd Vice President- Excused

Paul O'Connell – Secretary/Treasurer - Present

Greg Siembieda – Director of Investigation - Excused

Zach Spykerman – Director of Insurance – Present

David May – Director of Prosecution – Present

Jeff Haler – Director of Detection – Excused

Jeff Hutcheson – Director at Large, West – Excused

Kurt Blackburn – Director at Large, East – Conference Call

Dennis Chapman- Past President- Present

Alan Clark- Past President- Excused

III. Secretary/Treasurers Report

1. Minutes: Motion to accept from 1/24/14 by Grier, 2nd by Spykerman. Passed.
2. Finances: \$28,025.86 in checking account, \$15,973.12 in CD's, \$25 savings.
3. Treasurer report: Motion to accept by May, 2nd by Spykerman. Passed.

IV. Officer and Board Reports

1. President Crooks
 - a. Had IAAI conference call on March 12th. Date is set for 2015 ITC, May 17-22 in Chicago at Hyatt Rosemont near O'Hare Airport.
 - b. Spoke at SW Community College.
 - c. Helped at 2 week arson school at IFSTB with Zach.
2. 1st Vice President Grier- no report
3. 2nd Vice President Nelson- no report- she is at school being certified for reading black boxes in cars involving accidents.
4. Dir. Prosecution May
 - a. attended IA-NE IASIU conference.
5. Dir. At-Large West Hutcheson- no report
6. Dir. At-Large East Blackburn
 - a. Interested in Lunch-n-Learn for Davenport area involving Company Officer/OIC Investigation. O'Connell will work with Blackburn to get scheduled.
7. Dir. Detection Haler- no report
8. Dir. Investigation Siembieda- no report
9. Dir. Insurance Spykerman
 - a. Burn Cells to take place at Spencer on June 11th, GMRC and Iowa Chapter. May do some in Dubuque in July.
 - b. Helped with burn cells at 2 week arson school.

V. Committees-

1. Site Selection- Clark- no report
 - a. Crooks has been receiving emails from places in Waterloo and Cedar Rapids interested in hosting future seminars.

2. Financial Review- no report
3. Awards- Siembieda- no report
4. CFI- Hutcheson- no report
 - a. Crooks passed on information from one of the State agents to Smith that is interested.
5. Chaplain- Hartzler- no report
6. Historian- Clark- no report
7. Communications- Siembieda- no report
 - a. O'Connell will get with Siembieda about adding email addresses to the website.
8. Constitution/By-laws- Hutcheson- no report
 - a. The board discussed about keeping the registration fees for the Board for annual seminar at the discretion of the current President.
9. Ethical Practice, Grievance & Appeal- May- no report
10. Membership- O'Connell-
 - a. 3 new member applications were voted on and accepted (Stuart Wilson- Urbandale FD, Ryan Iossi- Davenport FD and Josh Humphrey- Iowa County Emergency Manager)
 - b. 18 new members for 2014 so far.
11. Nominations- Blackburn- no report
12. Scholarship- Grier
 - a. Form has been updated on the website.
13. Past President Council- Chapman- no report
14. Training- Spykerman-
 - a. Expert Witness- will not be in May. Future date to be determined yet.
 - b. Lunch-n-Learn in WDM on April 29th and May 1st in Ankeny about Company Officer/OIC duties to help the Fire Investigator.

VI. 2014 Conference

1. Waiting to get all speaker information to finish the brochure
2. Discussion on Seminar attendee gift. Ideas discussed were challenge coins, hats, stocking hats.
3. Spykerman brought up idea of items for candystore and not keep inventory. He will get with Siembieda about having a "mock up" of items for people to order and include shipping costs to be sent to the buyer. Blackburn is also checking with someone about challenge coins. Car decals were also discussed to sell.
4. Nelson is working with the Visitors Bureau and O'Connell is working on Hotel nights.

VII. 2015 Conference- no report

VIII. Old Business

1. Chapter Mission Statement- Grier working on it and will send document out to the Board.
2. Iowa Fire Invest Cert and IAAI CFI- Spykerman and Crooks met with Novak and he is looking into the situation.
3. New Laptop- O'Connell has purchased and came in under budget to include software, bag and backup hard drive.

IX. New Business-

1. Two Week Arson School- It has been mentioned that the current upper level management in the State Fire Marshal Division does not want the 2 week school to continue. They feel it has not value and there is no benefit from the program. This past class had 41 attendees for the 40 spot class. Discussion was that this class seemed like the best taught and prepared out of any.
2. Past President Clark is officially retiring in December 2014

X. Good of the Chapter

1. Director May brought up a discussion about statutes on legalities of cooking meth causing an explosion in the house. How does insurance view a structure burning caused by illegal activities?

XI. Adjournment

1. Next meeting will be held at DCI Lab in Ankeny on Friday August 8, 2014 at 10:00 hours. O'Connell will send out a meeting invite by email.
2. Motion to adjourn at 11:42 hours by May, 2nd by Spykerman.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul O'Connell

Secretary/Treasurer

Iowa Chapter IAAI Inc.

The opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the IAAI or the Iowa Chapter IAAI.

Please, if you have any suggestions for improvements or changes to the newsletter send me an e-mail at: bnelson@gmrc.com.

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REGISTRATION INFORMATION



West Des Moines Marriott

1250 Jordan Creek Parkway
West Des Moines, Iowa 50266



Make your own reservations – Phone: 515-267-1500 (Single – \$109 + tax)

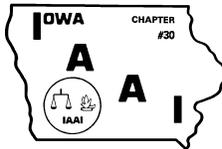
Room block will be held until August 27, 2014

Registration for Iowa Chapter members is \$250 prior to August, 25, 2014. This includes noon meals, BBQ ticket and one banquet ticket. After August 25, 2014, the price is \$275. One-day registration is \$100, does not include banquet, BBQ or membership. Extra banquet tickets may be purchased for \$35 each. Registration for non-Iowa Chapter members is \$350 prior to August 25, 2014, after August 25, 2014, the price is \$375.

The seminar registration **does not include membership** Iowa Chapter membership is \$30.

Send registration form to:

Iowa Chapter IAAI INC.
PO Box 65101
West Des Moines, IA 50265



ALL SEMINAR ATTENDEES ARE REQUIRED TO WEAR THEIR NAME TAGS AT ALL SEMINAR ACTIVITIES.



Please Note:

On WEDNESDAY – Classes are running concurrently. The BASIC FIRE CAUSE DETERMINATION (Jeff Hutcheson & John Ticer) and VENTILATION EFFECTS ON FIRE & EXPLOSION AND EXPLOSIONS & THE DEBRIS FIELD (Peter Dahl). ***Please indicate below which class you will be attending.***

- Wednesday class with Jeff Hutcheson and John Ticer
 Wednesday class with Peter Dahl

ELECTIONS

The Chapter has the following positions open for elections: President, First Vice President, Second Vice President, Secretary/Treasurer, Director of Insurance, and Director of Prosecution

SEMINAR REGISTRATION FORM

Please Print or Type

Name: _____

Address: _____

Employer: _____

Telephone: Home Number _____ Work Number _____

E-mail: _____ IAAI Member? Yes No

Seminar Registration \$250: _____



2014 Iowa IAAI Conference

September 9-12, 2014



TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2014

1:00 p.m.	Board Meeting
3:00 p.m.	Registration/Display Room Set-up
5:00 – 7:00 p.m.	Early Registration
7:00 – 9:00 p.m.	<i>Insurance for Fire Service & Law Enforcement Investigators</i> – Alan Clark

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2014

7:30 – 8:30 a.m.	Registration
8:30 – 9:00 a.m.	Opening Ceremonies President Mark Crooks Nominating Committee Report
9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.	RUNNING CONCURRENTLY <i>Basic Fire Cause Determination</i> – Jeffrey Hutcheson & John Ticer and <i>Fire Growth & Development and its Effects on Origin Determination Based on Ventilation</i> – Peter Dahl
12:00 – 1:00 p.m.	Lunch (Provided)
1:00 – 5:00 p.m.	RUNNING CONCURRENTLY <i>Basic Fire Cause Determination (Continued)</i> – Jeffrey Hutcheson & John Ticer and <i>Explosions & How the Debris Field can Assist in Origin Hypothesis Development</i> – Peter Dahl
5:00 – 6:00 p.m.	Sectional Meetings
6:30 p.m.	Reception (Cash Bar) & Barbeque

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2014

8:00 – 11:00 a.m.	<i>Emerging Trends in the Investigation of Insurance Claims</i> – Matthew Smith, Esq.
11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.	Annual Meeting
12:00 – 1:00 p.m.	Lunch (Provided)
1:00 – 5:00 p.m.	<i>Combating the CSI Mystique: The Effect of Television and Movies on Claims Investigation and Courtroom Testimony</i> – Matthew Smith, Esq.
6:00 – 6:30 p.m.	Social Hour (Cash Bar)
6:30 p.m.	Banquet

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2014

8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.	<i>Civil Litigation for Fire Investigators</i> – Sean O'Brien and Dave May
12:00 p.m.	Seminar Test