

ROGUE VALLEY FIRE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION

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Purpose

The purpose of the Rogue Valley Fire Investigation Team (RVFIT) of the Rogue Valley Fire Chiefs Association is to provide a forum for member fire investigators to:

1. Share information of professional interest;
2. Improve fire investigation techniques and outcomes;
3. Support each other's jurisdictions in times of need;
4. Develop and maintain camaraderie amongst fellow professionals for the purpose of providing quality fire investigation services throughout the membership's two counties and;
5. Enhance our image in the eyes of the public we serve and our peers by individually and collectively embracing the IAAI Code of Ethics.

This organization shall be known as the Rogue Valley Fire Investigation Team (RVFIT).

Scope

The RVFIT is a sub-unit of the Rogue Valley Fire Chiefs Association (RVFCA) and includes all member agencies of the RVFCA. Participating governmental agencies are those Federal Forestry, State Forestry, State Fire Marshal, State Police, Public Fire Departments, County Sheriff's, Police, and District Attorneys located in the Rogue Valley.

Authority

The authority of the RVFIT to exist comes from the endorsement of the parent organization, the Rogue Valley Fire Chiefs Association.

Membership

There shall be two categories:

1. **Investigative membership** shall be made up of personnel from fire, forestry, law enforcement, and other governmental agencies involved in fire investigation.

2. **Associate Member** is those individuals with special expertise solicited to assist the investigative membership.

Membership Requirements

Due to the sensitive and specialized nature of work involved in fire investigation, membership shall be contingent upon the candidate's compliance with the IAAI's Code of Ethics.

Each applicant must submit a letter of authorization to join the RVFIT from the chief executive officer (or his/her representative) of their governmental organization to the President of the Rogue Valley District IAAI.

Meetings

The Rogue Valley District IAAI shall serve as the forum in which the RVFIT members conduct their business.

Organizational Guidelines

A. Structure

1. At all times, the agency in which the need for assistance originates will retain authority over the fire incident as outlined in ORS 476.210, including but not limited to all administrative functions and approving and supervising news releases and inquiries from the insurance carriers.
2. The initiating agency retains the right to deny entry of any team member to their fire scene.
3. The RVFIT shall not be an agent for, nor join interests with any private party, in the determination of liability, subrogation, and civil cases; other than the regular investigation and processing of arson fires.
4. A current telephone list of all participating agencies and investigative members, by county, will be maintained and updated annually by the Rogue Valley District IAAI Vice Chair. This list will be made available to all members and agencies, including the communications centers.
5. All RVFIT activations will be critiqued at a Rogue Valley District of IAAI meeting on a monthly basis.

B. Zones

1. The two participating counties shall be divided into their respective county, for more efficient use of personnel.

JOSEPHINE COUNTY

Applegate Valley Fire District #9 (Josephine County)
Grants Pass Department of Public Safety
Illinois Valley Rural Protection District
Oregon Office State Fire Marshal
ODF – Grants Pass
ODF – Illinois Valley
U.S. Forest Service – Grants Pass
U.S. Forest Service – Illinois Valley
Williams Rural Fire Protection District
Wolf Creek Rural Fire Protection District

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Bureau of Land Management
Grants Pass Department of Public Safety
Josephine County District Attorney
Josephine County Sheriff's Office
OSP – Central Point
U. S. Forest Service

JACKSON COUNTY

Applegate Valley Fire District #9 (Jackson County)
Ashland Fire & Rescue
Butte Falls Fire Department
Coestin Rural Fire Protection District
Evans Valley Rural Fire Protection District
Jackson County Fire District #3
Jackson County Fire District #4
Jackson County Fire District #5
Jacksonville Fire Department
Lake Creek Fire Protection District
Medford Fire Rescue
Oregon Office of State Fire Marshal

Prospect Rural Fire Protection District
Rogue River Rural Fire Protection District
ODF– Medford
U. S. Forest Service (Prospect, Butte Falls)
U.S. Forest Service (Applegate, Ashland)
Rogue Valley International Airport

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Ashland Police Department
Bureau of Land Management
Butte Falls Police Department
Central Point Police Department
Eagle Point Police Department
Jackson County District Attorney
Jackson County Sheriff's Office
Jacksonville Police Department
Medford Police Department
OSP – Central Point
Phoenix Police Department
Rogue River Police Department
Talent Police Department
U. S. Forest Service

C. Activation of Team

1. The authority having jurisdiction will notify their dispatch center to activate the team in the appropriate county. If insufficient resources are available, a second activation for the RVFIT in the other county may be done.
2. The dispatch center will contact one of the following dispatch agencies that maintain paging capabilities for the RVFIT:
 - a. Oregon State Police Dispatch
 - b. Josephine County 911
 - c. ECSO (Emergency Communications of Southern Oregon)
3. The Rogue Valley District IAAI Vice Chair shall ensure the above communications center have the up-to-date call-out list.

On-Scene Protocols

For safety and security purposes at least two (2) fire service/law enforcement personnel shall be on scene. Additional personnel may be assigned if required by the authority having jurisdiction's lead investigator or the incident commander. It shall be the authority having jurisdiction's responsibility to provide the lead investigator for each investigation scene. This responsibility may be transferred or delegated by law or through mutual agreement to OSP and/or the OSFM.

Recognizing potential financial constraints, each individual investigator will be limited to three (3), eight (8) hour working days on each fire scene.

This limitation maybe waived with the approval of that investigator's agency head.

RVFIT members subscribe to the fire investigation methodology described in NFPA 921. On arriving at the fire scene RVFIT members will check in with the lead investigator and collaborate on duty assignments, using the following format:

1. Obtain waiver to search when appropriate
2. Secure the scene
3. Photograph
4. Process exterior
5. Process interior
6. Collect and preserve evidence
7. Prepare scene diagrams and document evidence
8. Critique fire scene
9. Interview of subjects involved
10. Submit complete, accurate and timely reports to the authority having jurisdiction over the incident.

When determined that a fire is incendiary or involved another criminal act, the Oregon State Police Arson Unit or appropriate law enforcement agency will to be notified by the lead investigator.

Investigators shall strictly adhere to all State and Federal safety regulations.

Code of Ethics

Taken from the International Association of Arson Investigators the following provides our membership with guidelines to live and work by:

- I will conduct both my personal and official life so as to inspire the confidence of the public.
- I will not use my profession and my position of trust for personal advantage or profit.
- I will regard my fellow investigators with the same standards as I hold for myself.
- I will never betray a confidence nor otherwise jeopardize their investigation.
- I will regard it my duty to know my work thoroughly. It is my further duty to avail myself of every opportunity to learn more about my profession.
- I will avoid alliances with those whose goals are inconsistent with an honest and unbiased investigation.
- I will make no claim to professional qualifications, which I do not possess.
- I will share all publicity equally with my fellow investigators whether such publicity if favorable or unfavorable.
- I will be loyal to my superiors, to my subordinates, and to the organization I represent.
- I will bear in mind always that I am a truth-seeker not a case maker, that it is more important to protect the innocent than to convict the guilty.