

THE WASHINGTON STATE CHAPTER IAAI  
**ARSON REPORTER**

International Association of Arson Investigators Washington State Chapter - Spring 2009



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## Message from the Editor

Welcome, readers to Spring of 2009. As editor of the Arson Reporter, I am proud to produce this issue for the Washington Chapter of the International Association of Arson Investigators. The Arson Reporter is being sent to members of the Washington Chapter first, then extra copies will be sent to select individuals in surrounding regions and handed to fire professionals during meetings and events.



Investigation Conference, May 11-15th in Leavenworth, photography tips and techniques, and logical reasoning

Typical for an editor of a small publication, the editor must beg, plead, interview and research the profession from top to bottom to find meaningful information to publish. The objective is to have a simple, informative and fun-to-read resource for the industry.

Want to see your name in print? Feel free to send me an article!

This issue will present information on the Pacific Northwest Fire

Noel Putaansuu CFI,  
Editor of the Arson Reporter  
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**New address for International IAAI**  
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## Fire Investigator T-shirts for sale

Carhartt-navy blue long-sleeve shirts with "Fire Investigator on the back and the IAAI Washington Chapter logo on the front. To order yours, go to the IAAI WA Chapter website and download the order form.



# GIGGLES & GRINS

## Fire in the hole!

When the employees of a restaurant attended a fire safety seminar, they watched a fire official demonstrate the proper way to operate an extinguisher. "Pull the pin like a hand grenade," he explained, "then depress the trigger to release the foam."

Later an employee was selected to extinguish a controlled fire in the parking lot. In her nervousness, she forgot to pull the pin. The instructor hinted, "Like a hand grenade, remember?" In a burst of confidence she pulled the pin -- and hurled the extinguisher at the blaze.



## From the Washington Chapter President:

The Washington State Chapter is healthy. The chapters in the surrounding states of Oregon, Idaho, and Montana are also doing well and will be receiving this issue of the Arson Reporter. Up coming conferences are a good indicator of chapter health, and Oregon and Montana have indicated that they are planning conferences.

The Washington Chapter has a new method of joint membership. You can renew your membership at the International web site [www.firearson.com](http://www.firearson.com), and at the bottom of the form

you can add the Washington chapter to your international membership. One bill for both a local and national affiliation makes for a smooth process.

The Washington Chapter encourages participation in the IAAI Annual Training Conference May 17-22, 2009 in Arlington, Texas. There are exceptional presentations planned, and the central Texas location is ideal for a family holiday in conjunction with attending the conference. Go to [www.firearson.com](http://www.firearson.com) for registration information.

## NFPA 921 - Time to submit proposed changes



The primary guide to fire investigators is revised every 4 years. The process for requesting additions or changes is accomplished by completing the NFPA Technical Committee Document Proposal Form. The link is below.

<http://www.nfpa.org/assets/files/PDF/NFPAProposalForm.pdf>

The requested change will be reviewed and considered by the committee. This is an important part of the process resulting in a larger document while removing items of questionable value

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## Hands Across The Border

by Terry Zweng  
President, BC Chapter 15

On February 20, the Washington State Chapter of the IAAI hosted the 33rd annual Hands Across the Border luncheon and seminar at the Silver Reef Casino near Ferndale, Washington. As is the practice, the guest chapter provided the speaker. The theme "Crossed Wires" was in keeping with the many interesting and varied topics that have been presented over the years. The Keynote speaker was Steve Baker, the forensic electrical examiner for Fire Pro Investigations and also a Manager in the electrical department for the City of Vancouver.

Steve provided well-timed information on safety concerns for the Investigator regarding some of the developing green electrical technologies that are being utilized as we try and shed our dependence on fossil fuels.

Steve also spoke on how high resistance connections develop and cause fires. He



further discussed how to recognize these connections and the precision needed when gathering the evidence for proving one's hypothesis. Additional topics included the importance of arc mapping a fire scene, identifying electrical parts and their manufacturers, metal halide lights as ignition sources and the distinction between whether the electrical damage found at a fire scene is a cause of or a result of the fire.

The seminar ended with a hands-on examination of various electrical components gathered from different fire scenes. Attendees were asked to examine

and comment on whether the electrical damage was a cause or a result of the fire.

Many thanks to Noel Putaansuu, the President of the Washington Chapter for hosting the event and for providing working examples of a high resistance connection and a floating neutral. Also, many thanks to Steve Baker for a very interesting and informative presentation. Lastly, thanks to everyone who attended. I hope to see all of you next year in British Columbia.

## Pacific Northwest Fire Investigation Conference May 11-15, 2009 in Leavenworth, Washington

The 2009 conference has three tracks to choose from:

**Track A - Basic Fire Investigation** – A 36 hour class for those beginning in the field of fire investigation.

**Track B - Geographic Profiling and Geographic Aspects of Serial Arsons** – Led by a team of ATF agents, this track will explore the process of geographic profiling and how it can be used in serial arson cases.

**Track C - Electrical – Fire Findings and NFPA 921 (2008) Update** – Jack Sanderson of Fire Findings will be the



featured instructor on Tuesday and Wednesday; Thursday will cover changes to NFPA 921.

And, you won't want to miss this year's opening and closing guest instructors! Agents from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives will be

speaking on Geographic Profiling, the use of fire in Filicide, and Computer Forensics.

Register today using the form and brochure at [www.iaai-wa.org](http://www.iaai-wa.org).

# Logical reasoning

There are three primary methods of logical reasoning:

- Deduction
- Induction
- Abduction

Deduction is the process of deriving the consequences of what is assumed. For example, if it is given that the sum of the angles is  $180^\circ$  (as it is in all planar triangles) and if two angles of one triangle are known, then the third angle can be deduced.

Induction is the process of inferring probable antecedents as a result of observing multiple consequents. An example being that; all fire I have ever touched was hot. Therefore, you can infer that all fire is hot to the touch. One may still need to touch the fire to prove the inference as true. Empirical evidence is required for an inductive statement to be proven true.

Abduction allows the inference of A as an explanation of B. Abduction allows

the precondition A to be inferred from the consequence B. Abduction deals with creating a hypothesis for unknown events.

You see a fire pattern from a liquid pool. No pool exists at the time of your inspection; however, many of the indicators are present. You can abduct that a pool existed before and during the fire. You can abduct that the fire resulted from a pool of liquid.

Abductive validation is the process of validating a given hypothesis by abductive reasoning. Abduction does not test a hypothesis; Abduction can be used to create testable hypotheses.

Sherlock Holmes, the heroic character of Arthur Conan Doyle's novels, would often draw a conclusion from a myriad of unassociated facts and observations. While



he would state that he deduced the answer to the puzzle, it would have been better to characterize the logical process as "Mr. Holmes abducted the answer to the crime using the information collected and his experience in solving these types of crime puzzles."

NFPA 921 is in the process of revision. The deadline to submit proposals is May 29, 2009. It is anticipated that there will be strong requests to revise the logical reasoning references and scientific method. The word abduction is recommended to be within an investigator's vocabulary.

## TEST YOUR LOGIC

### Logical Reasoning Questions

Here is an informative exercise in Logical Reasoning using real world scenarios and data.

Imagine an electrical appliance and its power usage during operation under various loads. A few examples will be presented; as you think through the process and the possible outcomes, what type of logical reasoning are you using?

I used a Kill A Watt meter (model P4400), a power consumption meter that is not calibrated however is reasonably accurate for this type of use. A few normal appliances were operated and the power usage rate was recorded. There are no trick

questions here - try not to over think these.

1. A drill press motor uses 130 Watts while spinning freely in the air. When a  $\frac{3}{4}$ " forstener bit was plunged into a piece of wood until it stalled, was the recorded power usage rate higher or lower than the free air spinning tool? How much?
2. A portable tool charger for 19.2 volt batteries draws \_\_\_\_\_ Watts without a battery installed, \_\_\_\_\_ Watts while charging and \_\_\_\_\_ Watts after the battery is charged and remains in position.
3. A plug mounted black box transformer 12 volt 500 mA battery

charger pulls 0.03 Amps with an open circuit and \_\_\_\_\_ Amps with the leads shorted.

4. A 4.0 peak horsepower wet/dry utility vacuum is operated under the following conditions; rate the order of the of the power consumption from highest to lowest.
  - a. Intake and Exhaust ports open
  - b. Hose attached and open
  - c. Working at vacuuming a smooth floor.
  - d. Obstructed hose (no air flow and rise in motor pitch)

*Answers on page 7*



## New book "Fire and Materials 2009"

### Conference Proceedings: papers from the 11th international conference

The Fire and Materials conference was held in San Francisco January 26-28. At least three fire professionals went to present papers on the subjects of fire investigation. This conference is becoming the forum for leading edge science on the subject of fire. The conference is held in even numbered years in the US, and in Europe on the odd numbered years.

The conference produced a 960 page book containing the papers, 78 in all, presented at the 2009 conference on paper and on DVD. The conference attracted papers on the following subject categories

- Materials
- Testing
- Urban Wild land Interface
- Modeling
- Fire Resistance
- Transportation
- Furniture
- Investigation

The investigation category contained 19 papers from around the world. To obtain a copy of the conference papers and DVD contact:

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## Noteworthy papers

### **A Self-Heating Test Protocol by Fred Fisher P.E. and Patrick Pagni Ph.D., P.E.**

This paper presents the mathematical equation describing the parameters of a self-heating pile of rags. It also presents a simple protocol for evaluating an oil or liquid product for the propensity of self heating in a cotton matrix pile.

### **Electrical Arcing and The Law by Kevin Lewis , P.E. and William Pierson Jr. Esq.**

This paper presents the description of various types of arc patterns on conductors. That a sharp line of demarcation is present, that post-arc heating at temperature below 1066°C (1950°F) the features of the sharp line of demarcation are still readily identifiable.

### **Case Study: Fire Evolution In Infant Bedding Materials, Smoke Detector Response Time, and Tenability by Joseph Skaggs, Daniel Joyce and Kevin Lewis**

This paper presents the process of recreating a fire scenario and performing fire modeling using empirical fire tests data to predict the activation of a smoke detector and the time line to skin injury.

### **Do We Use Flammable Solids In Our Furniture and Mattresses by Marcelo Hirshler**

This paper characterizes polyurethane foam materials as flammable solids. It criticizes the CPSC for insufficiently recognizing and regulating the fire hazard of polyurethane foams. This is note worthy because you are likely sitting on a flammable solid as you read this.

### **Studies of The Dehydration/Calcination of Gypsum Wall Board by Dale Mann and Noel Putaansuu**

This paper presents the current knowledge and understanding of the calcination process. Gypsum wall board comprises the walls and ceilings of most rooms. Using a probe method and FTIR form a basis for understanding the process of calcination and how to find the calcination depth within the core of the wall board.

### **RSET/ASET, A Flawed Concept for Fire Safety Assessment by Vytenis (Vyto) Babrauskas, Joseph Fleming, Don Russell**

This paper presents the two major egress



models and their current use in the industry while criticizing the method using black and white information for what is essentially a gray area for egress times. The findings indicate that the models are not viable for certain conditions and examples are provided.

### **Forensic Fire Investigation: An Interface of Science, Technology and Law by Vincent Brannigan and Elizabeth Buc**

This paper will shake the foundation of logic in industry. This paper is likely the most influential document for making revisions to the scientific method in NFPA 921 as well as bringing the word abduction to the attention of the fire industry.

## Answers

*(Read Logical Reasoning Questions on page 5 first)*

The drill press motor power usage rate was higher when the bit was plunged into the wood and stalled. The peak measured value was 219 Watts. If you answered the question and then looked at the answer you may have induced the direction of the power usage change, however, you abducted the answer to "How much," using past electrical usage experience, and if you abducted correctly then that is a little scary.

The portable tool charger draws 0 Watts without a battery installed, 46 Watts while charging and 4 Watts after the battery is charged and remains in position. Any answer developed without looking at the answer sheet is purely abductive. Not enough information was provided to deduce or induce an answer.

A plug mounted black box pulled 0.41 Amps or 47 Watts. You could deduce that the unit would not provide more than 500 mA or 0.5 Amps.

The 4.0 peak horsepower wet/dry vacuum had the following measurements.

- Intake and Exhaust ports open  
960 Watts
- Hose attached and open  
930 Watts
- Working at vacuuming a smooth floor.  
910 Watts
- Obstructed hose (no air flow and raise in motor pitch) 680 Watts

The average person would be surprised that the obstructed hose has the least power usage rate. Think of the fan spinning in open air with open ports and the least restriction as moving the most air, and that is what loads the motor. When you add restrictions, the motor is moving less air and the spin rate of the motor

increases along with the pitch. When finally you allow no air to move through the system the load is near the lowest point.

You weren't really deducing, you were abducting. Deduction is the process of drawing a conclusion based on premises. If you use deduction, the conclusion must be true if the premises are true. With deduction the conclusion cannot be false if the premises are true. The strength of deduction relies on the strong premises, whereas the strength of abduction relies on the experience and knowledge of the person making the abduction.

If you abducted the answer, you likely found that you had a wrong answer. If you inducted but got the wrong answer, it wasn't a valid induction. If you got the right order and values, you likely peeked at the answer, or had empirical data.

# Battery 101

Disposable batteries can be purchased in bulk from various retailers. These are generally alkaline in the AAA, AA, C, D 1.5 volt and 9 volt sizes. Information coming in is that these types of stored batteries, at times, are in the area where some fires have occurred. The exact mode of failure is often difficult to determine.

In addition to alkaline, there are lithium batteries that are more expensive with higher energy densities and longer shelf life. Lithium when exposed to air will react with the moisture in the air and with the nitrogen, often with significant heat.

Lithium disposable batteries should not be confused with Lithium ion rechargeable batteries. Li-ion battery cells have a voltage typically in the 3.3 to 4.0 volt range per cell. Li-ion batteries are used in many laptop computers and cell phones. The advantages of long battery life and high energy densities are making them desired in modern electronics and power tools.

Lithium polymer or Li-poly batteries have many of the characteristics of Lithium ion as far as cell voltage; however, lower mass makes them preferred for certain applications. Lithium polymer batteries are sensitive to overcharging likely resulting in a fire or explosion. These batteries can be found in RC helicopters, planes and cars.

Rechargeable Nickel-cadmium or NiCd batteries are often used in toys and power tools. The 1.2 volt cell does not make it a good replacement for 1.5 volt alkaline batteries. Consider that a 4 cell battery array in series is 4.8 volts with NiCd and 6 Volts with alkaline batteries and a 9 volt NiCd battery with six cells may only produce 7.2 volts, you begin to understand that some devices are sensitive to the voltage difference. NiCd batteries have a problem with repeated short cycling, such as partially discharging and recharging. It is advisable to stretch the cycle by discharging the battery fully before recharging.

Rechargeable Nickel-metal hydride or NiMH batteries are similar to NiCd batteries with 1.2 volts per cell. They have measurable higher energy density and are considered to have lower impact on the environment. NiMH batteries can be found in hybrid vehicles, fully electric vehicles and consumer electronics.

Rechargeable Lead acid batteries have comparably higher mass and lower energy densities. The cell of 2.1 volts and the density of lead make this battery useful for non-portable electronics and starting vehicles. Overcharging a lead acid battery can result in the build up of hydrogen gas within the cell.

## Photo contest winners:

### First Place - Structural

Submitted by Joy Henley  
*Correspondent/Robinson News*  
*Local citizen*



Amid three deaths, arson clues, investigation and findings, rubble reveals a lingering spirit of tears, bliss, love, celebrations and cherished memories - left by former dwellers.

### First Place - Vehicle

Submitted by Rusty Olsen CFI, CFEI  
*City of Kent Fire Investigator*



Firefighter disrupts some burning debris on a golf cart causing flare up. Arson fire with no arrests.



# Photography

by Noel Putaansuu

Who doesn't have need for improving their photography skills? There are many facets of fire scene photography and many skills that can be improved upon. Fire scenes provide a unique set of photographic challenges; they are typically dark with dark surfaces, dirty, wet or dusty.

A fire investigator may take far more photographs in a given time period than an average photographer. The question is often asked, "How many photographs are appropriate for a fire scene?" The answer varies from person to person. To answer the question you might think of it like this: Will the photographs answer all the questions that may be asked concerning this fire scene when the investigator was present? It is not uncommon to take 100 or 200 photographs during a fire scene examination on a given day.

Take photographs of the following:

- Each side of the structure
- Each room in the structure
- Every window, door, or path of entry
- Each side of the area of interest. Wide angle, medium and close-up.

## Equipment

- **Cameras:** There is always newer equipment coming out. Know your camera, the ISO range, the macro mode, the aperture mode. Some cameras have a low light setting. When looking at new equipment choose the camera that has a large light gathering lens and external flash mounts. There are good deals on cameras at pawn shops and craigslist.
- **Lighting:** The flash on a point and shoot camera has a limited range. In a small residence the flash may be adequate; however in larger subjects the use of additional lighting may be beneficial. Additional lighting may be halogen work lights, hand lights or external flashes.
- **Stands:** Keeping your camera out of the muck is a good idea. Holding the camera steady for long shutter exposures, due to low light is also beneficial.



From one of our readers: I read with interest the description of the DIY Milk Ring Flash gadget in the Fall 2008 edition of the Arson Reporter. Our Spokane County Fire District 9 Fire Investigation Task Force had just held a training session on digital camera techniques for macro and super-macro photographs in which we struggled with both glare and the lens shadow in low light situations. After conducting the experiment shown below, we have outfitted all of our investigation cameras with milk ring flash diffusers.



Exhibit 1

Exhibit 1. We used the macro mode in low light without a milk ring flash diffuser. Note the presence of both glare and lens shadow problems.



Exhibit 2

Exhibit 2. We used a single layer of polyethylene from a gallon milk jug which although it significantly improved the lens shadow problem, still left us with glare.



Exhibit 3

Exhibit 3. We tested the theory that if one was good, two would be better – and it proved true. By sliding on a second piece of polyethylene we solved both our glare and lens shadow problems.



Exhibit 4

Exhibit 4. The polyethylene gallon jug that we used had molded-in circle indentations on two sides which, when cut out, worked perfectly for the lens.

*Chris Hamp - IFSAC  
Fire Investigator Member,  
Spokane County  
Fire District 9  
Fire Investigation Task Force*

# Training opportunities

## Pacific Northwest Fire Investigation Conference May 11-15, 2009

Leavenworth, Washington  
 Register using the form and brochure at [www.iaai-wa.org](http://www.iaai-wa.org)  
 Track A Basic Fire Investigation  
 Track B Geographic Profiling and  
 Geographic Aspects of Serial Arsons  
 Track C Electrical – Fire Findings and NFPA 921 Update  
 Jack Sanderson of Fire Findings will be one of the  
 featured instructors

## IAAI Oregon Chapter Training September 21 – 24, 2009

Hood River Inn  
 Hood River, Oregon  
[www.or-iaai.org](http://www.or-iaai.org)



GIGGLES  
& GRINS

### The blind firemen golfers

There were those three guys, a priest, a doctor and an engineer, and they were playing golf. But the group before them was extremely slow and at each hole they waited hours. Finally the priest asked around, why was that other group so slow? He was told that they were very courageous firemen who saved the golf course a couple of years ago from a terrible fire, in which they all lost their sight. As a proof of appreciation they were given the right to play on the course whenever they wanted. They like that a lot, but being blind they are just not too good at hitting the ball, let alone finding it after it's hit.

The priest said, "Oh my this is terrible. Tonight I'll say a little prayer for these courageous souls."

The doctor heard that and said "Don't worry. I'll send them to a friend of mine, he's an ophthalmologist and he works wonders."

The engineer said "Wait. Why can't they just play at night?"

## IAAI Washington Chapter Training Session

November  
 2,3,4,5, 2009

Spokane Valley – Mirabeau Point Hotel

- Basic: four 10 hour days (40 hours)
- Report Writing by Sheri from GrammarWorks
- Investigation of Spontaneous Combustion and Hay Stack Fires
- Interviewing
- Burn cells

Go to [www.iaai-wa.org](http://www.iaai-wa.org) for more information when it becomes available.



## IAAI Montana Chapter Training

2 or 3 days in Helena, Montana



- Standardized Testing
- Litigation Support

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*Washington State Chapter #21*  
*Director of Membership Operations*  
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ARTICLE II  
MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. Active Membership. Any representative of government or a government agency and any representative of a business or industrial concern who is actively engaged in some phase of the suppression of arson or administration of justice at the time he/she makes application shall be eligible to active membership on application, provided such person possesses the other qualifications for membership in the discretion of the Membership Committee and provided such person is not less than eighteen years of age at the time he/she makes application. All applicants for active or associate membership, if accepted, will be on temporary status until the next meeting of the Board of Directors. During this temporary status period, a person's membership may be revoked at the discretion of the Board of Directors. If the application is not rejected by the "Board" within the specified time limit, full membership is automatically granted.

Section 2. Associate Membership. Persons not qualified for active membership may become associate member, after determination of their qualifications by the Membership Committee. Associate members shall have the privileges of an active member, except voting and holding office. The Association may, by majority vote of active members present, exclude associate members from any particular business meeting.

Section 5. Personal Qualifications. Prior to voting upon each application, the Membership Committee shall give due consideration to the following, among other qualifications it deems applicable, to wit: (1) the personal character and reputation of the applicant, (2) the nature, character and reputation of the applicants business, (3) the character and reputation of the applicant's employer and associates, and (4) the general nature, character and reputation of the principal business of the applicants employer and associates. No person shall be eligible for any class of membership if he/she has been a member, or is presently a member, or becomes a member of a subversive organization or of any organization whose objectives and operations are inconsistent with the purposes of the Association.

Privacy Policy  
The International Association of Arson Investigators, Inc. (IAAI) treats confidential information received from its membership with respect and concern. We maintain physical, electronic, or procedural safeguards to protect the information.

During the course of business, it is necessary to disclose routine information relating, for example, to membership status, CFI status, committee participation, and address verification. However, the IAAI maintains the confidentiality of information such as social security numbers, government issued identification numbers, banking data and credit card numbers- the exception to which would be in response to a subpoena or court order.

Joint Membership Application

The organizational structure of the IAAI is similar to that of a union, in that the International is the parent organization with the Washington Chapter serving as a "local". However, membership in just the Chapter does not mean that the individual is also a member of the International. Active membership in both affords members the opportunity to vote and hold office at the chapter

and international levels.

**Application for Membership – International / Washington Chapter**

**New Membership in International AND Washington Chapter Membership - \$115.00**  
 (\$40.00 annual dues for Washington Chapter Membership and \$75.00 annual dues for International)

**New Membership in Washington Chapter Membership Only- \$50.00**  
 (\$40.00 annual dues for Washington Chapter Membership and \$10.00 initiation fee)

**New Membership in Washington Chapter Membership and currently member of IAAI- \$40.00**  
 (\$40.00 annual dues for Washington Chapter Membership and \$10.00 initiation fee waived for IAAI members)

I hereby make application for Active membership in the International Association of Arson Investigators, Inc., and renew my membership in the Washington Chapter, Inc. of the International Association of Arson Investigators, Inc., in accordance with their Constitution and By-Laws, and agree to be bound therewith. All information given by me is warranted to be true.

Name (last, first, m.i.) \_\_\_\_\_ Title/Position \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State/Province \_\_\_\_\_ Zip/Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_ Country \_\_\_\_\_

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Employer \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Fax No \_\_\_\_\_ Supervisor \_\_\_\_\_

Bus. Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State/Province \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Country \_\_\_\_\_

**Occupational Affiliation**

Public Service  Private Investigation  Insurance  Engineering  Scientist/Laboratory  Attorney

**Primary Duty**

Fire investigator  Forensic accountant  Chemist/scientist  Manager  Instructor  Attorney

Forensic engineer \_\_\_\_\_  Other \_\_\_\_\_

(discipline)

Have you ever been convicted of a crime?  Yes  No If yes, explain offense and date/location of conviction.

Are you interested in serving on an IAAI Committee  Yes  No

Are you interested in delivering IAAI training  Yes  No

Are you a Certified Fire Investigator  Yes  No Certified with: \_\_\_\_\_

Recommended by member in good standing: (Reference must be a member of IAAI for International membership.)

Member's Name (Print)	Address	Int'l ID#	Telephone

Applicant's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Mail correspondence to:  Home  Business

Mail Application to:  
 Washington State Chapter #21  
 International Association of Arson Investigators  
 9116 E. Sprague Ave., # 186  
 Spokane, WA 99206-2301

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