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Fire Marshal Training Course

What is Fire Marshal Training Course?

A **fire marshal**, in the United States and Canada, is often a member of a state, provincial or territorial government, but may be part of a building department or a separate department altogether. Fire marshals' duties vary but usually include fire code enforcement or investigating fires for origin and cause. Fire marshals may be sworn law-enforcement officers and are often experienced firefighters. In larger cities with substantially developed fire departments the local fire departments are sometimes delegated some of the duties of the fire marshal.

A fire marshal's duties vary by location. Fire marshals may carry a weapon, wear a badge, wear a uniform or plain clothes, can drive marked or unmarked cars, and make arrests pertaining to arson and related offenses, or, in other localities, may have duties entirely separate from law enforcement, including building- and fire-code-related inspections. In many areas, the fire marshal is responsible for enforcing laws concerning flammable materials.

In Ontario, the Office of the Fire Marshal of Ontario (OFM), part of the Ministry of the Solicitor General (Ontario), provides support to municipal fire departments, sets training requirements for firefighters, and advises the government on legislation. The Fire Marshal is responsible for investigating the origins of fires.

United States

Arizona fire marshals

In Arizona, fire marshals are employed at the municipal, county, and state levels of government, and possess law enforcement powers where they relate to arson investigation. At the state level, the Office of the State Fire Marshal (SFM) is led by the State Fire Marshal and employs paid deputy fire marshals and unpaid assistant fire inspectors. Deputy Fire Marshals are full time employees of the SFM, while assistant fire inspectors are appointed from local Fire chiefs or those recommended by them. Both deputies and inspectors attend fire inspector training, have fire prevention and fire protection and possess law enforcement powers where they relate to their duties. Duties of fire marshals in Arizona include:

- Assisting in the enforcement of state, county, and local fire laws
- Investigating the causes, origins, and circumstances of fires, including those suspected of arson
- Collecting evidence
- Operating a fire safety inspection program for public buildings and schools
- Inspecting residential complexes
- Maintaining and propagating fire-related laws
- Operating an arson detection reward fund
- Providing and coordinating firefighting and fire protection training

California fire marshals

Like most states, Californian fire marshals are typically associated with a city or region's local fire department. Yet, California has two additional authorities that hold the official designations of fire marshal. One is the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE). It is tasked with the building code enforcement of all structures and occupancies within the state. They have the authority to issue building permits, conduct building inspections and investigate code violations. California Fire marshals are designated peace officers. The person heading this office is officially designated as the State Fire Marshal.

The second authority designated as fire marshals is the Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development (OSHPD) who is the state building official for all California hospitals. They are tasked with the structural, electrical and fire/life safety reliability of all hospital construction in the state. This responsibility is paramount in California due to the frequency and intensity of earthquake seismic activity it experiences.

Florida Fire Marshal

The Florida Division of State Fire Marshal (SFM) is located within the Department of Financial Services, where Florida's Chief Financial Officer (CFO) also serves as Florida's State Fire Marshal.

The SFM office serves local fire departments who request assistance with conducting fire investigations and provides fire training colleges throughout the state. It is headquartered in Tallahassee, with numerous field offices located across the state.

The investigators working for the SFM office are sworn law enforcement officers, with powers to make arrests, conduct searches and seizures, serve summonses, and carry firearms. These law enforcement officers conduct complex investigations and have the ability to make arrests statewide. Investigators conduct thousands of fire-related investigations each year, with approximately 45% being determined to be arson in 2009. Florida SFM investigators make arrest in 18% of the arson fires investigated, which is above the national average of 16%. Fire investigations are complex and potentially dangerous.

The Florida SFM Forensic Laboratory receives and examines over 10,000 evidence submissions every year. These submissions come from fire departments, police departments, sheriff's offices and SFM investigators. The crime laboratory offers a wide variety of services to include examination of fire debris, explosives analysis, image reproduction and forensic video analysis. The forensic experts in the laboratory conduct consultations with investigators, prosecutors, and other attorneys on analyses and general aspects of forensic science. These consultations are often in preparation for expert witness testimony in criminal court.

The Florida SFM office issues over 3,000 basic firefighter certifications every year. There are thirty-five certified training centers located across the state and the Florida State Fire College. The State Fire College trains over six thousand students per year in a wide variety of certification and professional development programs to include Pump Operator, Fire Officer, Fire Investigator, HAZMAT, etc.

The Florida SFM is responsible for inspecting over 14,000 state-owned buildings every year. SFM code enforcement and inspection activities also reach over 16,000 public and private buildings; to include prisons, universities, public schools, thousands of fuel-fired boiler systems, hundreds of construction mining sites and explosive storage locations each year.

The Florida Fire Incident Reporting Section collects over 1,800,000 fire and emergency reports per year. These local fire department and fire service reports are combined with the other states reports in the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) for use by the fire services in analysis and trends. The Florida reports are also used to form the basis for the SFM Annual Report "Florida Fires".

The SFM has authority to implement rules that conform to the standards of fire safety and the need to protect Floridians from fire hazards. Additionally, the SFM shall adopt and administer rules prescribing standards for the safety and health of occupants of educational and ancillary facilities pursuant to ss. 633.022, 1013.12, 1013.37, and 1013.371.

In any county that does not employ or appoint a local fire official, the State Fire Marshal shall assume the duties of the local fire official with respect to fire safety inspections of educational property required under s. 1013.12(2)(b), and the State Fire Marshal may take necessary corrective action as authorized under s. 1013.12(5).

New York City Fire Marshals



New York City Fire Marshal patch

New York City's Bureau of Fire Investigation, a division of the FDNY, currently employs about 140 Fire Marshals, 30 Supervising Fire Marshals (= to Captain) as well as several Commanders (= to Deputy Chief), an Assistant Chief Fire Marshal and Chief Fire Marshal. The position of fire marshal is a promotional civil service title and all officers have served several years as active firefighters. Unlike many other jurisdictions, the New York City fire marshals are armed police officers with full powers of arrest who generally work in pairs and investigate serious fires with the New York City Police Department. New York City Fire Marshals undergo comprehensive police training to include annual weapons qualification at Camp Smith. Investigations are conducted in cooperation with the New York City Police Department, with whom they have a close relationship. In a typical year they are assigned about 4,000 fires within the five boroughs of the city. New York Fire Marshals often receive special training at the FBI academy in Quantico, Virginia, as well as attending investigative classes conducted by the NYPD and explosives training classes sponsored by the federal government in Socorro, New Mexico. Under New York State Consolidated Laws Article 35.00 section 35.20 "deadly physical force may be used in order to terminate or prevent commission of arson."

The city's first fire marshal, George H. Sheldon, was appointed in 1873, eight years after the reorganization of the fire department into a career department in 1865. Robert O. Lowery became

the first African-American fire marshal in 1946. Lowery would ultimately rise to the top of the department, being appointed the city's fire commissioner in 1965.

Fire marshals have conducted a number of significant investigations, including the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire of 1911. They investigate insurance fraud involving arson, and more recently, potential terrorism. They also function as expert witnesses in arson cases. At times New York fire marshals work undercover and conduct surveillance operations. They also coordinate with federal, state and local law enforcement because arsonists are frequently involved in other criminal activity as well, and some investigations, like the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center, require multiple agencies' skills.

The first line of duty NYC fire marshal death was from the September 11, 2001, attacks when Marshal Ronald Paul Bucca, disregarding the danger, rushed into the World Trade Center to assist in the rescue of civilians trapped within the towers. Bucca, badge 317, a decorated Vietnam War combat veteran, reached the 78th floor of the South Tower along with Battalion Chief Orio Palmer, before the South Tower collapsed. The pair had worked on the 1993 investigation at the same site.

Professional training outside the state at the FBI Academy at Quantico, Virginia, and other locations for New York City marshals was made possible through federal counter-terror grants, subsequent to 9/11, actively supported by Mayor Mike Bloomberg.

New York State Executive Law, article 6c, sec 159, created an arson control board that mandated every jurisdiction prepare an arson control plan and a strong coordinated arson control program to include certification of investigators in compliance with NFPA 921 and NFPA 1033. A state standard of level I and level II fire investigator certification were developed. New York City Fire Marshal's training exceeds the requirements of level II.

Pennsylvania fire marshals

There are two levels of fire marshals in Pennsylvania, the state police fire marshal and the local fire marshal. The State Fire Marshal had been an independent office until powers and duties were transferred to the state police in 1919. In 1927, the state (Commonwealth) created the local fire marshal position underneath the state police, via an act of April 27, 1927 (P.L. 450, No. 291).

The Pennsylvania State Police (PSP) fire marshals are usually considered the final investigative authority for fires deemed exceptionally costly (over \$1,000,000) or where a death has occurred. PSP fire marshals are notified by the local fire marshal when their involvement is necessary. State law authorizes and identifies the local fire marshal as an "Assistant to the State Police Fire Marshal". Local fire marshals are selected for their positions by the local fire chief or municipality. The State Police Commissioner (Colonel) then appoints them to the PSP office.

Local fire marshals are authorized to investigate fires, obtain and execute search documents, take evidence, and detain and question in the process of establishing origin and cause. This process may or may not result in affecting an arrest or prosecution. Both levels of Fire Marshals often testify in civil and criminal court proceedings, and respond and collaborate with insurance investigators. Along with state law, many municipalities have assigned local law enforcement officer (LEO) status to their respective fire marshals due to the nature of the service, requirements to detain, question or arrest, enforce fire safety-related laws, and to protect themselves during potential high-risk investigations. (Some of the largest methamphetamine labs in the U.S. have been found in Pennsylvania during local fire marshal's investigations.)

All municipalities and fire districts require fundamental fire training and substantial firefighting experience, followed by progressive continuing fire investigation education supplied by the Pennsylvania State Police. Municipalities who have granted specific LEO status usually require either PA Act 120 or PA Act 235 training in addition.

Virginia Fire Marshals

The Virginia State Fire Marshal's Office is part of the Virginia Department of Fire Programs; the current marshal is Charles E. Altizer, P.E. The mission of the office is to provide safety to life and property from fire for the citizens of the Commonwealth. To do this, the Office:

- Utilizes inspectors and engineers to complete fire safety inspections in localities that do not have their own fire code official;
- Conducts building plan reviews for fire safety measures;
- Conducts construction inspections for fire safety systems in state buildings;
- Provides assistance to local building and fire code officials; and
- Responds to complaints and questions from private citizens.

Many of Virginia's larger urban localities have their own local fire official. For example, Fairfax County's Office of the Fire Marshal has over 100 employees who are trained and certified to enforce a variety of fire prevention regulations including portions of the Uniform Statewide Building Code. The Office, which is the Fire Prevention Division of the Fire & Rescue Department's Business Services Bureau, functions under the command of a Deputy Fire Chief, who is responsible for oversight of all aspects of the Office's mission, including supervision of the Fire Prevention Services (FPS) and Hazardous Materials & Investigative Services (HMIS) sections, each commanded by a Battalion Fire Chief. The mission is to prevent the inception or recurrence of fire and hazardous conditions by providing fire prevention and hazardous materials-related educational, enforcement, inspection, investigative, plans review, and technical services to the businesses, industries, residents, and visitors of Fairfax County and the towns of Clifton, Herndon, and Vienna.

Washington Fire Marshals

The Washington State Fire Marshal's Office is a bureau within the Washington State Patrol. The Office of the State Fire Marshal provides services including incident reporting, data collection, code review, construction plan fire safety, fireworks and supervision of sprinkler installation.

United Kingdom

The American definition of a fire marshal should not be confused with that used in the United Kingdom. Fire marshals (sometimes known as "fire wardens") are civilians trained to assist in fire evacuation procedures at businesses and other organizations, usually employees.

There is no direct equivalent to a US fire marshal in the United Kingdom. The enforcement and investigation role are carried out by two separate professionals known as **fire investigators** and **fire inspectors**.

Fire investigators are highly trained and experienced firefighters or fire officers, who investigate cases of arson and other fire incidents where the cause of the fire is unclear or disputed. Fire investigations can also be carried out by police scenes of crime officers. Fire investigators do not fulfill a direct law enforcement role but instead act as expert witnesses in any prosecutions brought forward by the police or fire service.

The enforcement of fire safety legislation is undertaken by fire safety inspectors, or fire safety officers as they are sometimes known.

UK fire officers do not have powers of arrest but can place subjects under caution and prosecute anyone who has failed to comply with fire safety law. They also have the authority to close unsafe premises and investigate any actual perceived fire safety offence. They have substantial powers of entry. Most fire inspectors are experienced firefighters / fire officers, but there are also several civilian fire inspectors.

