

Standard Operating Procedures Manual
For
Certified Fire Investigator Program (CFI)



**California Conference
of
Arson Investigators**

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Purpose

The Certified Fire Investigator designation was established by the California Conference of Arson Investigators (CCAI) in January 1998 and is intended to identify and recognize a fire investigator's knowledge, experience, and expertise in fire origin and cause investigations through a multi-phase testing process. This designation is hereafter known as the CCAI-CFI.

General

- A. The CCAI-CFI designation is open to all qualified candidates.
- B. Membership in CCAI is encouraged but is not required for eligibility for CCAI-CFI certification or recertification.
- C. CCAI has no intention of determining who shall engage in the practice and profession of Fire Investigation. Lack of certification does not indicate that one is unqualified to perform fire investigations; rather, that such a person may not have fulfilled the requirements for certification as specified by CCAI, or has not applied to the program.
- D. CCAI strives to provide equal access of the CFI Program to all eligible persons, including those with any disabilities, and therefore provides the CFI program information online at www.arson.org. Should any accommodations need to be considered, please contact the CCAI office at the address and/or phone number below.
- E. The official mailing address and contact telephone and fax numbers of the Certified Certification Program are:

California Conference of Arson Investigators
1279 North White Avenue
Pomona, California 91768-1930
Phone: 909-865-5004
Fax 909-865-5024
- F. The Business Manager of CCAI is authorized to respond to any written request for confirmation of certification, or lack thereof, the original date of certification as well as the expiration date of such certification for any individual. He or she may also answer other related questions that do not violate the confidentiality of the member.

Administration

CCAI adheres to the following procedures governing the CCAI-CFI Program.

The "CCAI Standard Operating Procedures Manual for the Certified Fire Investigator Program" is on a three-year cycle. Anyone can submit proposals on any portion of the Standard Operating Procedures during the call for proposals. The call for proposals will be for 120 calendar days originating in the second year of the cycle, and to commence on the 1st of March of that year.

At the end of the call for proposal period, the CCAI-CFI committee will act on each of the proposals as well as the committee's proposals prior to the CCAI spring training seminar of the following year. Any and all submitted proposals will either be "accepted", "accepted in principle", or "rejected". The committee will provide substantiation for each of the proposals that has not been accepted. The committee's report on proposals must receive a minimum two-thirds approval vote by the committee, and the actions of the committee will be outlined in a report that will be published in print for any member requesting, as well as on the CCAI website, www.arson.org.

Upon publication of the committee's report on proposals, a 60-day time period will commence in which anyone can then submit comments on the proposed changes. Should any comments be received within the time period, a meeting will be called by the committee, and the comments acted upon in the same manner as the proposals listed above.

During the CCAI fall training seminar in the third year of the cycle, the Board of Directors will meet to act on the proposed changes to the manual. Appeals of the committee's actions may be requested to be heard by the Board of Directors at this meeting, and approval of the changes needs a two-thirds approval vote from the Board. Any changes would then be distributed and published.

Minimum Requirements

Applicants must show proof of a minimum of 160 hours of formal education expressly related to fire/arson investigation and other related topics. The courses, classes, workshops or seminars must focus on advanced fire investigation and must include the JPR's referenced in NFPA 1033 Standards for Professional Qualifications for Fire Investigator. At least 60 hours of the training must have been completed within the last 36 months of application.

- The 160 hours of formal education may consist of courses presented by the California Conference of Arson Investigators, California State Fire Training accredited courses, National Fire Academy courses, courses presented by the International Association of Arson Investigators or other IAAI Chapter courses, CFI-Trainer.net courses, National Association of Fire Investigators courses, college classes related to fire/arson investigation and other organizations pre-approved by the CCAI Board of Directors.
- California State Fire Training courses; Fire Investigator 1A, 1B and 1C are courses strongly recommended as part of the 160 hours of formal education mentioned above.
- Out of State Training: An applicant may receive credit for training courses attended outside of the state of California, if the courses are equivalent to the topics covered in NFPA 1033 Standards for Professional Qualifications for the Fire Investigator. It is the applicant's responsibility to provide a list of the various topics covered in each of the accepted/accredited courses. An outline and/or course description must be provided. The CFI Committee will determine those classes that will be accepted for certification. Other Acceptable Training: Fire,

arson, and law enforcement courses accredited by colleges and universities and courses/seminars sponsored by CCAI, IAAI or other IAAI Chapters.

- Training sessions and lectures which are less than four (4) hours will not be accepted, unless they are approved classes such as the CFI trainer.net courses.
- The 160 hours of training must include: a minimum of eight (8) hours training in Motor Vehicle Fire Investigation, Wildland Fire Investigation, and a minimum of four (4) hours of Marine Fire Investigation.

The following CFItrainer.net online courses are required and the certificate for each must be provided with your application.

1. Accreditation, Certification and Certificates.
2. Digital Photography and the Fire Investigator.
3. Ethics and the Fire Investigator.
4. Physical Evidence at the Fire Scene.
5. Practical Application of the Relationship Between NFPA 1033 and NFPA 921.
6. Residential Electrical Systems.
7. The Scientific Method for Fire and Explosion Investigation.
8. Writing the Initial Origin and Cause Report.
9. Wildland Fire Investigation
10. Investigating Motor Vehicle Fires
11. Marine Fire Investigation

Applicant must have completed the investigation of 75 fires for origin and 75 fires for cause using the “Scientific Method” as describe in NFPA 921 and 1033. Investigations performed during a “training phase” will not apply towards the 75 minimum investigations.

- A. Applicant must have successfully completed the CCAI or IAAI Expert Witness courtroom testimony course, ATF Testimony Course, or the National Fire Academy courtroom testimony courses.

Successful completion of the above training and experience will allow the applicant to sit for the written examination (150 questions) and the practical application examinations.

Application

- A. Applicants must submit the following:
 1. Proof of the successful completion of 160 hours of advanced fire investigation training.

2. Proof, certificates, from CFITrainer.net showing successful completion of each of the required courses.
3. Certificates of classes that cover each of the areas required by NFPA 1033.
4. Letters of verification of employment/fire investigation experience.
5. Applicable certification fee of \$250.00 for current CCAI members and \$500.00 for non-members. This application fee is non-refundable.
6. Applications must be submitted a minimum of 45 days prior to sitting for the written examination.

NOTE: All applications are subject to approval by the CFI Committee.

Examination

A. Certification Fire Investigation Examination Parameters:

1. The Certification Fire Investigator Examination shall be approved by the CCAI-CFI committee and reviewed continually.
2. The examination will consist of multiple components, (a) a written test, (knowledge), (b) a practical examination (competency). The CCAI testing procedure will test to the Standards and Job Performance Requirements (JPR's) of the professional fire investigator as defined in NFPA 1033. All test questions will conform to, meet or exceed the JPR's designated in NFPA 1033.
3. The written test shall consist of 150 randomly drawn questions obtained from a question bank consisting of true/false, matching, multiple-choice and fill-in type questions. The examination shall include questions from every duty area within the profession of Fire Investigation. Test questions will be structured from "NFPA 921", "NFPA 1033", "User's Manual for NFPA 921", "Kirk's Fire Investigation" "The Ignition Handbook", CFITrainer.net classes and the ASTM Standards (such as, but not limited to, E1020, E1492, E860 and E1188). The applicant should consider these texts as resource materials.
4. The written test is to be taken as a "Closed Book" test, with no notes or aids or cell phones allowed. A grade of 75% is required to pass the CFI Written Examination. The applicant shall be allowed three (3.0) hours to complete this portion of the test. Successful completion of the written test is required to progress to the practical examination component.
5. The practical examination component of the test will consist of the viewing and evaluation of a media-based presentation reflecting an actual fire scene, or an actual fire scene, and the subsequent production of an origin and cause investigation report documenting the critical aspects of the fire investigation.

To establish competency, the applicant must document and illustrate, by way of a written report, methodology, analysis, hypotheses and conclusions.

The practical examination shall reflect the use of field notes and other information as may be available to draft the report. The applicant shall be allowed eight (8.0) hours to complete the practical portion of the examination.

6. Satisfactory completion of all test components is required in order to receive CFI Certification.
7. During the examination process, any instances of attempted or successful fraud, misrepresentation, or improper conduct by the applicant will result in disqualification and automatic failure. Allegations of fraud or improper conduct shall be referred to the CCAI Ethical Practices and Grievances Committee for investigation.

A. Administration:

1. The CCAI Office is responsible for the distribution, collection, and scoring of the examination. The office is also responsible for the enforcement of the rules pertaining to the taking of the exam.
2. All CCAI-CFI test questions and related answers will be kept on a separate password protected computer and under lock and key within the CCAI office location.
3. The Business Manager of CCAI is authorized to respond to any written request for confirmation of certification, or lack thereof, the original date of certification as well as the expiration date of such certification for any individual. He or she may also answer other related questions that do not violate the confidentiality of the member.
4. Written examinations can be taken at the following times and locations:
 - a. CCAI bi-annual and regional seminars.
 - b. CCAI office.
 - c. An approved university, college or professional proctored site or testing center.When using this method, the applicant is responsible for any costs incurred.
5. Practical examinations will be proctored at the CCAI bi-annual regional seminars and other locations approved by the CFI Committee or the CCAI office. Proctors for the practical examination must be approved by the CFI Committee.

B. Procedures

- a. At least one day prior to each examination, the correct number of examinations will be printed and delivered to the examination proctor via return receipt mail.
- b. The examination identification numbers shall be assigned by the business office using the applicant's membership number. The test packet shall have the applicant's name and identification number printed on it.
- c. The examination packet includes the following documents:
 - Proctor's Instruction.
 - Applicant's Instructions.
 - Test.
- d. The examination proctor must verify the identity of each applicant through a driver's license or similar identification which lists the applicant's identification number (to be matched with the examination packet). The following information is to be verified at the commencement of the examination:
 - Applicant's identification number.
 - Acknowledgment receipt of one examination.
 - Applicant's signature and date.
 - Monitor's signature and date.
- e. Each applicant must sign for his or her sealed, individually identified examination packet. The proctor must verify that he or she has taken the correct packet and must witness his or her signature on the packet and then retain the packet until the completion and return the examination. The examination proctor must verify that he or she witnessed the examinee's signature and attest to same.
- f. The examination will be allowed to continue for three hours, without interruption.
- g. Upon completion of the examination and return of all examination materials, the applicant must leave the examination room.
- h. After the examination session has been completed, the proctor should place the examination in the envelope and seal same. Each applicant must return the examination he or she signed for, and also sign the packet indicating he or she did so. The applicant and the proctor shall

complete the following documentation at the conclusion of the examination:

- Applicant's signature and date.
 - Monitor's signature and date.
- i. All of the remaining materials (examination, instruction sheets, and applicant's comments) should be placed in the master examination pouch and sealed. The master examination pouch must be returned to the CCAI office within 24 hours or the next working day after completion of the examination by certified or registered mail.

6. Examinee Results Notification Process.

- a. Within seven (7) days after administration of the written examination, CCAI will grade the test and send each applicant, via email, a pass/fail notice.
- b. Within fourteen (14) days after administration of the practical examination, CCAI will grade the test and send each applicant, via email, a pass/fail notice.
- c. Within thirty (30) days after satisfactory completion of the examination, the applicant will be mailed his or her CFI Certificate.
- d. Results of a candidate's test performance are confidential, and will be released only to the candidate, or to the CCAI-CFI committee for review and analysis. The only exception is by court order.
- e. All results will be secured inside a secure filing cabinet in the CCAI office.

7. Failure of Examination - Options and Processes:

If an applicant fails the written exam, he/she has six (6) months to retake the exam. If the applicant fails the practical exam, he/she has six (6) months to retake that portion of the exam. The entire exam process must be completed within 365 days.

If an applicant fails either examination and does not re-challenge within the 365-day period, he or she must submit a new application and fee for the CFI program.

Recertification/Continued Professional Training

- A. The CCAI-CFI shall satisfy the Continued Professional Training requirements outlined by CCAI. These requirements will be reviewed and revised periodically as recommended by the CFI Committee to the Board of Directors.

- B. Those failing to meet these requirements are not considered to be certified in good standing and any inquiry into the investigator's certification will reflect the failure to maintain a CFI Certificate as recognized by CCAI.
- C. The CFI Renewal Recertification application shall provide verification of current employment in the field of fire/explosion investigation.
- D. CCAI-CFI recertification applications should be received 30 days prior to the CFI expiration date in order to provide sufficient time for review and evaluation. Recertification applications will be accepted up until the expiration date on the person's Certified Fire Investigator certification.
- E. A grace period of ninety (90) days following the expiration date of their CFI certificate will be provided for submission of recertification applications which did not meet the above deadline. Applications received within the 90-day grace period may be assessed a late fee of \$75.00 for members, \$150.00 for non-members. After 90 days, the CCAI-CFI Certification will become invalid. Individuals wishing to regain CFI Certification will be required to re-apply to the CCAI-CFI Certification Program.
- F. The CCAI-CFI Certification is valid for three (3) years from the date of issuance. Recertification is subject to satisfying the requirements of either Section 1, 2 or 3 listed below:
 - 1. Ninety (90) hours of CCAI approved tested training obtained during the three (3) year period after the issuance of the certification.
 - 2. One hundred thirty-five (135 hours) of CCAI approved, non-tested, education obtained during the three (3) year period after the issuance of the certification. Approved training courses may include:
 - a. California State Fire Training courses; CCAI classes, seminars, and Roundtables, National Fire Training, IAAI or IAAI Chapter seminars, trainings or classes.
 - b. Courses specifically designed for fire/explosion investigations produced by other organizations, agencies or companies who have been evaluated and approved by the CCAI-CFI Committee.
 - 3. Credit hours for recertification may be provided for approved professional instruction of seminar training classes focused on investigation and analysis of fire and explosion subjects within the recertification cycle. Credit may be provided upon review of the subject course outline and hours are limited to the number of hours of instruction. At least 50% of your CEs must reflect non-instruction time.

- G. Each CCAI-CFI must present to the CCAI Business Office, verification of attendance at approved training programs, along with a maintenance fee of \$150.00 for members and \$300.00 for non-members
- H. Verification will include, but is not limited to, one or more of the following documents:
 - 1. SFM classes, CCAI classes or seminars, IAAI or affiliated Chapters of the IAAI approved courses or seminars.
 - a. Provide a photocopy of the Certificate of Completion or Attendance.
 - 2. Other investigation courses:
 - a. Provide the name, address, and telephone number of the course instructor or course coordinators (if requested by CFI Committee) and Certificate of Completion.
 - b. Provide a copy of the course outline describing the blocks of instruction and hours taught.

Approved Training for Certification-Recertification Credit

- A. Seminars sponsored by CCAI.
 - 1. Semi-annual seminars; approximately twenty (28) hours in length.
 - 2. One-day seminars; four (4) hours or longer.
 - 3. Special seminars approved by the CFI Certification Chairperson or Certification Committee.
- B. IAAI Training Conferences or other IAAI Chapter Training.
- C. IAAI CFITrainer.net on-line courses (note: Only **50%** of required training is accepted from approved online courses). These courses cannot be duplicates of the original completed training previously submitted for application.
- D. POST certified courses recognized by CCAI:
 - 1. Annual Legal Update.
 - 2. Arrest, Search and Seizure.
 - 3. Investigation Courses.
 - 4. Surveillance Courses.
 - 5. Explosive Recognition Courses – from agencies such as the SFM, ATF or FBI
- E. State Fire Training, Cal Fire or equivalent certified courses recognized by CCAI.

Application Review

- A. The CFI Chair or Committee of CCAI shall rule on which courses submitted by the applicant are approved to meet the requirements of certification and continued professional training.

1. Due to the large volume of courses available to applicants, it is impossible to provide a complete list of approved courses.
2. Courses submitted by the applicant for acceptance will be reviewed on an individual basis and the ruling by the CFI Chairperson or Committee will be final.
 - a. Appeals regarding course acceptance can be made to the CCAI Board of Directors Meeting.
3. The CFI Chairperson and the CFI Committee will review applications as quickly as possible. The CFI Chairperson may designate other committee members at a special meeting if the workload warrants.

Appeals Process

Any applicant or current CCAI Certified Fire Investigator may request an appeal in any of the following areas, as well as any area in which he or she believes his or her rights have been denied, as outlined under the published rules and regulations of the California Conference of Arson Investigators.

1. Any individual test question(s) they believe to be incorrect or untrue.
2. Any assessment or test results and their procedures.
3. Denial of initial CFI application or any re-certification thereafter, including the processes and methodology under which those certifications are denied.

The request of appeal must be in writing and submitted to the CCAI Business Office no later than (30) days after the original letter of denial. The CCAI-CFI committee or chairperson must respond to the appeal request within thirty (30) days after the date of receipt, acknowledging the appeal. The appeal will then be reviewed and ruled on by the CCAI-CFI chairperson, or if necessary, the CCAI-CFI committee as a whole. Any records of the decision made by the chairperson or committee are to remain closed door, and the records kept at the CCAI office for a period no less than seven (7) years following the appeal review date.

The decision of the CCAI-CFI chairperson and/or committee is to be delivered to the appellee by registered mail within then (10) days after the decision is reached. In the event that the individual is dissatisfied with the decision of the CCAI-CFI chairperson or committee regarding his or her appeal, that individual may then appeal the decision to the CCAI Board of Directors. The appeal request before the Board of Directors should be submitted no less than two weeks prior to the start of the next scheduled Board meeting, in order to be heard at set scheduled meeting.