DIVISION OF STATE FIRE MARSHAL

Fire and Explosion Investigation Bureau (FEIB)
Who We are and What We Do

Joshua P. Hobbs, FEIB Chief

Safe. Sound. Secure
The Ohio Department of Commerce is focused on equipping businesses and protecting consumers.

Commerce has seven Divisions including (insert your Division here).

Our goal is to keep Ohioan’s safe, sound and secure.
Mission

To safeguard the public, its property, and the environment from fire and related risks through education, regulation, investigation, and enforcement.
Goals of today’s overview

* To provide an understanding of the mission and capabilities of the SFM FEIB
  • To demonstrate the scope of the FEIB’s role regarding Fireworks in Ohio.
  • To provide a basic understanding of the FEIB’s role in Fire/Arson Investigation.
  • To provide and understanding of resources available to local agencies from State Fire Marshal FEIB
  • To provide some examples of FEIB cases across Ohio
There are 8 Bureaus within the Division of State Fire Marshal

The FEIB is the Law Enforcement arm of the DSFM

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Fire & Explosion Investigation Bureau

All investigators are Ohio-certified peace officers

Fire & Explosion Investigation Bureau Chief

Investigator Supervisor
4 positions

Administrative Staff
2 positions

Investigator
21 positions (5 with K9s)

Oldest arson inv. agency in the U.S.
Up to 1200 investigations per year

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SFM FEIB Officers are …
Example of Field Investigator Districts
Fire Investigation – Origin and Cause
(Initially a Fire Service Responsibility)

vs.

Arson Investigation – Determining Criminal Responsibility
(Ultimately a Law Enforcement Responsibility)
Mission:
Investigate fires of a suspicious nature, suspected arson, bombings, and any other associated crime(s). Assist with the prosecution of those responsible for incidents determined to be criminal in nature.
Fire & Explosion Investigation Bureau

Principle Operations (24/7/365):

• Law enforcement agency investigating the origin, cause and circumstances of major fires and explosions in the state of Ohio

• Arrest and prosecute persons believed to be guilty of arson, bombings, illegal explosives, illegal fireworks and other related offenses
Fire & Explosion Investigation Bureau

Principle Operations (24/7/365):

• Provide expert forensic investigation service to fire departments, police and sheriffs, coroners and prosecutors

• Provide training programs to all levels of public safety first responders, as well as judges, prosecutors and coroners
Fire & Explosion Investigation Bureau

Partners:

• SFM Code Enforcement Bureau
• SFM Fire Prevention Bureau
• SFM Forensic Lab
• Ohio Fire Academy
• SFM Testing & Registration Bureau
• Regional bomb squads
Fire & Explosion Investigation Bureau

Partners:

• Ohio Homeland Security STACC (State Fusion Center)
• Ohio Attorney General BCI&I
• Ohio Highway Patrol
• Ohio Department of Insurance (ODI)
• Federal agencies: ATF, DEA, FBI, USMS
Fire and Explosion investigations involve skill, competency and scientific knowledge based NFPA 1033 and NFPA 921
Fire & Explosion Investigation Bureau

Fire/Explosion Causes:
FOUR classifications per NFPA 921:

– Accidental
– Natural
– Undetermined
– Incendiary
Fire Investigation – What is Arson??

– Incendiary fire – intentionally ignited under circumstances in which the person knows that the fire should not be ignited.
Fire scene investigations Must be conducted without presumption!

Is it an Accident?

Or is it a crime scene?
Motives of Arson ... ORC 2909

- Vandalism
- Crime Concealment
- Extremist
- Profit / fraud
- Excitement
- Revenge

The primary motivation for all violent crimes is POWER
Arson: Is it basic terrorism?
Officially Endorsed by ISIS in 2017
Remember …

- Fire and Explosion scene investigations are about determining the origin and cause.
- If it is deemed an intentional act is becomes a **CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION**
It starts with a detailed scene exam and ends with:

Old fashioned detective work

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Jury Trials and Achieving a Conviction

• **Subject matter testimony=Expert Witness**
  – One who is recognized by the court as qualified by specialized knowledge, skills, experience, or education on an issue. This now a significant roadblock in achieving a conviction. Expertise and experience is now a must.

• **Note:** Ohio has no standard or requirements for training and certification of public sector fire / arson investigators.
Forensic investigation of the fire scene to determine if a fire is incendiary …

…with criminal investigation and expert witness testimony to prove the crime of arson.

The SFM FEIB combines:

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FEIB Canine Resources

- **Accelerant Detection Canines (4)**
  - Generally conducts a limited search once debris is cleared from area of origin
  - Also used for clothing, vehicle and crowd searches

- **Explosive Detection Canine (1)**
  - Often conducts lengthy searches with other Canines
  - Can detect all forms of explosives, fireworks, shell casing and firearms.
  - Used proactively and reactively
Canine Team

- Investigator Ron Stemen
- Canine “Dodger”
- Based at HQ for statewide response
- Explosive Detection K-9
SE Ohio

Investigator Handler
Jeff Heft

Canine Dolan

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Northern Ohio

Investigator Handler
Jeff Koehn

Canine Connor

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Southwest Ohio

Investigator Handler
Rob Heising

Canine Finnegan

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In addition to the “routine” fire/arson investigation, SFM FEIB Investigators also conduct Post Blast investigations. These cases can be the result of a fireworks incident, residential gas explosion, or even an act of terrorism.
FEIB and Fireworks Investigations

- Responsible for responding to and initiating investigations into all major fireworks incidents
- Execute law enforcement component of illegal fireworks transactions on behalf of SFM
- Conduct overt and covert investigations with state, local and federal agencies regarding illegal manufacturing and sales.
- Coordinate destruction of confiscated fireworks with local bomb squads in Ohio.
- Participate in all large scale fireworks theft cases in Ohio.
Photo of an Incident Involving a 1.3G Display.

You *MUST* contact SFM for response and Investigation in this case.
1.4G Consumer Fireworks: Large scale illegal wholesale is our priority.
Illegal sale of 1.3G product
From a Butler County home

Large scale Illegal transport and sale of 1.3G Product out of a van in southwestern Ohio and southeastern Indiana
Illegal Possession, Sale utilizing business “fronts”
Potential Crimes Surrounding Fireworks

- Illegal import, transport and display of 1.3G
- Illegal import, possession and sales of 1.4G
  - RESULT: Seizure of illegal products by AHJ and SFM. Misdemeanor or Felony charges
- Illegal manufacturing or Malicious use of IEDs
  - RESULT: Investigation, analysis, render safe, seizure. Federal or State charges likely
Seizure photos from occupied residences in Ohio
Fireworks Incidents

- All 1.3G incidents and significant 1.4G injuries – Notify the SFM FEIB immediately.
- The SFM FEIB will assist in ANY fireworks investigation.
- The SFM FEIB will also ASSIST in the storage and destruction of confiscated fireworks. However, the State Fire Marshal campus has a very limited storage capacity.
IED’s

Example of Improvised Explosive Devices seized.
Illegal Manufacturing of Fireworks or Explosives

Retired fireworks employee was storing and manufacturing in basement of his house.

SFM FEIB and Lab – Responded and field tested the products
“One Pot” Labs

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SFM FEIB Post-Blast Response Trailer
For statewide response
FEIB Judges and Prosecutor’s Education Seminars

Semi-annual; programs presented by FEIB staff to educate criminal justice personnel on arson investigation and prosecution
1973 the Ohio FAIR Plan Underwriting Association founded the Blue Ribbon Arson Committee (BRAC)

- Can be used by law enforcement officers, firefighters and insurance industry personnel
- Provides reward money
Fatal fires …the most important evidence

Every fatal fire should get a thorough, professional investigation by a team of all concerned

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- Rodney Cydrus and Konetta McDowell
- Set multiple commercial and residential houses in Ohio and other states in 2008
- Apprehended in Illinois

“...the pair is wanted for questioning for their part in the May 28 arson at Reinhardt Truck Sales, 7515 Ohio River Road, in Wheelersburg, two commercial arson fires in Ross County in 2008 and several other theft and arson fires across southern Ohio.”

Shane Cartmill, Ohio State Fire Marshal's Office
7 Killed in Portsmouth Arson 2008

- 4 adults
- 3 small children
- Remains unsolved
Robbery/Murder/Arson-Morgan County 2009
6 Killed in Youngtown Arson-2008

Michael Davis-Charged

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Father Kills 2 young sons – 2010 Greenfield Highland County

Wesley Coonrod
2015-Hamilton Butler County
1 Firefighter killed-ARSON
Toledo 2014-Two Firefighters killed -ARSON
2017 Akron Fire-7 Civilians Killed-ARSON
Tom Wilcox

- Burned wife to death in 2009
- Lawrence County

Photo by Jessica St James, Ironton Tribune
Interagency cooperation at major incidents
Thank you – any questions?

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