

The Fire Trailer News



FIRE TRAILER NEWS

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The Fire Trailer News is the official publication of the Georgia Fire Investigator's Association and is published four times a year: Summer, Fall, Winter and Spring. Views and opinions expressed in articles herein are those of the authors and are not necessarily those of the officers or membership of the Georgia Fire Investigator's Association. Articles, manuscripts and photos are solicited for this publication. No payment is made for contributions. Submissions should be sent to the editor. Appearance of advertisements in the Fire Trailer News does not constitute endorsement by the Georgia Fire Investigator's Association. Advertisers shall not use the Georgia Fire Investigator's Association name or image in its commercial activities in any manner.



President's Message Keith Bell

First, I would like to thank the GFIA membership for allowing me to represent you during this 2011-2012 year. I also want to thank the incoming Board of Directors and Committee members for the amount of dedicated hours they have already spent and continue to spend on making the GFIA the best chapter of the IAAI. In the months ahead there will be several people asked to be a part of committees such as NFPA 921 Review, district representation, and other areas to make the GFIA an even greater resource for all fire investigators throughout the state. If there are individuals who want to be on a committee, please let me know.

During the upcoming year, one of my main focuses will be to address the financial ability to send public investigators to the annual training seminar. I have great hope that our organization can rally to obtain funds through private and corporate donations. This will offset the cost of our valuable training seminars for the already financially-strapped public agencies. I think it is very important for our public fire investigators to know how important they are to this association. I would also like to announce that the Board has unanimously voted to bring back the Spring Seminar. The decision to have the Spring Seminar was brought on to continue serving the GFIA members with the best training available.

The annual training seminar was a great success. I want to send a special thanks to Ann Bell, Teresa McAfee, Kevin and Susan Cunningham, Laurel and Dana Mason, Sara Waters, Jane Cox, and all the others who assisted in making things go on without a problem. I also want to remind the GFIA members that the Training and Education Committee is currently researching areas to move the annual seminar beginning in 2013. If any members have suggestions for a new location, please notify Kevin or Susan Cunningham.

This term has already started off with the signing of the Georgia Fire Service Unification agreement. This agreement, which you will find in this newsletter, will allow the GFIA to communicate and have input into the Georgia Fire Chiefs Association. This will allow representatives of our organization to be present in their meetings as well as they into ours. As you will see, there are other benefits mentioned in the agreement. I believe as "Charter Members" of this Unification agreement, we will benefit as a group.

Next, the members of the GFIA have voted on the NFPA 921 (2011 Edition) resolution as it pertains to the members in Georgia. I want to again thank the Board members for already donating a considerable amount of their valuable time to this extremely important issue. I also want to thank Mark Dietrichs of Swift, Curry, McGhee & Hiers for his assistance in providing the Board with the Georgia case law supporting the position of the GFIA membership on this issue. Regretfully, the Board of Directors of the IAAI does not support the position our Chapter has on this particular issue. GFIA Board has relayed the message to the IAAI Board that our Chapter does not discard the entire 2011 Edition of NFPA 921 as a useful resource guide, only that Chapter 18 "Fire Cause Determination" because it does not comply with Georgia case law. The resolution in its entirety with accompanying case law is available for anyone to view on the GFIA website (gfia-iaai.org).

In closing, I hope all the members of the GFIA, Chapter 8 of the IAAI, know our association is only as good as the members who make it up. I want all members to know they have a voice as to the direction in which the GFIA moves into the future. I look forward in hearing from you all and seeing you at the Spring Seminar.

God Bless and stay safe,
R. Keith Bell
GFIA President

Power, Love, & Self-discipline

For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline. (2 Timothy 1:7)

Frequently in our lives, we face challenges and crises. These obstacles are not only professional; we have personal, spiritual and emotional issues.

This is not new. As the Apostle Paul faced challenges of imprisonment and impending death, he reminded Timothy not to be ashamed of the message of Jesus or of his messenger, Paul. The Spirit of God lives in us, and brings us power, love, and self-discipline. We shouldn't be timid! The presence and power of God lives within us through his Spirit.

A Prayer for us

Father, forgive me for those times I have been timid about my faith. I recognize that in those moments when I was timid, I wasn't depending upon your Spirit to strengthen me and give me boldness to say the things I need to say in the ways I need to say them. Please fill me with your Spirit so that I can be a person of character and compassion; demonstrating, power, love and self-discipline in my life. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Chaplin's Corner

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Gwinnett Fire Honor Guard Wins Uniform of the Year

Congratulations to the Gwinnett County Fire Services Honor Guard on winning the Public Safety Uniform of the Year. This award is presented annually by the North-American Association of Uniform Manufacturers & Distributors. Honor Guard Commander, Investigator Ira Burnette and Captain Steve Cahn accepted the award at the 2011 NAUMB Convention in Orlando, Florida in May.

There are twenty members of Gwinnett Fire's Honor Guard. This includes three bagpipers. The Honor Guard offers their services at recruit graduations and for Gwinnett and, upon request, for other agencies' funerals. They can also be seen around the community at special observed dates throughout the year, such as Memorial Day and 9-11, and at sporting events, like the Atlanta Braves, Gwinnett Braves, and Gwinnett Arena games.

Ira Burnette was instrumental in designing the new uniforms. The competition acknowledges the importance of "professional, neat, well-fitted, and identifiable uniforms in police, fire and other first-responder public safety departments".





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Sharee Wells is currently working for Forensic and Scientific Testing in Thorsby, Alabama. She worked for the Alabama Department of Forensic Sciences for 10 years, where she served as the only reporting fire debris analyst for the state. Please visit the company's website for more information www.fast-lab.com or to contact Sharee directly at 205-646-0071.

Fire Debris Collection & Preservation

Fire investigation is a complex and ever changing field; the Fire Investigator must first investigate the fire utilizing the scientific method in compliance with NFPA 921.

Then, during the data collection of the scientific method, the collection and preservation of fire debris must be done properly if the evidence is to be used in the successful prosecution of an arson fire.

The value of physical evidence depends upon the proper documentation, collection, and preservation of the evidence from the time of its initial discovery and collection to its subsequent examination and analyses. Fire debris evidence should be collected in either a metal paint can (quart, gallon) or nylon fire debris bags. The purpose of the evidence collection container is to trap the ignitable liquid vapors inside the container for analysis. Evidence should be placed in a proper container immediately upon its collection at the fire scene. Due to possible evaporation and contamination of ignitable liquids, it is vital that fire debris evidence not be pre-packaged into paper or plastic bags.

It is also important that evidence be submitted to the laboratory promptly. Studies have shown that over a period of time, ignitable liquids will degrade and even decompose beyond the laboratory's ability to identify its components. One particular substrate, soil samples, has been shown to degrade ignitable liquids over the period of several weeks. When collecting soil samples, it is the recommendation of the laboratory to freeze the sample. This slows the microbacteria's degradation of the ignitable liquid until the sample can be submitted to the laboratory.

Each laboratory will have its own preference for the evidence submissions and evidence containers. It is important to contact your local laboratory to determine the proper procedure for submission. Please feel free to contact Sharee Wells at Forensic and Scientific Testing for any questions relating to Fire Debris Analysis.

NEWS FROM CPSC

U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission

Office of Information and Public Affairs

Washington, DC 20207

CPSC Hotline: (800) 638-2772

CPSC Media Contact: (301) 504-7908

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 27, 2011

Release #11-232

CPSC Alert: Counterfeit Smoke Alarms Distributed in Atlanta

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) is urging consumers in the Atlanta area to check their homes for counterfeit smoke alarms. About 18,500 counterfeit photoelectric smoke alarms were distributed for free in the Atlanta area between 2006 through May 2011 as part of the Atlanta Smoke Alarm Program. The smoke alarms can fail to alert consumers in the event of a fire.

The Atlanta Fire Rescue Department, which distributed the free smoke alarms as part of a fire safety campaign, is recalling the smoke alarms and is working to provide free smoke alarm inspections and replacement units. Consumers who received these alarms should immediately contact the Atlanta Smoke Alarm Recall Hotline at (404) 546-2733.

The counterfeit alarms can be identified by a silver Underwriters Laboratories' UL label on the back and three sets of vented slots on the front. The UL label is counterfeit. The alarms do not have a model number or brand name printed on them. "Important: Refer to Manual for Operating Instruction and Safety" and "Do Not Paint" are stamped into the plastic on the front of the alarm in both English and German. The package states, "This Smoke Alarm save [sic] life and property by

early warning!" Claims that smoke alarms can "save property" are not typical claims for smoke alarms. The packaging states, "10 YEAR LIFE LITHIUM BATTERY," but the battery included with the smoke alarm is a carbon zinc, industrial, heavy duty battery, which will power the alarm for only one year.

CPSC's independent testing of the smoke alarms determined that the alarms pose a life safety hazard to the occupants in the event of a fire. The alarms perform poorly and inconsistently and do not meet voluntary standards requirements in Underwriters Laboratories' (UL) 217, Single and Multiple Station Smoke Alarms and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 72, Fire Alarm and Signaling Code. The smoke alarms' sensitivity settings varied greatly between the alarms tested. Some alarms did not respond within an adequate time for life safety and other alarms did not respond at all.

CPSC has worked with the voluntary standards organizations to improve smoke alarm performance and reliability. Counterfeit alarms can put lives at risk. Working smoke alarms that meet the voluntary standards are proven to save lives. CPSC urges consumers to install smoke alarms on every level of the home, outside sleeping areas and inside bedrooms. Replace batteries at least once every year and test the alarms once a month.



This & That

From time to time, there is information that GFIA members will need, but we won't necessarily need a whole article. For those instances, we will publish that information under this section of our newsletter. Please contact your newsletter editors, Ann Bell or Bilinda Thomas to have your information included.

IAAI Membership renewal issues

During our chapter meeting there was a question regarding IAAI membership renewal and those members not receiving membership renewal notices from the IAAI. Roger Krupp, First Vice President of the IAAI, informed us that the IAAI membership office emails a renewal notice to the member's email address they have on file 60-90 days before expiration date. They then mail via USPS a renewal notice 30 days prior to expiration of the membership. Two weeks before the expiration, the membership office sends another email. In the past they have experienced issues because members will list their fire department's office address and email as their email and address of record, and items may get lost when not sent to home address. Mr. Krupp wanted to remind our members to go to the IAAI website (firearson.com) and make sure they have the most current contact information on file. This may help those not receiving emails or renewal notices sent via USPS.

Alabama Association of Arson Investigators

The Alabama Chapter IAAI has made great strides in providing a quality educational experience for investigators in Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi. Please check out their website, www.alabamארson.com, for information on their Fall Seminar in Orange Beach, Oct. 17 - 20, 2011.

Save the Date!

The GFIA will be picking back up their Spring Seminar! Plan on March 13 - 16, 2012 in McDonough, GA. Further details will come as the date gets closer!

Editors' Message

The Fire Trailer News has two new editors. Ann Bell of RK Bell Consulting 706-215-2826 and Bilinda Thomas of State Farm Insurance 770-880-7059. Please feel free to contact them with any information you may be interested in seeing or submitting. The Fire Trailer News is a quarterly publication. The Winter 2011 edition will be published at the end of December. If you have any suggestions or submissions, please forward it to one of the editors no later than December 1, 2011.



Outgoing President, Ken LeCroy, Message to Membership

As the outgoing President, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the GFIA Board and Membership for your support during this past year. I couldn't have done it without you. It has been a pleasure and honor.

I would also like to congratulate our new Officers who took office in Savannah this August. Keith Bell is to be our President, and Kevin Wallace is the First Vice President. Ron Reagan will serve as our Second Vice President with Michael Hawkins filling the Secretary position.

I would like to give a special thanks to Ed Canipelli. Ed stepped down as Treasurer after 22 years of dedicated and faithful service. Laurel Mason is our new Treasurer.

Please join me in welcoming and thanking those who make the GFIA what it is today.

With the greatest respect,
Ken LeCroy

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