



## CAMPUS FIRE SAFETY CODE TALK

---

### What's New in Fire Investigation 2017?

*By Michael T. Wixted, MIFireE, Emergency Services Specialist*

Fire Investigation is the scientific pursuit of knowledge and truth when it comes to determining the origin, cause and the impact of fire. Whether it's a small contained toaster fire in kitchen or the complete destruction of multi-million dollar warehouse, understanding why and how it happened may be the only way to safeguard against future loss. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) has long supported the fire investigation community through the development of [NFPA 921, Guide for Fire and Explosion Investigations](#) and [NFPA 1033, Standard for Professional Qualifications for Fire Investigator](#). NFPA 921 provides a systematic and scientific approach to fire investigation by providing methodologies and practices based on sound scientific principles. Similarly NFPA 1033 supports the fire investigator by providing the basic knowledge requirements and minimum job performance requirements (JPR) necessary to be a qualified fire investigator. Essentially NFPA 921 is the "how" and NFPA 1033 is the "who" when it comes to fire investigation. So if you see a fire scene, be it something small in the kitchen of a dorm room, or something large encompassing an entire campus building, more than likely NFPA 921 and NFPA 1033 will be at play in the background.

So what's new? Well like all things in life the advancement of science and technology is never ending. Although the fundamental principles of fire dynamics haven't changed, we are learning more and more, rediscovering new facts and challenging ourselves to new ways of thinking. As a result NFPA 921 and 1033 are regularly updated in order to stay relevant in the fire investigation industry and continuously support its stakeholders. It's an open process where members of the public can get involved and industry experts collaborate in order to develop required changes. That process is coming to floriation for NFPA 921 and pretty shortly the 2017 edition will be finalized and available to the public. So what could have changed, there are many updates but at a glance here is one of the most impactful:

- The scope of NFPA 921 has been revised to distinguish the difference between a Fire Investigation Report and a National Fire Incident Reporting Systems (NFIRS) Report. Concerns were raised within the industry that NFIRS Reports, which provide valuable



## CAMPUS FIRE SAFETY CODE TALK

---

information for national fire loss, were no longer being completed as they were being compared to Fire Investigation Reports which are typically completed by a trained/qualified fire investigator and contain more detailed information. This issue involved discussions with representatives of the National Association of State Fire Marshals (NASFM), International Fire Marshal Association (IFMA) and the National Fire Data Center at the United States Fire Administration. Based on the work of these groups the issues were brought before technical experts who work diligently to revise NFPA 921 and after some thoughtful and thorough collaboration the scope of the document was revised.

There are many other changes which we won't discuss here, but if the world of fire investigation intrigues you and you want to know what else is occurring at NFPA, not just in relation to NFPA 921, check out [www.nfpa.org/xchange](http://www.nfpa.org/xchange). It's an online information and knowledge platform where you can touch a huge host of information, opinions and get involved in some interesting discussions.



The Center for Campus Fire Safety



978.961.0410

SupportTeam@campusfiresafety.org