

FIREPOINT



IAAI JOURNAL



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EDITORIAL

In the December 2000 editorial I wrote that:

"On the 23rd October, 2000 on ABC Television, the 'Four Corners' program made serious allegations against a number of fire investigators, and against insurance companies, concerning their professional standards and conduct.

Bodies such as our Associations and the Insurance Council of Australia need to carefully consider the facts".

In this issue we publish a response to the program by way of a letter received from Peter Thomas. The views he expresses are his own, and are not necessarily those of the Queensland Association of Fire Investigators, or of this magazine. I welcome other responses to the issues raised in the television program, or in the letter.

Wal Stern



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VICTORIAN NEWS

Training Sessions

The following is a list of proposed training sessions for 2001:

March

"Vehicle Fires" MFB
Training College
Supper Meeting

May

"Fire Engineers" MFB
Training College
Supper meeting

June

Visit to VFSC

August

One Day Seminar
Theme & Venue to be
advised

September

Wildfire Investigation
MFB Training college

November

Court Procedures

Details of each session will be forwarded to each member prior to the session. It is important that each member books via the contact numbers.

The June session will be limited to members only but all others are available to any non-members or friends. If anyone has any special requests or ideas for training sessions please contact any of the

committee. Days and times for training sessions are planned to allow as many as possible to attend, but this means planning your own diary and booking early.

Membership

The Chapter's membership list was reviewed in December and it is pleasing to report that we have 140 financial members. New members are still welcome.

Committee News

The committee has decided to hold the Annual General Meeting in conjunction with the Seminar in August. The current President, Alex Conway has indicated that he will NOT be standing for President and the positions of Treasurer and four committee members will become vacant.

It is important that the committee positions are filled so that all the work doesn't fall on just the eager few. Any member interested in a position on the committee is encouraged to contact a committee member.

Short Article

Appeared in the newspaper:

Fires Take Heavy Toll

MOSCOW – More than 13,000 Russians died from fires this year, including 615 children. More than 219,000 fires were reported in Russia by the end of November.

Russia's firefighting service said about 56,000 buildings were destroyed and about 5000 livestock perished.

About 40,000 people were saved by firefighters.

Comment : I hope Australia doesn't get to this stage!

Digital Cameras

Digital cameras and digital imaging are being used in fire investigation in the U.S.

The burden of proving it is an accurate representation (not altered) is with the party introducing it. Make sure you have a procedure established for authenticating the images, and a written policy on the use of these cameras.

*Steve Walkley
Fire Investigation Officer
Tasmania Fire Service*

November 23 and 24 last year saw the Victorian Association of Fire Investigators (Including Tasmania) Seminar, held at the Tasmania Fire Service Training College, Cambridge.

The seminar was opened at 2pm by Chief Officer John Gledhill of the Tasmania Fire service and was attended by approximately 50 delegates, the majority being from 'mainland' states.

Steve Walkley, Terry McCarthy and Colin Thomas FAICD then presented a case study on Seascope Cottage, the accommodation facility that was burnt down in the Port Arthur tragedy. Terry and Colin were both Police Officers for a number of years, specialising in terrorism negotiations and fire investigation respectively.

Colin specialised in fire cause determination for ten of his seventeen years with the Police, and Terry has been a

guest lecturer at the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Baltimore County Police Department and the California Association of Hostage Negotiators. They are now partners in the private investigation firm, Thomas Whayman & McCarthy.

Steve has been with the Tasmania Fire Service for over 21 years and has been a qualified fire investigator for the past 13 years.

Colin and Steve continued the afternoon with live demonstrations of car burns, comparing the differences in cars that have been deliberately ignited using a flammable liquid accelerant and a car that has 'accidentally' caught alight.

The seminar dinner was held that night, at the Hobart Visa Hotel. International French Fire Investigator Mr Fi Fi Fart Fart (with an Irish accent), (see photo page 10) was the after dinner speaker. He gave practical demonstrations of fire, which at one stage had most of the audience seeking cover, and demonstrated his use of balloons, in relation to fire investigation. Could only be described as interesting, I think?

Day two opened with two concurrent seminars. The first was a case study on the Kew Cottages fire of 1996 in which nine handicapped males lost their lives, by Commander Gary Martin AFSM, GradDipAppSc, MB; and Ex Senior Sargent Adrian Edwards Arson Squad.

Commander Martin spent seven years as Officer in Charge of the Fire Investigation Unit, and during a long and distinguished career was awarded the Australian Fire Service Medal in the Queens Birthday Honours 1997.

The second of the concurrent seminars was a presentation "Agents as Insurance Intermediaries", by Stephen Knight LLB and Julian Whayman BA, LLB, FAICD. Steve became a partner in Dobson Mitchell & Allport (the oldest continuously practicing law firm in Australia) in 1997, specialising in insurance law, and is the Treasurer of the Tasmanian Chapter of the Australian Insurance Law Association. Julian was the senior police prosecutor for five years and acted as senior solicitor for the Tasmania Police Service. He is now the third partner in Thomas

Whayman & McCarthy, as well as being principal of his law firm, Julian Whayman Barristers and Solicitors.

These presentations were followed by an Open Forum and morning tea, then a viewing of the cold burn modules with Steve Walkley, Colin Thomas and Bruce Dineen.

In the afternoon, three rooms of the 'fire-house' that had been furnished, plastered, painted and electrically wired were burnt, giving the attendees the opportunity to observe the rooms prior to, during and post fire. This was hosted by Steve Walkley, Colin Thomas, Alex Conway (President of the VAFI) and Adrian Edwards.

At the completion of the seminar, delegates were given the opportunity to pose questions or make comment to a panel that comprised all guest speakers and presenters.

The overall comment or opinion of all, was that the seminar had been a great success, both in bringing together personnel from around Australia with a common interest in the investigation of fires and as an avenue to share the knowledge that exists between the

different authorities around the country.

We would like to thank the sponsors of the Seminar: C.S.R Plaster; Dobson, Mitchell and Allport, Barristers, Solicitors and Notaries; Thomas, Whayman and McCarthy Investigation firm, and of course, the Tasmania Fire Service.

Thanks also to the VAFI committee, Specially Thanks to Steve Walkley Tas. Rep., and Colin Thomas Tas. Rep. of the VAFI.

.....
Two photos from the burn undertaken in Tasmania are shown on the following pages.

The first (page 8) shows clearly that the fire is coming from the interior of the building, not travelling to the interior from an outside location. There will be little fire damage indicated later to the exterior, at floor level, or to the external wall below the window.

The damage observed after the fire has been extinguished to the window, and window frame, will be far more devastating, where the fire is exiting, than to the adjoining window or window frame. The flames exit mainly from the top half of the windows.

The most intense damage observed externally will be to the top of the window frames, and to the eaves on the exterior of the house, with damage also observed to the guttering above the affected window.

Examination of metal window frames gives an indication as to the temperature reached at that location. Check to see if the aluminium has softened, or melted.

The second photograph (page 9) shows how much smoke can be generated in the early stages of a fire. There may only be smouldering combustion occurring at this stage, without any flame being present.

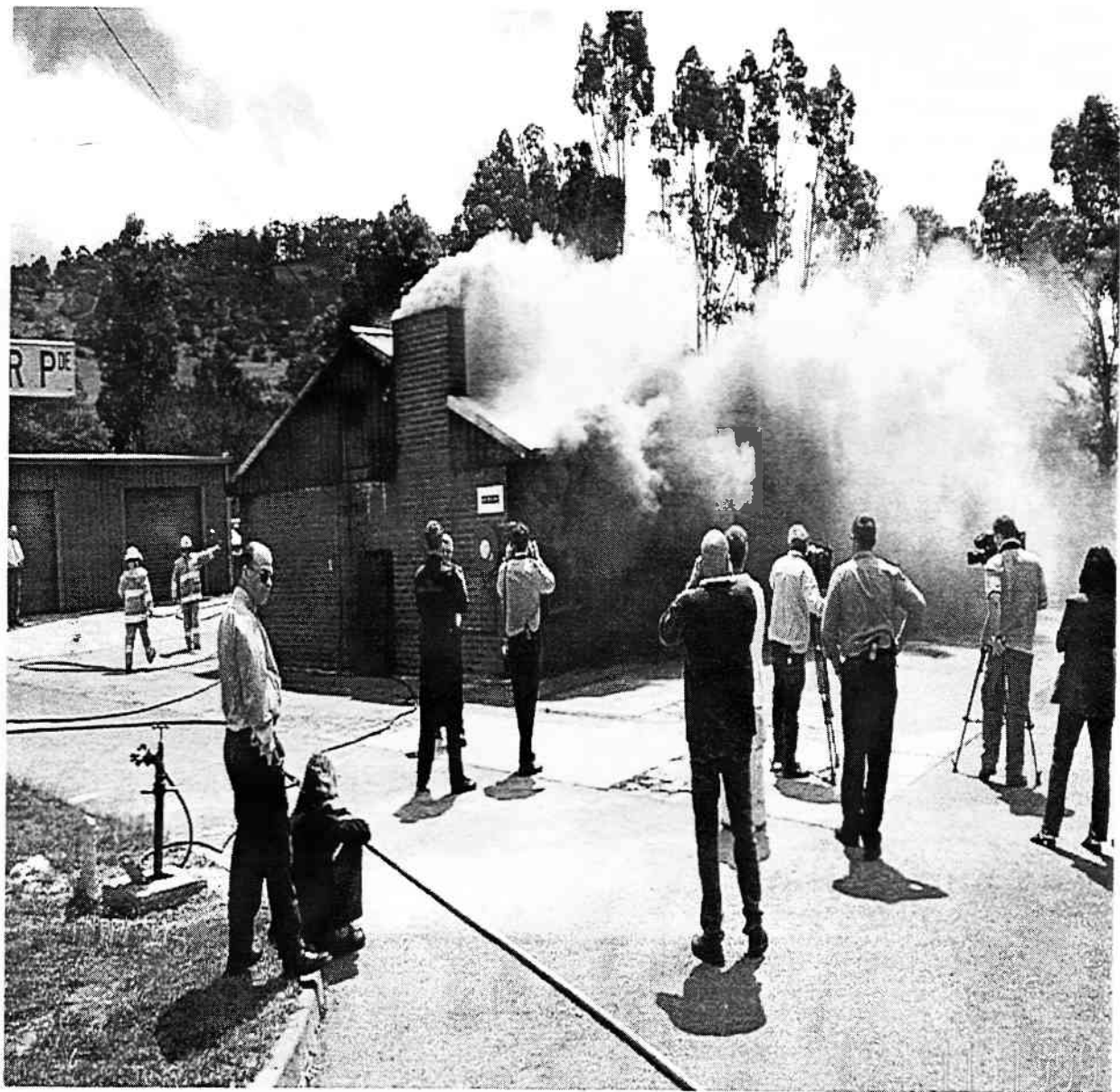
If a hydrocarbon accelerant had been used, there would have been much darker, blacker smoke observed.

If the conditions are wet, thick grey smoke might be observed.

Eyewitness accounts of where smoke was first observed can help pinpoint the position of origin.

Observations on the colour of the initial smoke are also important.







NEW SOUTH WALES NEWS

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

from Don Walshe

In line with our objectives of providing training and professional development for our members, the committee is in the process of organizing workshop/training session evenings. These meetings are aimed at expanding knowledge of fire investigation and other aspects of fire scene procedures. They will cover current trends and provide the opportunity for skills maintenance.

There will be a series of workshop evenings throughout the year with guest speakers on various topics. The topics will be of interest to all personnel who attend fire and explosion scenes, in every capacity, not only investigators.

The sessions will be free of charge with light refreshment provided. These workshops are aimed at making membership of our association relevant to people involved in the fire industry.

Talking of membership, annual dues are now

payable. If the workshops are as successful as I think they will be the \$ 40. yearly fee will be great value for money.

But wait..... there's more. As well as the A.F.I. workshop nights we will also be presenting joint information nights with the Australian & New Zealand Forensic Science Society.

These sessions will provide the opportunity for speakers to present differing views on a selection of topics.

Once again these evenings will be free of charge and all are welcome to what should prove to be enjoyable and informative evenings.

The first of these sessions may have been held by the time this issue of "FIREPOINT" is on the streets but hopefully the information about the time and place was communicated to you in time. Details of the first two sessions to be held in March are set out below.

Plans are well advanced for our A.F.I. Annual Two Day Conference with August 2nd. and 3rd. being the dates to set aside.

A great venue has been arranged, the Carlton Crest Hotel, which apart from being a lovely hotel with good facilities, is within walking distance to Darling Harbour, China Town and some of the best pubs and restaurants in Sydney. More details to follow.

WORKSHOPS

Thursday, 1st March
@ N.S.W. Fire
Brigade College
Alexandria.

Topic: *Health &
Safety Issues for
Investigators and
Assessors.*

Wednesday, 21st
March
@ Glebe Coroners
Court - Parramatta Rd.
Glebe.

Topic: *Investigation
Problems and
Decontamination of
Clandestine Drug
Laboratories.*

MYSTERY QUIZ

NSW is well served by the FIRU. Its members go out to all large fires, to determine their origin and cause. But it's not all hard work on the job. One tries to make oneself as comfortable as possible, even under difficult circumstances. An unnamed FIRU officer reveals how, in the photo below.

There are some investigators who get filthy, digging amongst the debris. Some use canines to save themselves getting too dirty. There is a prize to the first reader to identify the mystery man in this photo. Contact the editor, Wal Stern (contact details are on page 3). The first correct entry received wins the prize.



NSW Fire Investigation & Research Unit

Report

Compiled by

Ross Brogan
FIRU Investigator

The very best of wishes for the coming year from all of the staff attached to the FIRU. Early in the year there have been some staff movements within the NSW Fire Brigades.

Our current committee member, and past President, Roger Bucholtz, has recently been promoted to Chief Superintendent. In his role he will be the second - in - charge of the South Region of the NSW Fire Brigades; covering an area from Balmain, south to the Victorian border. Hearty congratulations are extended to Roger.

Steve Smith, the Officer - in - Charge of FIRU, has taken leave to pursue personal development in outside industry. We wish Steve luck with his new venture. A replacement as OIC of FIRU will be decided in the near future.

FIRU have been extremely busy over the last few months, with December being particularly fast-paced; 62 incidents being attended during the month. Of particular concern has been the spate of shop fires around Sydney, resulting in severe explosions. Several

of the explosions caused the shopfronts to be blown out onto the street, properties adjacent to suffer damage from flying debris, and peoples' lives placed at risk due to the amount of debris expelled over a wide area.

In one explosion, a young resident above the shop was thrown out of bed and had cause to evacuate the flat as the flat caught fire behind her; being rescued from the roof by the Fire Brigade. As with a lot of incidents of this nature, hospitalised suspects, suffering flash burns are assisting police with their inquiries.

There is conjecture that these fires are related to the large amount of small businesses suffering hardship in today's economic climate.

The FIRU Canine Accelerant detection Team (Val & Ellie) has been very busy attending more and more incidents deemed to be of an incendiary nature. Ellie has been very successful, which is particularly pleasing.

A project has been initiated with the University of Technology, Sydney to determine and prove the success rate of alerts at scenes. Over a twelve month period samples will be taken at scenes where Ellie alerts to accelerants, and analysis carried out to confirm the success rate.

During this period there will also be analysis of Ellie's blood to assess whether any detrimental effects are showing from her continual exposure to fire scenes and accelerants.

IAAI International Liaison

In my role as International liaison Officer I would just like to mention the fact that the IAAI Annual Conference and AGM will be held in Atlantic City, New Jersey, USA during the month of May this year. Details are available in the current Fire & Arson Investigator magazine. [or contact me at FIRU - 02 97427395].

A reminder to members that this year is the first year that international members can vote in a postal ballot for members of the international committee. If you are unable to attend the conference to vote in person, a ballot may be requested by writing to, or emailing the IAAI Headquarters (USA). The address is International Assoc. of Arson Investigators, 12770 Boenker Road, St Louis, MO 63044, USA; or email iaaihq@aol.com.

Ballots must be received in the IAAI office no later than 5th May 2001. Details in the F&AI magazine. Faxed requests not accepted.

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ARSON INVESTIGATORS

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

TO THE SECRETARY. _____ CHAPTER _____

ADDRESS _____

STATE _____ POST CODE _____

(Refer to the list of State office bearers on page 3 for the appropriate address).

I hereby apply for membership of the _____ Chapter of the International Association of Arson Investigators Inc. in accordance with its constitution and By-laws and agree to be bound thereby. I attach the sum of A\$ _____ in payment of Annual Dues (\$ _____) and Initiation Fee (\$ _____).

All information recorded in this application is hereby warranted to be true and correct.

1. NAME IN FULL _____ 2. DATE OF BIRTH _____

3. EMPLOYER _____ 4. POSITION _____

5. BUSINESS ADDRESS _____

CITY/SUBURB _____ STATE _____ POST CODE _____

6. HOME ADDRESS _____

CITY/SUBURB _____ STATE _____ POST CODE _____

7. PHONE (BUS) () _____ FAX () _____

MOBILE () _____ HOME () _____

8. PLEASE LIST ANY FORMAL QUALIFICATIONS (DEGREES, DIPLOMAS, CERTIFICATES etc. WITH THE NAME OF THE ISSUING AUTHORITY AND THE YEAR OF QUALIFICATION.

9. MEMBERSHIP of OTHER ORGANISATIONS _____

10. HAVE YOU EVER BEEN CONVICTED of a CRIME? YES _____ NO _____

11. FULL CONVICTION DETAILS _____

12. ARE YOU A MEMBER OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION of the IAAI?

MEMBERSHIP No. _____

13. REFERENCES (Name, address, phone number, occupation)

A _____

B _____

14. RECOMMENDED by a MEMBER in GOOD STANDING

SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

15. APPLICANT'S SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

ARSON CRIME LINKAGE ANALYSIS SYSTEM (ACLAS)

This is an abridged version of an article which outlines a Canadian concept of a computerized system to identify serial arsonists. Can it help us in Australia? What can we take from this initiative?

SUMMARY

The Arson Crime Linkage Analysis System (ACLAS) is planned to be a computerized system that will identify arson series early so as to provide the basis to identify and apprehend serial arsonists before they cause major financial losses or loss of life. Drawing on two Canadian successes in related fields the first such system worldwide will be developed in Canada, marketed to major metropolitan areas in Canada and exported abroad.

The Violent Crime Linkage Analysis System (ViCLAS), developed by the RCMP, has enjoyed national and international acclaim as an innovative and powerful tool to address serial homicide and

serial sexual assault. ViCLAS technology and concepts will be one cornerstone of ACLAS.

Geographic Profiling, and the "Rigel" computer system that produces such profiles, have been applied to hundreds of cases, involving thousands of individual crimes, across North America and around the world, consistently with excellent results. A number of these crimes this process has helped solve were crimes of serial arson.

By combining the power of ViCLAS with that of Rigel a system will be developed that will identify arson series early, capture essential data to help locate the serial arsonist, and provide an administrative overview of arsons not previously available.

Through the joint efforts of the Canadian Police Research Centre (CPRC), law enforcement, emergency services, private industry and the National Research Council (NRC) the necessary resources will be brought together to

develop such a system. All the ingredients for success are readily available. The need has been identified. The founding research has been conducted. The sources of expertise have been identified. The technology has been developed. A model system has been "roughed out". All that remains to be done is to identify the stakeholders who will contribute to the actual development of the system and reap the benefits.

THE ARSON PROBLEM

The solution rate for arson is currently 20%! The annual Canadian number of injuries to firefighters due to arsons range between 200 and 300. In 1997 there were 55 deaths and \$181,819,292 in financial losses attributed to arson.

If one looks at 1997 statistics, the last year for which complete Canadian arson statistics are available, there were 12799 arsons reported to police in Canada. Only 1395 of those crimes were cleared by charge and 1152 were

"cleared otherwise"; a clearance rate of 20% with over 80% of arsons unsolved.

The Uniform Crime Reports(UCRs) maintained by the FBI reflect a similar, picture in the USA. In 1997 the UCR reported 81,753 arsons with an 18% clearance rate. It is significant to this paper that these clearance rates tended to improve in cities under 10,000 and improve even further in rural areas.

The International Association of Arson Investigators reports that, in residential fires arson is the third leading cause of death and that in commercial fires it is the main cause of death, injuries and dollar loss. In 1988 the Federal Emergency Management Agency in USA ranked arson as the second leading cause of death in residential fires.

While reporting procedures, classifications and interpretation of statistics varied from one jurisdiction to another the overall picture remained relatively consistent. Arson is a serious problem for fire fighters, police, the insurance industry and the general public across North America. Statistics from the United Kingdom reflect

a similar picture.

It is estimated that the vast majority of arsons are singular events attributable to one offender. When private dwellings and occupied buildings are victimized by a serial arsonist, however, the investigative costs, media attention and public fear escalate.

THE CHALLENGES.

1. The criminal nature of most homicides and sexual assaults is apparent at time of reporting, while many arsons require considerable investigation to establish the criminality of them. This is further complicated by the wide range of reporting criteria used by various agencies to distinguish between suspicious fires, fires of undetermined origin, those confirmed as arson, fires started by children, etc.

2. The very nature of the crime renders arson a very difficult crime to investigate. Evidence that is not consumed by the fire itself is often destroyed in the effort to fight the fire.

3. Research, by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms(ATF) in USA, has shown that serial arsonists are less mobile

than serial killers and serial rapists, largely confining their crimes to one state.

4. Serial Arsonist tend to be more prolific in their crimes and enjoy a high rate of escaping police attention, albeit more by circumstance than design,(average 25.3 fires without being questioned by police). This is significant in the face of the finding that over 50% of the arsonists interviewed returned to the scene some time after arson, 97% of those within 24 hours.

5. Many serial arsonists begin their careers with crimes that are commonly referred to as "nuisance fires". Typical records of such fires offer a dearth of information beyond that of time and location.

6. A number of national and state wide systems to link murders and rapes have been developed in USA and elsewhere. Today, no such system exists to link arsons.

7. A common definition of what constitutes an arson, for linkage purposes, must be addressed in a way that is both understandable and acceptable to potential users of the system.

8. Any new system must be user friendly. Each user

must be educated in the hands on use of the technology as well as the geographic and behavioral concepts involved.

9. Funding to support development of a working ACLAS prototype needs to be identified.

WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT IT?

Research and experience in many crime categories have supported the theory that a high percentage of crimes are committed by a small percentage of offenders. There is no reason to believe that this is any different with serial arson. The linking of a series of crimes to a common offender not only increases investigative efficiency, it also enhances the grounds for multiple charges and dangerous offender status, with There are currently over 95,000 cases entered on ViCLAS from all regions of Canada. From the current data base there have been over 7,250 series of two or more crimes identified. These series represent over 17,400 individual crimes. That translates into solving an average of 2.4 crimes for every offender identified. That is clearly more efficient than solving

resultant indefinite/longer sentences for serial offenders. The development of ACLAS may be justified for these reasons alone.

There are two recent Canadian developments that offer a new way of dealing with serial arson. They are:

1. The Violent Crime Linkage Analysis System(ViCLAS). Developed by the RCMP, ViCLAS has enjoyed national and international acclaim as an innovative and powerful tool to address serial homicide and serial sexual assault.

Research by the FBI, and others, has shown that serial killers and serial rapists are motivated to commit their crimes by high levels of anger harbored internally, by a quest for power over crimes one at a time. Additionally, just as ViCLAS identified a much higher number of serial sexual offenders than was previously believed to exist, ACLAS may well surface more arson series in Canada than are presently known.

2. Geographic Profiling, invented by Detective Inspector Kim Rossmo of Vancouver Police

another, or a combination of the two. Each individual serial offender's unique combination of these emotions tends to remain constant over time and space as he continues his criminal career. This finding is one of the cornerstones upon which ViCLAS is built.

ViCLAS was developed to address serial crime, and was initially an additional paper form that busy investigators were required to fill out but it has had unforeseen spinoff benefits. For instance many jurisdictions are now using the ViCLAS form as an investigators checklist! Experience has shown that if the investigator can fully complete the form he/she has done a thorough investigation. In some cases the ViCLAS form; has replaced the traditional reporting forms.

Department, has proved to be a powerful and accurate tool to address serial crime. A Vancouver company, Environmental Criminology Research Inc. (ECRI) developed a geographic profiling system known as "Rigel". Rigel conducts up to a million calculations to quickly produce geographic profiles that focus in on where the offender lives.

Geographic Profiling and the Rigel system have been applied to hundreds of cases, involving thousands of individual crimes, across North America and around the world, with consistently excellent results. A number of the crimes this process has helped solve were those of serial arson.

THE PARTICIPANTS

The National Research Council(NRC) has worked with the Canadian police community for over 30 years and is a founding partner in the Canadian Police Research Centre(CPRC) since 1979. Bringing private and public entities together to address a common cause has been a major endeavour of the NRC CPRC office. The CPRC was a supporter in the development of ECRI's innovative and powerful law enforcement tool "Rigel" for Geographic Profiling of serial crimes and the InvestigAide, a Break & Enter expert system.

Serial arson brings a new element to the equation. Police are responsible for the investigation of arson. Fire Departments play a role in both fire

suppression and providing expertise and investigative data.

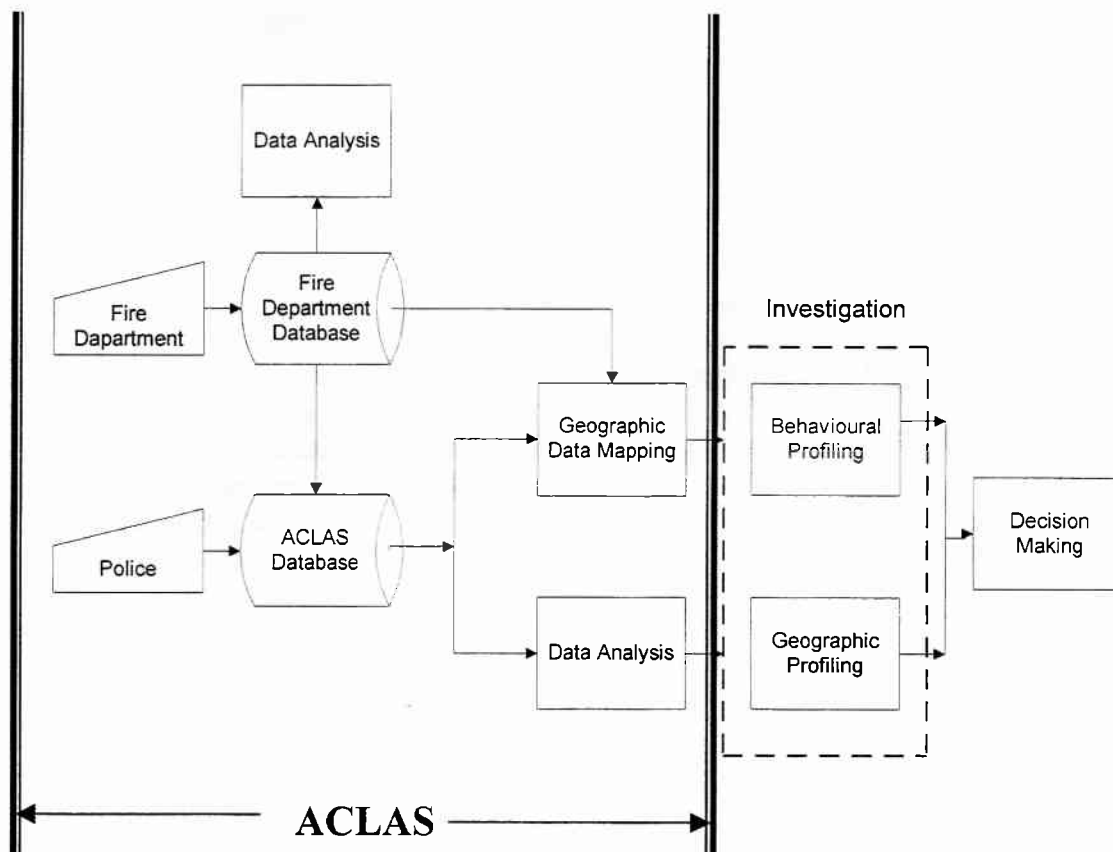
THE MODEL - ACLAS

The NRC sponsored a two day workshop (May 25 & 26, 2000) to explore ways of developing an arson linkage system. Participants from CPRC, RCMP, ViCLAS, ATF, private industry, Ontario Provincial Police, and the Ottawa arson task force attended. While all attendees agreed that development of a robust and reliable arson linkage system would be of great benefit, no single entity, public or private, had the required resources to do so. It was clear that a wider base of support is required for this project to succeed. This White Paper is a direct result of that conclusion.

Drawing on lessons learned during ViCLAS development, and the specialized experience of the Ottawa Arson task force, a data gathering instrument and system configuration drafted. This outline, called ACLAS, was critiqued later by Special Agents of the ATF and a representative of the

Manitoba Fire Commissioner's Office currently assigned to the Arson Strike force in Winnipeg. Other stakeholders will be offered the opportunity to comment on the model. The following three tiered model was arrived at:

1. Tier One - Fire Data
 - will capture the following fire data - classification, time and location.
 - will be available to all police and fire department personnel.
 - will allow for a clear picture of an existing rate of arsons within any given geographic and/or temporal parameters and allow administrators to conduct analysis of arson data, separate from all other fires, for administrative purposes.
- 2 Tier Two - Fire and police investigators:
 - will capture confidential details from identified arson scenes.
3. Tier Three - Restricted to police investigators only. Will capture both confidential information and personal information on suspects and known offenders.



Using the same technology applied in the Rigel system for geographic profiling, ECRI has developed a "visualizer" that translates address information and plots it on a map. This allows the analysts to easily view the geographic patterns of a potential crime series. With the ability to zoom in or out, and to expand or contract temporal parameters this is a powerful tool.

The "visualizer" is a key component of any arson linkage system. First, serial arsonists, as noted earlier, are less mobile, therefore, the geographic and temporal pattern of their crimes are highly significant. Secondly, most arson series begin with "nuisance" fires and often progress in severity to the point of directly endangering human lives. By accurately capturing the

geographic and temporal data of such small fires an emerging series can be identified earlier. Should the series progress to the point of life endangerment before the offender is identified, that basic information from his early crimes can prove critical to the production of an accurate geographic profile. Capturing "nuisance" data as it occurs will make the system more

reliable for analysis.

WHO WILL USE ACLAS?

The larger the city the more anonymous the serial offender becomes. This, and the limited mobility of

most serial arsonists found in ATF research, support the development of a system for major metropolitan agencies. The ability of neighboring jurisdictions to compare ACLAS data will assist in those rare cases of the more mobile serial arsonist. Cities such as Winnipeg and Ottawa who have formed an arson task force of both fire and police department investigators will receive the quickest and greatest benefit from ACLAS. Ideally users would also capture arson data from surrounding jurisdictions in order to have a complete local picture.

THE MARKET

A review of the 1997 arson statistics across Canada reflects that the major Canadian cities would benefit from an ACLAS approach.

In the USA 80 American cities would benefit from

using ACLAS.

Just as ViCLAS has been adopted in seven countries outside Canada, the major cities in those countries, and any major city in the western world, would also benefit from using ACLAS.

THE BENEFITS

Better Data:

The simple fact that the most recent complete arson statistics from across Canada are already three years old clearly reflects a need for improvement to the way such information is collected. It is only by considering the consistency of statistics from 1992 through 1997, and then projecting forward to 2000 in the trust that such consistency remained, that a current picture could be arrived at.

ACLAS will capture arson data as the crimes occur. By capturing, collating and analyzing this data, in a uniform way from city to city, the true arson picture, on a municipal, provincial and national scale, can be more accurately interpreted in a timely manner. Trends, both positive and negative, can be identified earlier. This can alert investigators to changes in crime trends as they are

developing and enhance investigative effectiveness.

Serial Arson Targeting:

When two or more serial arsonists are active in the same city it can be very difficult to separate one series from the other, and "one time" incidents from a series. Currently, it is only through painstaking slow and detailed analysis of volumes of records that such crimes can be disentangled with any degree of certainty.

By drawing on the existing research and expertise to develop ACLAS, and future research and experience to improve it, users will have "cutting edge" technology and the direct benefits of international expertise at their finger tips.

ACLAS will quickly identify individual arson series attributable to an individual, usually before lives are at stake. Through the use of behavioural and/or geographic profiles, and/or traditional investigative means the offender(s) can then be more quickly identified and dealt with.

(See Figure 1 under THE MODEL - ACLAS above)

Investigative Time Saving

Given that many serial arsonists begin their careers with "nuisance" fires, that cause little damage and pose little danger to life, the early identification and apprehension of such offenders will have significant long term results. Early intervention will reduce the number of fire calls and the inherent risk to fire fighters. Capture of specific details regarding the crimes and the offender will make future investigation of his crimes more efficient should the offender resume his criminal activities. Each such criminal career cut short will reduce the danger to fire fighters, improve investigative efficiency and effectiveness, and reduce the dollar loss to arson that tends to rise in the latter part of such careers. It will also reduce the risk to life that serial arson poses.

Property Cost Saving:

Who, then, will benefit from the use of ACLAS? The fire department, the police department, the insurance industry and the general public will all benefit. In short, ACLAS will save time, money and lives.

CONCLUSION

Canada is in a unique position to develop an effective and efficient arson linkage system. The NRC has a history of bringing the necessary participants together for the international success of such projects. The problem has been identified and analyzed. The founding research is in place and the experts who conducted that research are willing to assist. A model has been designed and critiqued by those experts.

The next step is to build a working prototype that can be "field tested" in an operational environment. As with any joint project where the NRC brings private and public participants together for a common cause, those who contribute to the building of ACLAS will reap the early benefits.

The objective is to produce a system that is affordable to all major departments so as to do the greatest public good. No one agency or private business can afford to do this alone. Police departments, fire departments and the insurance industry all stand to gain in both practice and public image by supporting this project. Recipients of this paper are encouraged

to give serious thought to what each one can offer in support be it logistical or financial. Lip service and words of encouragement will not get the job done and now is the time to stand and be counted.

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In the U.S. more than 3,700 people are believed to die each year in residential fires, and there are more than 400,000 residential fires serious enough to be reported to fire departments.

About 90% of U.S. households have smoke detectors installed. A survey has shown that in about 20% of the households the smoke detectors were not working, mostly because the battery was flat or missing.

United States Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms Selects Chief Architect 7.0 For Fire Investigation.

The U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) has selected Chief Architect 7.0 as the architectural computer-aided-design (CAD) software package to be used by its Certified Fire Investigators (CFIs). ATF-- an agency operating under the United States Department of the Treasury-- ordered 150 seats of Chief Architect 7.0.

This purchase is the latest step in the ATF's strategy to advance fire investigation and analysis in their Certified Fire Investigator Program beyond a discipline based on experience to one that applies scientific and engineering technology. ATF special agents trained as CFIs and stationed throughout the United States will use Chief Architect to produce detailed drawings of fire scenes.

As part of investigations they will draw floor plans that show the placement of fire origins, furniture, victims, or other relevant objects. In cases where a structure is completely destroyed, Chief Architect enables the

CFIs to create 3D representations of buildings and rooms for visual walkthroughs. In criminal arson cases, the CAD drawings and 3D renderings can be enlarged and used in court as exhibits. Because CFI agents often work together on cases establishing a nationwide CAD standard with Chief Architect lets agents exchange compatible drawings over the Internet.

ATF special agent CFIs are the only investigators trained by a Federal law enforcement agency to qualify as expert witnesses in fire cause determinations.

In 1999, these men and women participated in approximately 2,100 fire scene examinations. They are also key members of the National Response Team (NRT) and the International Response Team (IRT).

The ATF National Response Team assists Federal, State, and local investigators with significant arson and explosives incidents. The teams work alongside State and local officers reconstructing the scene, identifying the seat of the blast or origin of the fire, conducting interviews, and sifting through debris to

obtain evidence related to the bombing/arson.

Since its inception, the NRT has been mobilized 340 times. These incidents involved the loss of 439 lives, injuries to 2,342 individuals, and over \$4.3 billion in property damages.

Chief Architect provides advanced architectural design tools for 2D drafting, 3D modeling, and graphic presentation for architectural design professionals -- combining production proven 3D modeling and unparalleled ease of use at an affordable price. Chief Architect is written for the Microsoft® Windows family of operating systems and is distributed to customers worldwide.

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QUEENSLAND NEWS

PRESIDENT'S WELCOME

Happy New Year and welcome to the first edition of Firepoint for 2001.

The first quarter of the year is an important time for the Chapter as there are many house-keeping issues such as Membership Renewals, annual Activity Plan and Annual General Meeting that need to be addressed. Please take a few moments to review the updates on these issues detailed further on in this report.

On behalf of our members, I wish to sincerely thank the following organisations for sponsoring our Chapter throughout 2001.

Major Sponsor

Deacons (Lawyers)

Supporting Sponsors

Freemans Australia

Kennedy's Forensic

Munters Pty Ltd

The sponsorship funds assist with the costs associated with the "Major Project" and updating the QAFI Website.

2001 MAJOR PROJECT

An invitation was recently sent by the 2001 Project Facilitator, Mr. Michael Drummond, to members and various industry bodies to participate in the 2001 QAFI Major Project Consultation Process.

It is anticipated that the training seminar will be held in late July, early August and we wish to thank the following people for volunteering their time to formulate the focus and content of the project.

- ◆ Det. Sgt. Robert Campbell, Queensland Police Service
- ◆ Jon Capper, Pacific Adjusters
- ◆ Mal Edmiston, Project Services
- ◆ Alan Faulks, Dept. Mines & Energy – Electrical Safety Office
- ◆ Brad Greer, ARIMA
- ◆ Kate Hitchens, Kennedy's Forensic
- ◆ Sgt. Michael Holohan, Queensland Police Service
- ◆ Ray O'Sullivan, Freemans Australia (Toowoomba)
- ◆ Trevor Pohlmann, RACQ

- ◆ Greg Reynolds, QFRA – Fire Investigation Research Unit.
- ◆ Keith Spanswick, Forensic Services Australia.

In search of a prospective venue for the Major Project, members of the sub-committee recently had the opportunity to tour the new Q.F.R.A.'s Training Academy located at Whyte Island. Upon completion, this Training Academy will lead the way in South East Asia.

Will this be the venue for this year's Major Project?

At this stage, no one knows. What we do know is that the consultative committee will work hard to ensure that the right venue is selected to complement the training program.

For additional information on the Major Project, please contact Michael Drummond on (07) 3002 5009 or e-mail mpd@tcm.com.au

MEMBERS SURVEY

On behalf of the Committee, I wish to thank all members who completed and returned the member survey form.

The feedback on training issues will be used to plan the future direction of the Association.

2001 CHAPTER COMMITTEE NOMINATIONS

Nomination forms for Office Bearers on the 2001 QAFI Executive Committee have been forwarded to members.

Please consider taking an active role in your Association. It is your valued skills that will ensure the future success of the Association.

All nominations must be received prior to close of business Friday 9th March 2001.

MEMBERS LUNCHEON & A.G.M.

The Chapters Annual General Meeting will be held at the Members Luncheon on Tuesday 27th March from 12 Noon to 2.00pm at The Stamford Plaza (formerly The Heritage), Brisbane.

Program:

1200 – 1230hrs

Pre-Lunch drinks

QUEENSLAND NEWS

1230 – 1300hrs	Lunch
1300 – 1340hrs	Guest Speaker
1340 – 1350hrs	A.G.M.
1400	Close

At this point in time, I am unable to confirm the guest speaker or presentation topic.

Formal notification will be forwarded to members with additional information being published in our February QAFI Newsletter.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Membership renewal invoices for the period 1 Jan 2001 to 31 Dec 2001 have been issued are now due for payment. . Reminder invoices will be issued on the 28th February to all members with outstanding fees.

If you have any queries in relation to membership, please do not hesitate to contact Julianne Foley on (07) 3822 4700 or e-mail admin_officer@qafi.asn.au

DOLPHIN LAMPS CAUSE FIRE

Following a recent near tragedy involving a six-year old Brisbane girl and a cuddly looking dolphin-shaped lamp, the Queensland Government has taken steps to remove the potentially lethal product from sale.

The parents of the young girl were wakened in the middle of the night by the alarm of a smoke detector. They were horrified to find the child's bedroom filling with smoke while their daughter continued to sleep, unaware of the immediate danger. The dolphin-shaped lamp was found on the bed and had ignited the child's bed linen.

Subsequent investigations by both the Electrical Safety Office (ESO) and the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) has revealed that there have been several versions of the Dolphin lamp sold in Queensland and throughout Australia. They include models with supply voltages of 240 volts, 24volts and 12volts. However, all models are fitted with 10 watt lamps.

Testing initiated by the ESO, has shown that all versions fail to meet the requirements of Australian Standards for "Child Appealing Lamps" and that they all have the potential to cause fire.

Mr. Alan Faulks, Utilisation Manager, ESO, says that the combined efforts of the ESO and the

Office of Fair Trading (OFT) has resulted in Stop Sales Notices being issued to suppliers of these lamps and for warnings to be advised to all other States and Territories.

This incident also highlights the real value of smoke detectors and their effectiveness as a means of preventing certain tragedy and limiting the damage caused by fire.

THE TROUBLE WITH FRAUD

Allegations of fraudulent behaviour by insurance claimants is on the rise, with the referee appointed to adjudicate such cases seeing his workload increase by 56 percent in just 12 months. Last year the Referee, Michael Arnold, handled 380 allegations of fraud and solved 308. Insurance Enquiries and Complaints Chief Executive Sam Parrino says additional resources are being committed to meet the growing number of cases where fraud is alleged.

It's an aspect of insurance claims disputes that is sometimes fraught with doubt and difficulty, which Michael Arnold acknowledges in the latest IEC annual review.

He said insureds often face three problems if they wish to rebut fraud allegations: they do not have ready access to alternative expert advice; they lack the resources to pay for it; and if they do obtain an alternative and contradictory opinion and supply it to the insurer, it is usually scrutinised "in a way that is adversarial rather than investigative".

"The insurer, having made an initial assessment that the claim is fraudulent on the basis of its expert opinion, becomes rigid in approach and is on the path to litigation in which a court's assessment of the opinion becomes inevitable." Mr. Arnold said.

Pointing out that courts are now taking a new attitude to expert evidence, and now require experts to provide objective assistance to the court in reaching its decision. He said IEC has held discussions with the commercial arm of the University of Sydney, which can provide expert opinion on a range of matters.

The aim is to have access to opinions from persons who are independent of both the insurer and the insured in disputes, and who can provide objective analysis and opinion"

Mr. Arnold, who has the power to commission a report at the insurer's expense, said the plan is in its formative stages.

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A LETTER FROM PETER THOMAS

The following letter was forwarded to the Queensland Association of Fire Investigators from Peter Thomas, with a request that it be published in the "Firepoint" Magazine.

RE: Peter Thomas and the ABC - Four Corners program of Monday 23 October 2000

Members may be aware of the ABC – Four Corners (the ABC) program aired Monday 23 October 2000, they say "related to the Insurance Industry and its use of freelance arson investigators, an important subject of national public interest".

Because of the adverse effect the program has had on me, my family, friends, business, the Insurance Industry and people associated with it, I believe it is appropriate that I write this letter of explanation and protest.

Any fair-minded person who viewed the presentation would conclude, I submit, that the program was about Peter Thomas.

It was about me, initiated by one Roseanne Catt and or people representing her. At the same time the ABC 'dragged the insurance industry into its sights and used unsubstantiated allegations and complaints by people with axes to grind', in an effort to achieve their ultimate aim, identified in the next paragraph.

It is about Catt's arrest by me in 1988, her subsequent conviction

in the Supreme Court of New South Wales in 1991 for offences of Conspiracy to Murder, Assault Occasioning Actual Bodily Harm and Perjury etc. It is about her sentence of 12 years 3 months **AND, renewed attempts recently to have her released from prison early and her case reinvestigated.**

The other cases aired all involved investigations carried out by me which resulted in persons being charged with criminal offences, or whose insurance claims were rejected.

Every case involved the preparation of a brief of evidence that was scrutinised by people such as Police or Crown Prosecutors, Insurance Managers and their legal representatives.

Every person involved in the cases aired or who had conduct of the associated legal process that followed is in a position to reject generally the allegations made by the ABC, Loss Adjuster John Higginson and private investigator Grant McKay. I might add, neither man is known to me personally nor have I had any professional association with them.

The program was intentionally or recklessly defamatory of me. I have briefed Counsel to provide an advising, and thereafter I intend to pursue the ABC and others who participated on the program and behind the scenes. Many of you know me personally and have worked with me over a long period of time. A number of you were contacted by the ABC and gave positive, supportive information concerning my

character, ethics and professional conduct. I thank you for your support then and since the program was aired.

The program did seriously denigrate the Insurance Industry and persons associated with it. As an Industry service provider and member of the QAFI, I believe we have a duty to respond to allegations made by the ABC such as;

"Innocent people are being wrongly and systematically accused of arson in the absence of supporting evidence"

"For the insurance companies it's good business, there is no need to pay out on the claim"

"Sally Neighbour's investigation of the fire insurance business is a disturbing portrait of an industry which has failed its responsibilities by nurturing suspect operators and trampling on the rights of its own clients"

John Higginson and Grant McKay should be called on by the Association and made to account, by providing evidence of their allegations that bring the insurance industry and person associated with it into disrepute, some of which were:

Higginson -

"Well some investigators are totally unscrupulous and they're the ones who have got to be wiped out of the industry"

"These unscrupulous operators, well generally they're ex-police officers, most likely from down south, without any previous training in the insurance industry"

"They go out to prove what a hero they are by getting claims rejected"

McKay -

"He has made a name for himself for getting claims rejected"

"From what I have discovered, Peter Thomas places the facts way down on the list in terms of his investigations"

"He seems to be results orientated and his results invariably favour the insurance companies"

"Any insurer that engaged his services would have to be deaf, dumb and blind not to see what methods he uses and employs in relation to his investigations"

"They will commit perjury"

I know as far as I am concerned personally, and as far also as the Insurers whom use my services are concerned, neither Higginson nor McKay can provide one shred of evidence to support their allegations.

Both make their living in the Insurance industry and purport, on national television, to be concerned about unlawful and unscrupulous conduct from within.

They should in my submission, be required by the Association in its capacity as an insurance service provider, to account for their conduct.

If they are not able to produce evidence justifying their conduct they should be dealt with by way of exposure and expulsion from the list of insurance service providers.

Those of us in the Association who are involved in the Insurance Industry know that the denigration of the Industry by the ABC program and its participants can not be justified.