

ACFE SA PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS FOR  
FORENSIC PRACTITIONERS IN SOUTH AFRICA:

FORENSIC FIRE  
INVESTIGATORS



ACFE®

Association of Certified Fraud Examiners

**South Africa Chapter**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**SECTION A .....5**

**1. OVERVIEW OF THE FORENSIC STANDARD FORUM ..... Error! Bookmark not defined.**

**2. THE ACFE.....5**

**2.1 Background on The ACFE SA Chapter .....5**

**2.2 The preamble of the ACFE SA .....6**

**2.3 Applicability of Code .....6**

**2.4 Standards of Professional Conduct.....6**

**2.5 Standards of Examination.....8**

**2.6 Standards of Reporting.....9**

**3. ACFE CODE OF ETHICS .....9**

**SECTION B .....10**

**1. FORENSIC STANDARD FORUM .....10**

**2 BACKGROUND.....10**

**3. INSTRUCTION .....11**

**4. FORENSIC FIRE INVESTIGATOR.....11**

**4.1 Scope and Purpose.....11**

**5. REQUISITE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS .....12**

**6. FRAUD INVESTIGATION.....12**

**6.1 Introduction .....12**

**a. Range statement.....12**

**b. Knowledge.....12**

**c. Skills.....13**

**6.2 Liability and Responsibility .....13**

**a. Range Statement.....13**

**b. Knowledge.....13**

**c. Skills.....13**

**6.3 Forensic Investigation .....14**

**6.4 Fire Investigation .....15**

**a. Range Statement.....15**

**b. Knowledge.....15**

**c. Skills.....15**

**7. RESEARCH.....16**

**7.1 International Association of Fire Investigations (IAAI) .....16**

**a. Fire Investigation Technician (IAAI-FIT).....16**

**b. Certified Fire Investigator (IAAI-CFI) .....16**

**8. EDUCATION AND QUALIFICATIONS .....17**

**8.1** *Scope and purpose* .....17  
**8.2** *Recommended levels of expertise* .....18  
**8.2.1** *Forensic Specialist Investigator* .....18  
**a.** **Fraud** .....18  
**b.** **Fire**.....18  
**c.** **Experience**.....18  
**9.** **RECOMMENDATION**.....18

Version number

V02

Version date

25 July 2023

### RECORD MANAGEMENT

Entity: ACFE SA

Document Name: Forensic Fire Investigators Standards\_V02

Document Path: <https://www.acfesa.co.za/ACFESA-Resources-anti-fraud>

<b>Version Number</b>	<b>Date Published</b>	<b>Approval</b>
V01	March 2022	ACFE SA Forensic Standards Forum
V02	25 July 2023	ACFE SA Forensic Standards Forum

### DOCUMENT REVISION

<b>Revision Number</b>	<b>Date Revised</b>	<b>Editor</b>
R01	July 2023	Piet Hills and De Wet Ferreira

## SECTION A

### 1. INTRODUCTION: THE FORENSIC STANDARD FORUM

The aim of the Forensic Standard Forum under the auspices of the ACFE SA is to standardise methodologies employed in the course of forensic investigations, which are carried out in conjunction with criminal or civil legislation. Such investigations include almost all disciplines and practices involved.

It is instrumental to lead the way in terms of setting standards in all the disciplines of forensics applied during any given investigation and although there are well known and international standards in most of the disciplines, some changes may be required in order to address the situation in South Africa and Africa in the context of our own environments and applicable legislation and/or legal systems and frameworks.

Forensic scientists and criminal investigators need to be guided with acceptable standards and procedures for carrying out such examinations. Although the ACFE refers to “certified fraud examiners” it recognises the fact that a strong association exists with forensic examiners and practitioners. All forensic disciplines will accordingly be included in the Forensic Standard Forum.

### 2. THE ACFE

#### 2.1 *Background on The ACFE SA Chapter*

The need to raise the standard of fraud examination in South Africa and for a professional body which was not limited to a specific profession such as accounting, or law resulted in the establishment of a local chapter with the mission to provide a community environment in which local forensic examination practitioners can associate. Local membership provides a number of benefits including a network of experienced professionals; a training framework for practitioners with "how to" guidance technical updates and ethical standards; regular discussion forums on issues relevant to the local environment; annual workshops on fraud examinations; and a video library with case studies. This chapter is a collection of individuals in South Africa from all industries and professionals, who all have a single goal mind, the reduction of white-collar crime in South Africa.

*(ACFE Professional Standards – [www.acfesa.co.za](http://www.acfesa.co.za))*

## **2.2 *The preamble of the ACFE SA***

The Association of Certified Fraud Examiners is an association of professionals committed to performing at the highest level of ethical conduct. Members of the Association pledge themselves to act with integrity and to perform their work in a professional manner.

Members have a professional responsibility to their clients, to the public interest and each other; a responsibility that requires subordinating self-interest to the interests of those served.

These standards express basic principles of ethical behaviour to guide members in the fulfilling of their duties and obligations. By following these standards, all Certified Fraud Examiners shall be expected, and all Associate members shall strive to demonstrate their commitment to excellence in service and professional conduct.

## **2.3 *Applicability of Code***

The CFE Code of Professional Standards shall apply to all members and all Associate members of the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners. The use of the word “member” or “members” in this Code shall refer to Associate members as well as regular members of the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners.

## **2.4 *Standards of Professional Conduct***

### **a. Integrity and Objectivity**

- Members shall conduct themselves with integrity, knowing that public trust is founded on integrity. Members shall not sacrifice integrity to serve the client, their employer, or the public interest.
- Prior to accepting the fraud examination, members shall investigate for potential conflicts of interest. Members shall disclose any potential conflicts of interest to prospective clients who retain them or their employer.
- Members shall maintain objectivity in discharging their professional responsibilities within the scope of the engagement.
- Members shall not commit discreditable acts and shall always conduct themselves in the

best interests of the reputation of the profession.

- Members shall not knowingly make a false statement when testifying in a court of law or other dispute resolution forum. Members shall comply with lawful orders of the courts or other dispute resolution bodies. Members shall not commit criminal acts or knowingly induce others to do so.

**b. Professional Competence**

- Members shall be competent and shall not accept assignments where this competence is lacking. In some circumstances, it may be possible to meet the requirement for professional competence by use of consultation or referral.
- Members shall maintain the minimum program of continuing professional education required by the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners. A commitment to professionalism combining education and experience shall continue throughout the member's professional career. Members shall continually strive to increase the competence and effectiveness of their professional services.

**c. Due Professional Care**

- Members shall exercise due professional care in the performance of their services. Due professional care requires diligence, critical analysis, and professional scepticism in discharging professional responsibilities.
- Conclusions shall be supported with evidence that is relevant, competent, and sufficient.
- Members' professional services shall be adequately planned. Planning controls the performance of a fraud examination from inception through completion and involves developing strategies and objectives for performing the services.
- Work performed by assistants on a fraud examination shall be adequately supervised. The extent of supervision required varies depending on the complexities of the work and the qualifications of the assistants.

**d. Understanding with Client or Employer**

- At the beginning of a fraud examination, members shall reach an understanding with those retaining them (client or employer) about the scope and limitations of the fraud examination

and the responsibilities of all parties involved.

- Whenever the scope or limitations of a fraud examination or the responsibilities of the parties change significantly, a new understanding shall be reached with the client or employer.

**e. Communication with Client or Employer**

- Members shall communicate to those who retained them (client or employer) significant findings made during the normal course of the fraud examination.

**f. Confidentiality**

- Members shall not disclose confidential or privileged information obtained during the course of the fraud examination without the express permission of proper authority or order of a court. This requirement does not preclude professional practice or investigative body reviews as long as the reviewing organization agrees to abide by the confidentiality restrictions.

*2.5 Standards of Examination*

**a. Fraud Examinations**

- Fraud examinations shall be conducted in a legal, professional, and thorough manner. The fraud examiner's objective shall be to obtain evidence and information that is complete, reliable, and relevant.
- Members shall establish predication and scope priorities at the outset of a fraud examination and continuously re-evaluate them as the examination proceeds. Members shall strive for efficiency in their examination.
- Members shall be alert to the possibility of conjecture, unsubstantiated opinion and bias of witnesses and others. Members shall consider both exculpatory and inculpatory evidence.

**b. Evidence**

- Members shall endeavour to establish effective control and management procedures for documents. Members shall be cognizant of the chain of custody including origin, possession and disposition of relevant evidence and material. Members shall strive to



preserve the integrity of relevant evidence and material.

- Members' work product may vary with the circumstances of each fraud examination. The extent of documentation shall be subject to the needs and objectives of the client or employer.

## ***2.6 Standards of Reporting***

### **a. General**

- Members' reports may be oral or written, including fact witness and/or expert witness testimony, and may take many different forms. There is no single structure or format that is prescribed for a member's report; however, the report should not be misleading.

### **b. Report Content**

- Members' reports shall contain only information based on data that are sufficient and relevant to support the facts, conclusions, opinions and/or recommendations related to the fraud examination. The report shall be confined to subject matter, principles, and methodologies within the member's area of knowledge, skill, experience, training, or education.
- No opinion shall be expressed regarding the legal guilt or innocence of any person or party.

## **3. ACFE CODE OF ETHICS**

All Certified Fraud Examiners must meet the rigorous criteria for admission to the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners. Thereafter, they must exemplify the highest moral and ethical standards and must agree to abide by the bylaws of the ACFE and the Certified Fraud Examiner Code of Professional Ethics.

- An ACFE Member shall, at all times, demonstrate a commitment to professionalism and diligence in the performance of his or her duties.
- An ACFE Member shall not engage in any illegal or unethical conduct or any activity which would constitute a conflict of interest.
- An ACFE Member shall, always, exhibit the highest level of integrity in the performance of all professional assignments and will accept only assignments for which there is a

reasonable expectation that the assignment will be completed with professional competence.

- An ACFE Member will comply with lawful orders of the courts and will testify to matters truthfully and without bias or prejudice.
- An ACFE Member, in conducting examinations, will obtain evidence or other documentation to establish a reasonable basis for any opinion rendered. No opinion shall be expressed regarding the guilt or innocence of any person or party.
- An ACFE Member shall not reveal any confidential information obtained during a professional engagement without proper authorization.
- An ACFE Member will reveal all material matters discovered during an examination which, if omitted, could cause a distortion of the facts.
- An ACFE Member shall continually strive to increase the competence and effectiveness of professional services performed under his or her direction.

## **SECTION B**

### **1. FORENSIC STANDARD FORUM**

The list of forensic standards guidelines needs to be dictated by discipline-specific specialists. To assist members of the forum to implement standards, qualifications and ethics, it would be beneficial to standardise the input required in order to build the framework across all disciplines.

### **2. BACKGROUND**

During the meetings held at the ACFE SA Forensic Standard Forum, the need arose for the identification of the necessary qualification/s, expertise as well as skillset required for a person to conduct a proper investigation of a fire, excluding the forensic origin and cause determination of a fire, but including merits related to policy response (including the identification of fraud and non-compliance to policy exclusion and warranties), witness identification and interviewing and collection of public documents that compliments the fire origin and cause determination (alarm printouts, compliance certificates, fire brigade reports, etc.)

It was acknowledged that there is expertise available in the private and public sectors pertaining to the forensic investigation of the origin and cause of a fire. The necessary qualifications, experience and

training of these persons to act as fire investigators is regulated by a statutory obligation to register with the South African Council for Natural Scientific Professions (SACNASP) in terms of Section 20(3) of the *Natural Scientific Profession Act, 27 of 2003*.

### 3. INSTRUCTION

It was requested that the ACFE SA conducts research and investigate the matter, to enable the ACFE SA to establish criteria and set minimum standards for Forensic Fire Investigators. This is to ensure that clients can be assured of professional services and investigations pertaining to the responsibility and liability aspects of a fire.

### 4. FORENSIC FIRE INVESTIGATOR

#### 4.1 *Scope and Purpose*<sup>1</sup>

This document provides guidance on the education, qualifications, knowledge, and skills component for the Forensic Fire Investigator, as recognized and approved by the ACFE SA, and will serve as the benchmark for assessing competency in this regard.

This document has also taken into account the effects of these various fires, buildings, vehicles, and fields. Some of these fires may be fraudulent, while others may not be, which could lead to subrogation or criminal prosecution.

This document's contents have been based on national and international best practices, as well as the following international guidelines and standards:

- NFPA 1033 Standard for Professional Qualifications for Fire Investigator, 2022 Edition
- NFPA 921 Guide for Fire and Explosion Investigations, 2021 Edition
- Forensic Investigation. Legislative principles and Investigative Practice. Editors Rudolph Zinn & Setlhomamaru Dintwe.

The first two mentioned documents are living documents that are in a constant review process. The contents of these documents are thus subject to the periodic update or change as the new versions of the applicable documents become available. The requirements apply to individuals conducting

---

<sup>1</sup> SACNASP  
[https://www.fpasa.co.za/Fire\\_Investigator\\_Compentency\\_Requirements\\_Guidance\\_Document\\_1.pdf](https://www.fpasa.co.za/Fire_Investigator_Compentency_Requirements_Guidance_Document_1.pdf).

specialist investigations in both the public and private sectors, as well as to all fires, including structures, vehicles, and wildland fires.

It is thus imperative that Forensic Fire Investigators evaluate their competency in relation to the requirements of this document to ensure that their capacity is developed, and they remain current regarding key aspects.

## **5. REQUISITE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS**

The Forensic Fire Investigator must have a sound knowledge of fraud, fire and investigation in order to conduct a successful investigation. Sometimes a fire or arson is used to conceal a financial difficulty and will be followed by an insurance claim in which there will be a relevant misrepresentation forwarded to the Insurer to obtain a financial gain, otherwise not entitled to.

It is also true that recovery actions and litigation can be instituted as a result of a fire. The Forensic Fire Investigator should be able to successfully address all this in his/her investigation and compliment the investigation conducted by the Forensic Fire Origin and Cause Investigator.

The minimum education and professional qualifications will be discussed later in this document.

## **6. FRAUD INVESTIGATION**

### ***6.1 Introduction***

#### **a. Range statement**

The Forensic Fire Investigator needs to know and understand the meaning of fraud; the different elements of fraud; the basic cycle of investigation; the difference between civil and criminal investigations; and the different requirements.

#### **b. Knowledge**

- Know and understand the definition of fraud as a criminal offence.
- It is important to understand the different elements of fraud.
- Proof beyond a reasonable doubt - criminal law.
- Proof on the balance of probabilities - civil law.

- Understand the meaning and cycle of an investigation.
- What the requirements are for the basic investigation.

**c. Skills**

- Identify fraudulent behaviour
- Identify fraud
- Know the difference between civil and criminal investigations
- Identify, collect, and analyse all the evidence pertaining to the incident
- Conduct a basic fraud investigation

## 6.2 *Liability & Responsibility*

**a. Range Statement**

Liability is applicable in almost all fire investigations. This is particularly true when one considers the huge monetary losses and in some cases the loss of life, as a result of a fire. Liability covers a vast area as from the possible suspect responsible for the arson, up to a recovery for the losses suffered as well as the possible acceptance/repudiation of an insurance claim.

**b. Knowledge**

- Know and understand the various applicable laws, bylaws and regulations.
- Identify the specific laws, rules and standards applicable to the specific investigation. These will differ for buildings to *wildland* fires, from building to building and a category vehicle.
- Comprehensive knowledge of short-term insurance and their contracts.
- Understand the meaning and regulations of the applicable SANS (South Africa National Standards) regulations, SANS 10-400 for structures.
- Know and identify the various fields of expertise applicable in the specific investigation.
- Basic knowledge of the mechanical and electrical systems of a vehicle.
- Knowledge of the most up-to-date and advanced technology to obtain the true evidence.

**c. Skills**

- Identify the various fields of expertise and the experts needed to conduct a professional investigation. Then coordinate the joint effort of these experts to get to the truth.
- Discover, identify and collect objective and subjective information and evidence on all the circumstances surrounding the fire.
- Determine who is responsible for what pertaining to fire safety and prevention.
- Determine by means of facts, concrete evidence and witnesses, the liability of persons/entities involved in this fire.
- Confirm through a scientifically based in-depth investigation if arson was committed and if indeed, then determine by means of concrete evidence and facts, who was responsible.
- Confirm by means of facts that all the contractual conditions and endorsements of a contract had been adhered to, when and where applicable.
- Acquire the skills needed to use and apply the latest technology.

**6.3 Fire Investigation**

There is a statutory obligation on any person that practises fire origin and cause investigation to register with the South African Council for Natural Scientific Professions (SACNASP) in terms of Section 20(3) of the *Natural Scientific Profession Act, Act 27 of 2003*. It is not foreseen that the Forensic Fire Investigator would require registration with SACNASP to fulfil the minimum requirements to practise as a Forensic Fire Investigator.

In addition to the above, to meet the minimum practice standards for Forensic Fire Investigators will be attend the Fundamentals in Fire Investigations Course offered by the Fire Protection Association of South Africa (FPASA) and other accredited institutions.

International certifications are also accessible through South Africa Certifications, offered by the International Association of Arson Investigators (IAAI), which are specifically aligned with the job performance requirements found in NFPA 1033. These are:

- IAAI- FIT, Fire Investigation Technician
- IAAI-CFI, Certified Fire Investigator

For a Forensic Fire Investigator to successfully conduct a forensic specialist investigation of a fire in all its aspects, it is necessary to have more than just basic knowledge of a fire. The

Forensic Fire Investigator should know what to investigate.

#### **6.4 Forensic Investigation**

##### **a. Range Statement**

According to the latest literature in Forensic Investigation, the following working definition for the concept “forensic investigation” is presented:

*Forensic investigation can be defined as an in-depth meticulous investigation, searching for the truth using specialised skills and expert knowledge and the application of scientific investigation methods and techniques, in order to lawfully discover, collect, prepare, identify and present evidence which can be presented to a court of law, disciplinary council, instructing client or company.*

##### **b. Knowledge:**

- Knowledge in the specialist field of fire investigations, cause, and origin.
- To have the knowledge to identify the specialised fields involved in the fire investigation and the knowledge and ability to coordinate them.
- To have access to the various experts needed to get to the absolute truth.
- Continuous and current knowledge of scientific methods and techniques in the applicable specialised fields and its capabilities.
- The various investigation techniques and the investigation cycle.
- The knowledge to lawfully discover, collect, prepare and identify evidence.
- Knowledge to present the true and relevant evidence in a court of law, disciplinary council, or to an instructing client or company.
- The ethics applicable to every aspect and field of the investigation

##### **c. Skills**

- Analyse and correctly interpreted the instruction.
- Obtain a detailed mandate/instruction pertaining to the specific investigation.
- Assist the Forensic Fire Origin and Cause Investigator in establishing the origin and cause of the fire.
- Correctly interpret the fire investigation report.
- Ability to reconstruct the scene.
- Understand the findings at the scene, in order to identify the concise goals and objectives for the investigation.

- Apply the scientific method recommended per NFPA 921.
- Identify and liaise with the applicable experts, authorities, and the client to coordinate a successful scientific investigation.
- Professionally gather all relevant evidence, including samples for possible further specialist analysis, correctly.
- Obtain, through means of thorough investigative interviews, all the possible information on the incident from all the relevant role players and witnesses.
- Obtain detailed, written statements from the witnesses/insured/complainant.
- Identify the suspect/responsible persons and the applicable *modus operandi*.
- Prepare all the evidence and submit a comprehensive investigation report with detailed and precise recommendations, based on the uncovered true facts.
- Acquire the skills needed to become an expert witness in court.
- Get acquainted with the applicable ethics to conserve and ensure the integrity of the investigation.
- Correct interpretation of applicable policy wording in order to identify any non-compliances and warrant breaches which have a causal link with the origin and cause of the fire.

## 7. RESEARCH

The ACFE SA conducted comprehensive research on the above matter.

### 7.1 *International Association of Fire Investigations (IAAI)*

The International Association of Arson Investigators is an international organisation that controls and regulates the skillsets, as well as the expertise of Forensic Fire Origin and Cause Investigators worldwide.

The IAAI acknowledges two levels of expertise in the investigation of a fire pertaining to the origin and the cause thereof.

#### a. **Fire Investigation Technician (IAAI-FIT)**

The first level of expertise is titled as above. Certain minimum requirements are applicable. This level was established as a steppingstone towards the next level, to assure the client of the expertise and also so the client knows what to expect from the Forensic Fire Investigator.

Certain qualifications and skillsets are required to obtain this designation.



**b. Certified Fire Investigator (IAAI-CFI)**

The education, training and experience requirements for this certification will be difficult to attain for any person that is not a full-time forensic fire origin and cause investigator.

**8. EDUCATION & QUALIFICATIONS**

**8.1 *Scope and purpose***

The Forensic Fire Investigator will conduct fire merit investigations in both the public and private sectors, as well as provide a professional or expert opinion that may affect or prejudice a third party (in addition to delivering a professional or expert opinion that has the ability to influence or bias a third party). It is envisaged that in order to conduct this, the Forensic Fire Investigator should, in addition to holding the CFE certification, also successfully complete the Fundamentals in Fire Investigations Course.

The investigation of fraud and or liability pertaining to a fire is of utmost importance for the Forensic Fire Investigator. Again, the outcome of the investigation, proven by the truth of the uncovered facts, will have a huge impact on the parties involved. It must be kept in mind that the outcome might result in either criminal or civil litigation, or both. The monetary outcome can be huge.

It is evident then that certain education and qualifications are needed to obtain the requisite expertise for the Forensic Fire Investigator in order to present a professional and high-quality service to the client.

This was discussed at the last meeting with the Initial Task Team when discussing the way forward for the Forensic Specialist Investigator pertaining to the investigation of a fire incident. It was decided that this field of expertise, liability and fraud investigations pertaining to a fire, rests with the ACFE SA.

While the levels and requirements should not result in unfair and unreasonable requirements, these requirements and criteria must provide confidence for persons using this service and to

accommodate resource for users where professionalism, competence and ethics have been breached.

## **8.2 *Recommended levels of expertise***

The levels of expertise are recommended to help ensure that a suitable progression path is provided and that a proper system for the Forensic Fire Investigator can be implemented effectively and efficiently.

### **8.2.1 *Forensic Specialist Investigator.***

#### **a Fraud**

- It is crucial that the Forensic Fire Investigator holds the minimum qualification of a Certified Fraud Examiner.
- It is therefore evident that the same criteria pertaining to education and qualifications for the CFE will be applicable.

#### **b. Fire**

- The minimum practice standards will be for Forensic Fire Investigators to attend the Fundamentals in Fire Investigations Course offered by FPASA and other accredited institutions. .

#### **c Experience**

- It is recommended that the Forensic Fire Investigator has experience and completed at least 40 fire investigations pertaining to liability and recourse, involving the three main areas of fires, building, vehicle and wildland.

## **9. RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the ACFE SA Forensic Standard Forum discuss the above with a view of establishing a task team, or committee, to finalise the proposed criteria and implementation of the above to enable them to set a worldwide minimum set of standards. These standards should enable highly skilled and professional Forensic Fire Investigators not only involved in

Version number V02  
Version date 25 July 2023

the investigation of the origin and cause of a fire, but also the investigation of fraud, liability and recourse, to execute their investigations.

**Document compiled by and date:** Piet Hills, Andre de Beer and De Wet Ferreira, March 2022

**Document Reviewed by and date:** Piet Hills and De Wet Ferreira, July 2023

**Document Approved by and date:** ACFE SA Forensic Standards Forum, 25 July 2023