

## Arson/Explosives Unit

### 604.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy provides guidelines for arson/explosives investigations and utilizing the Arson/Explosives Unit.

### 604.2 POLICY

VPD authorizes an Arson/Explosives Unit to enhance law enforcement efforts and increase the rate of apprehension and prosecution in crimes of arson and explosives.

#### The Arson/Explosives Unit:

1. Works as a team with the Vancouver Fire Department, the Prosecutors Office and the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms to investigate and prosecute arsons and misuse of explosive devices in the city of Vancouver.
2. Works to deter arson and explosives related crimes by aggressively investigating and seeking prosecution for arson and crimes in which explosive devices have been used.
3. Attempts to increase the Department's rate of apprehensions and prosecution in crimes of arson and the use of, or manufacturing of explosives through the use of proper evidence collection and preservation, using established and recognized scientific methods of fire and law enforcement procedures in accordance with applicable local, state, and federal law.
4. Assists the VPD Major Crimes Unit in homicide and suspicious death investigations in which arson or incendiary devices play a part.
5. Attends additional training to adequately investigate arson and explosives in general.
6. Maintains and operates vehicles specifically containing arson and explosive personal protective equipment and evidence collecting material.
7. The Arson/Explosives Unit includes officer(s) collaterally assigned to conduct arson related crimes as well as the VPD officer(s) assigned to the Portland Metro Explosives Disposal Unit (MEDU). These officers attend additional training to adequately investigate arson and/or explosives in general.

### 604.3 ARSON UNIT DEPLOYMENT

#### A. Procedures for utilizing the Arson Investigator

1. The on-call Fire Marshall is responsible for the initial fire response. If the Fire Marshall determines that a VPD arson investigator is required to assist, they will contact CRESA in order to notify an Arson Investigator. An Arson Investigator who is on-duty will be contacted before contacting an investigator who is off-duty.
2. The Arson Investigator will assess the information provided by the Fire Marshall. If the investigator is currently on duty, they will immediately notify their on-duty patrol sergeant that they have been called to an arson or explosives incident.

## Arson/Explosives Unit

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3. The on-duty Patrol Supervisor should make every effort to allow the investigator to respond to the incident and assist the Fire Marshal. When applicable, the on duty-Patrol Supervisor will ensure that the Arson Supervisor is notified and make command notifications as well.
4. The investigator will respond to the scene and will work with the Fire Department or other investigative agency in determining the origin and cause of the fire, and the collection and preservation of evidence relating to the cause of the fire. Under most circumstances, the investigator will maintain control of all evidence for court purposes.
5. Evidence shall be processed in accordance with Vancouver Police Department guidelines.

### **B. Explosives Investigator**

1. The Arson/Explosives Unit includes officers who are collaterally assigned to conduct arson related crimes as well as the VPD officer(s) assigned to the Portland Metro Explosives Disposal Unit (MEDU). MEDU officer(s) attend additional training to adequately investigate explosives.
2. The MEDU officer falls under the Property Crimes Unit chain of command only while serving as an investigator and conducting follow-up investigations on incidents involving explosive devices. During all other times, including during MEDU related emergency call-outs, the MEDU officer remains under the Special Operations Division chain of command.

### **C. On Duty Investigators**

1. If an on-duty arson/explosives investigator is called to assist with an investigation, the on-duty patrol supervisor will attempt to determine the length of the investigation and ensure that the patrol staffing levels are maintained during the investigation.
2. If a staffing shortage is created on the investigator's original patrol shift(s), the supervisor should make arrangements to call in or hold over personnel for the remainder of the shift.
3. The on-duty patrol supervisor should make every effort to ensure that the investigator(s) are free to investigate the incident without having to perform patrol duties when possible. This in no way prohibits a supervisor from requesting that an investigator leave the scene of an investigation for emergency circumstances as they deem appropriate.

#### **604.3.1 ARSON UNIT SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. Overall coordination of the unit and for supervising the assigned investigators.
2. Case management of the unit and keeping statistical records detailing the unit activities.
3. The Arson Unit will be supervised by the property crimes sergeant.

## *Arson/Explosives Unit*

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### **604.4 ARSON INVESTIGATOR MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS**

1. Investigators must be able to wear all assigned duty gear and work in a hazardous environment for long periods of time.
2. Investigators who are assigned special law enforcement commissions in the State of Oregon must notify the unit supervisor before conducting any operations in that state.