



Coffee Break Training - Fire Investigation Series

Fire/Arson and Explosion Investigation Curriculum: Preparing a Curriculum Vitae

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Learning Objective: The student shall be able to identify the basic elements of a curriculum vitae and explain its significance with regard to testifying as an expert witness in arson cases.

Every fire investigator at some time in his or her career will have to qualify as an expert witness. The role of an expert witness is not only unique, but also carries a tremendous responsibility since someone's liberty could be taken away for life based solely on the opinion of the fire investigator.

Expert witnesses possess scientific, technical or other specialized knowledge that the ordinary person does not possess that will assist the trier of fact to understand the evidence or to determine a fact in issue. In such situations, prosecutors will usually ask investigators to provide a curriculum vitae. A curriculum vitae (Latin for "the course of one's life") is a comprehensive statement of one's educational background, experience, training and other academic qualifications and activities.

The following is a recommended format for investigators to use in preparing a curriculum vitae:

Education (List education in rank order)

- Graduate School/Advanced Degrees, College, High School
- Specialized Training (e.g., military EOD)

Training

- Fire/Police Academy, Seminars and Workshops, CFI Trainer, Special skills (e.g., Master Electrician)

Certifications

- Certified Fire Investigator, Evidence Collection Technician, Accelerant Detection K-9 Handler, Police Officer, Firefighter I, II, III

Experience

- Positions held (most recent first), Number of fires investigated, Number of investigations as lead investigator, Number of investigations participated in

Prior Testimony

- Number of times, Where (District Court, Federal Court, etc.), Prior qualification as expert witness (when and where)

Association Memberships

- IAAI, NAFI, NFPA

Publications

- Magazines, Articles, Books

Awards and Honors

- Local, Civic, IAAI, NAFI

Investigators should include everything positive about their achievements that they can honestly state, and their curriculum vitae should be updated regularly to reflect changes in work experience, training and publications. There are no rules on length for a curriculum vitae, but it should always look professional and be free of grammatical and spelling errors. Investigators should not include home address and telephone number, age, ethnicity, hobbies, marital status, place of birth, height, weight or photographs on a curriculum vitae.

The curriculum vitae is one of the most important documents that an investigator will prepare during the course of his or her career. It has a direct bearing on an investigator's credibility to offer opinion testimony in fire/arson-related legal proceedings and is an important document for the prosecutor to use in pretrial preparation.



A curriculum vitae is a comprehensive summary of an investigator's education, experience, training and specialized skills that has a direct bearing on an investigator's credibility to offer opinion testimony in fire/arson-related litigation.