NFPA® 1033

Standard for Professional Qualifications for Fire Investigator

2014 Edition
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NFPA® 1033

Standard for

Professional Qualifications for Fire Investigator

2014 Edition

This edition of NFPA 1033, Standard for Professional Qualifications for Fire Investigator, was prepared by the Technical Committee on Fire Investigator Professional Qualifications and released by the Technical Correlating Committee on Professional Qualifications. It was issued by the Standards Council on May 28, 2013, with an effective date of June 17, 2013, and supersedes all previous editions.

This edition of NFPA 1033 was approved as an American National Standard on June 17, 2013.

Origin and Development of NFPA 1033

In 1972, the Joint Council of National Fire Service Organizations (JCNFSO) created the National Professional Qualifications Board (NPQB) for the fire service to facilitate the development of nationally applicable performance standards for uniformed fire service personnel. On December 14, 1972, the board established four technical committees to develop those standards using the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards-making system. The initial committees addressed the following career areas: fire fighter, fire officer, fire service instructor, and fire inspector and investigator.

The original concept of the professional qualification standards as directed by the JCNFSO and the NPQB was to develop an interrelated set of performance standards specifically for the uniformed fire service. The various levels of achievement in the standards were to build upon each other within a strictly defined career ladder. In the late 1980s, revisions of the standards recognized that the documents should stand on their own merit in terms of job performance requirements for a given field. Accordingly, the strict career ladder concept was revised, except for the progression from fire fighter to fire officer, in order to allow civilian entry into many of the fields. These revisions facilitated the use of the documents by other than the uniformed fire services. The Committee on Fire Inspector and Investigator Professional Qualifications met and produced the first edition of NFPA 1031, Professional Qualifications for Fire Inspector, Fire Investigator, and Fire Prevention Education Officer. This document was adopted by the NFPA in May of 1977.

In 1986, the joint council directed the committee to develop separate documents for each of the job functions the original document addressed. This direction was coupled with the decision to remove the job of fire investigator from the strict career path previously followed and allow for civilian entry. The first edition of this new document, NFPA 1033, Standard for Professional Qualifications for Fire Investigator, was adopted by the NFPA in June of 1987.

In 1990, responsibility for the appointment of professional qualifications committees and the development of the professional qualifications standards was assumed by the NFPA. The Professional Qualifications Correlating Committee was appointed by the NFPA Standards Council and assumed the responsibility for coordinating the requirements of all of the documents in the professional qualifications system.

The NFPA Standards Council established the Technical Committee on Fire Investigator Professional Qualifications in 1990 to address the need for specific expertise in the area of fire investigation to review and revise the existing document. This committee completed a job task analysis and developed specific job performance requirements for the job of fire investigator.

The intent of the Technical Committee on Fire Investigator Professional Qualifications was to develop clear and concise job performance requirements that can be used to determine that an individual, when measured to the standard, possesses the skills and knowledge to perform as a fire investigator. These job performance requirements are applicable to fire investigators both public and private.
In the 2003 edition of the document, the Technical Committee made changes to bring it into conformance with the new Manual of Style for NFPA Technical Committee Documents.

In the 2009 edition of the document, the Technical Committee added an explanatory annex item to the Scope statement. The committee’s intent was to clarify that the standard applies to all fire investigation, including outside, vehicle, and other fires that are not structural. The committee added a skills maintenance requirement to Chapter 1 and included more specific Requisite Knowledge statements to various JPRs.

For the 2014 edition, the fire investigator is expected to remain current on the topics listed in the general requirements section of the document by attending formal education courses, workshops, and seminars, and through professional publications and journals. While the technical committee views a high-school level education as a minimum, the fire investigator is expected to maintain up-to-date basic knowledge of topics already projected in the document, as well as knowledge of fire protection systems; evidence documentation, collection, and preservation; and electricity and electric systems. Definitions for fire analysis, fire dynamics, fire investigation technology, and fire science have been added. The technical committee has also made clarifications under the evidence collection and preservation section of the document.
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Committee Scope: This Committee shall have primary responsibility for the management of the NFPA Professional Qualifications Project and documents related to professional qualifications for fire service, public safety, and related personnel.
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Committee Scope: This Committee shall have primary responsibility for documents on professional qualifications required of fire investigators.
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NOTICE: An asterisk (*) following the number or letter designating a paragraph indicates that explanatory material on the paragraph can be found in Annex A.

Changes other than editorial are indicated by a vertical rule beside the paragraph, table, or figure in which the change occurred. These rules are included as an aid to the user in identifying changes from the previous edition. Where one or more complete paragraphs have been deleted, the deletion is indicated by a bullet (•) between the paragraphs that remain.

Information on referenced publications can be found in Chapter 2 and Annex C.

Chapter 1 Administration

1.1* Scope. This standard identifies the minimum job performance requirements (JPRs) for fire investigators.

1.2* Purpose. The purpose of this standard shall be to specify the minimum job performance requirements for serving as a fire investigator in both the private and public sectors.

1.2.1 It is not the intent of this standard to restrict any jurisdiction from exceeding the minimum requirements.

1.2.2 Job performance requirements for each duty are the tasks an individual must be able to perform in order to successfully carry out that duty; however, they are not intended to measure a level of knowledge. Together, the duties and job performance requirements define the parameters of the job of fire investigator.

1.3 General.

1.3.1 The fire investigator shall be at least age 18.

1.3.2 The fire investigator shall have a high school diploma or equivalent.

1.3.3 The authority having jurisdiction shall conduct a thorough background and character investigation prior to accepting an individual as a candidate for certification as a fire investigator.

1.3.4 The fire investigator shall have a high school diploma or equivalent.

1.3.5 The job performance requirements found in this standard are not required to be mastered in the order they appear. Training agencies or authorities shall establish instructional pri-

ority and the training program content to prepare individuals to meet the job performance requirements of this standard.

1.3.6* Evaluation of job performance requirements shall be by individuals who are qualified and approved by the authority having jurisdiction.

1.3.7* The investigator shall have and maintain at a minimum an up-to-date basic knowledge of the following topics beyond the high school level:

(1) Fire science
(2) Fire chemistry
(3) Thermodynamics
(4) Thermometry
(5) Fire dynamics
(6) Explosion dynamics
(7) Computer fire modeling
(8) Fire investigation
(9) Fire analysis
(10) Fire investigation methodology
(11) Fire investigation technology
(12) Hazardous materials
(13) Failure analysis and analytical tools
(14) Fire protection systems
(15) Evidence documentation, collection, and preservation
(16) Electricity and electrical systems

1.3.8* The fire investigator shall remain current in the topics listed in 1.3.7 by attending formal education courses, workshops, and seminars and/or through professional publications and journals.

Chapter 2 Referenced Publications

2.1 General. The documents or portions thereof listed in this chapter are referenced within this standard and shall be considered part of the requirements of this document.

2.2 NFPA Publications. (Reserved)

2.3 Other Publications.


2.4 References for Extracts in Mandatory Sections. (Reserved)

Chapter 3 Definitions

3.1 General. The definitions contained in this chapter shall apply to the terms used in this standard. Where terms are not defined in this chapter or within another chapter, they shall be defined using their ordinarily accepted meanings within the context in which they are used. Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 11th edition, shall be the source for the ordinarily accepted meaning.

3.2 NFPA Official Definitions.

3.2.1* Approved. Acceptable to the authority having jurisdiction.

3.2.2* Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ). An organization, office, or individual responsible for enforcing the requirements of a code or standard, or for approving equipment, materials, an installation, or a procedure.