



# DEPARTMENT NOTICE

24-179

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## Fire and Arson Investigations

(Update to DN 21-158)

The San Francisco Arson Task Force, which combines the SFFD Bureau of Fire Investigation (BFI) and the SFPD Arson Detail, is responsible for determining the origin and causes of fires and related investigations. Arson investigators are always available for response and consultation. All incident reports involving fire, false alarm, arson, including attempted arson, shall be assigned to 6F200 and faxed to [REDACTED].

In addition to the potential loss of life and serious injury, each year the monetary loss associated with arson fires in San Francisco is considerable. At times, suspects may meet the criteria for a mental health evaluation under 5150 W&I. In these cases, officers shall confer with an Arson Task Force Police Investigator prior to transportation to a mental health facility. Typically, criminal charges will take precedence over suspects being transported for psychiatric evaluation.

When members take suspects into custody who have set or attempted to set fires, a Police Investigator from the Arson Task Force shall be immediately contacted through the Department Operations Center (DOC) at [REDACTED] at all times, day or night. Investigators may respond and/or make an advisement regarding proper scene documentation, evidence collection and appropriate charges.

As a reminder, Fire and Arson Investigation services are not provided by San Mateo County at SFO. Airport personnel shall therefore direct any questions or requests for arson investigation services through the Department Operations Center (DOC) at [REDACTED] at all times, day or night.

**When seizing and booking property:** In the event an alleged Molotov Cocktail or flammable liquid is located at a scene, contact the SFFD Bureau of Fire Investigation (BFI) at [REDACTED]. BFI will respond and analyze the liquids to determine if they are flammable, if necessary. BFI will then give the member at the scene three vials of flammable liquids in a sealed metal can. Once the can is sealed containing the three vials, the member will book the metal can as evidence in SFPD property per standard procedures. BFI will dispose of any excess flammable liquids. If unable to contact BFI directly, contact the on-call Arson Task Force Inspector via DOC. It should be noted, the Arson Task Force is NOT responsible for the storage of volatile or flammable liquid substances, including firebombs that contain no other hazardous non-liquid components.

All other non-liquid flammable substances and/or non-liquid substances or items that can be categorized as a "Destructive Device" as specified under Penal Code 16460 - refer to DGO 6.15 for E.O.D. procedures. Damaged pressurized containers containing volatile liquids and/or chemicals (ex: propane tanks, butane canisters) consult E.O.D.

Flammable liquid is defined, for this order, as a liquid or liquid solution capable of being ignited.

Firebombs are defined, for this order, as a flammable liquid stored in a container used to ignite a fire. (ex: Molotov Cocktail: definition 16460(a)(5) PC))

  
WILLIAM SCOTT  
Chief of Police

*Per DN 23-152, sworn & non-sworn Members shall electronically acknowledge this department document in PowerDMS within (30) thirty calendar days of issuance. Members whose duties are relevant to this document shall be held responsible for compliance. Any questions regarding this policy should be sent to [sfpd.writtendirectivesfgov.org](mailto:sfpd.writtendirectivesfgov.org) who will provide additional information.*