



**BEXAR COUNTY FIRE MARSHAL  
AND OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

622 DOLOROSA STREET  
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS 78207  
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**Chris Lopez  
Fire Marshal**

Steve Seddig  
President CCIFA/ City of Wylie Fire Marshal  
Collin County Fire & Arson Investigation Association Inc.  
500 State Hwy 5  
Fairview, TX 75069

Sir,

As an arson investigator, our jobs are becoming increasingly difficult. In order to continue my development as an arson investigator and expert in my field, I attended the 2017 Forensic Fire Death Investigation Class provide by the Collin County Fire & Arson Investigators Association in October of 2017. This class covered a wide variety of topics ranging from Fire Death Investigation, to Fire Death Forensic Anthropology, and Arc Mapping. In addition, this class provided unheard of hands on experience through Live-Burns of human cadavers and materials/chemicals typically associated with arson, as well as, allowing the students to physically view an autopsy and all procedures associated with this process.

Less than a month later, I responded to a house fire involving two fatalities. The structure had been completely engulfed and eventually collapsed due to structure instability. The skills I obtained in this class were clearly prevalent during my investigations. In an attempt to determine the area of origin and cause, I utilized my general knowledge obtained during the Arc Mapping portion of this training to evaluate the electrical components and determine the spatial relationship of the circuit components before contacting an expert in Arc Mapping. In addition to the initial survey of the scene and examination, I then moved on to the excavation process. During this process, I was able to locate fragments of bones and partial body parts within the scene utilizing skills obtained during the Live-Burn portion of this training. This evidence was collected and properly stored based on the standards taught and reinforced during this training.

This training provided me with a tremendous amount of insight into how and why fire develops the way it does based on external circumstances and factors. Because this training provided an environment that was capable of replicating (5) Live-Burn Scenarios, I was able to better understand the effects each factor has on the decomposition of a human body, fire scene, and any materials around the area of origin. I was also able to utilize general knowledge obtained during the classroom portion of this training.

Due to the harsh reality that this type of training where Live-Burn Scenarios are conducted is rare, I believe it is absolutely necessary to continue to provide such training to all fire and arson investigators around the nation. Without this training, there is a slight possibility that the fragments of skull bone and partial body parts located at my fire scene less than a month after



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my training, goes undetected. This is unnerving to consider, as for I am the voice of our victim and am responsible for determining origin and cause.

Because of this training offered by the Collin County Fire & Arson Investigators Association, I have improved as an investigator exponentially. I now have a stronger confidence in my ability to investigate a fire scene where a fatality has occurred without questioning my knowledge, or lack thereof, and skills. This increase in confidence has also allowed me to feel comfortable to share this valuable knowledge and information with all of my Fire Marshal, Chief, and co-workers.

Thank you to the Collin County Fire & Arson Investigation Association for providing invaluable training to not only me, but my unit as a whole and the community we serve.

Sincerely,

Marcel Garcia  
Bexar County Fire Marshal's Office  
Arson Investigator/Deputy Fire Marshal