



## **W. Andrew Asbell, IAAI-CFI, NAFI-CFEI/CVFI**

Director, Fire Practice Group

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### **Background**

Along with a B.S. degree in Criminal Justice, Mr. W. Andrew Asbell is a Certified Fire Investigator, a Certified Fire and Explosion Investigator, and a Certified Vehicle Fire Investigator.

He served as a Fire Investigator with the City of Charlotte, NC Fire Department, the City of Norfolk, VA Department of Fire-Rescue, and as a private fire investigator where he investigated and determined the origin and cause of more than 2,500 fires and explosions in industrial facilities, commercial and residential structures, vehicles, agricultural equipment, heavy equipment, wildland, and fire-related injuries/fatalities.

Mr. Asbell has completed numerous educational seminars and continuing education courses in the field of fire investigation and fire code enforcement. He has testified in federal and state courts and been qualified as an expert witness in court proceedings pertaining to fire origin and causation.

Mr. Asbell has coordinated and instructed continuing educational training programs involving the investigation of fires to public fire and police officials, insurance adjusters and investigators, and attorneys. His teachings include live fire training involving structures, vehicles, and products.

In addition to his fire investigation experience, Mr. Asbell served as a firefighter, law enforcement officer, and a Nationally Registered EMT-Paramedic (NREMT-P) for over 18 years.

Currently, Mr. Asbell oversees the fire investigation efforts, which include training, hiring, mentoring, and supervising the Fire Practice Group within Rimkus. Mr. Asbell is an active member of the Mississippi Fire Investigator's Association.

### **Professional Engagements**

- **Residential**

- Investigated fires in all types of residential occupancies including single and multi-family dwellings, manufactured homes, and college dormitories.

- **Commercial**

- Investigated fires involving commercial warehouses, manufacturing, agricultural structures, storage, and healthcare facilities.

- **Transportation**

- Investigated fires in passenger cars, trucks, semi-trucks, buses, RVs, boats, heavy equipment, agricultural equipment, and motorcycles.

## Forensic Engagements

- **Representative Fire Investigations (Summary)**

- Long Beach, MS (2023), Origin and cause of multi-million-dollar commercial linen/laundry facility. The cause of the fire was a result of improperly discarded rags/towels with fatty acids that self-heated and spontaneously ignited.
- Angie, LA (2022), Origin and cause investigation of large loss involving a church structure. The cause of the fire resulted from an electrical failure in the attic.
- McComb, MS (2021), Origin and cause investigation of an Amtrak train depot and train museum. The cause of the fire resulted from an individual intentionally dispersing an ignitable liquid and applying an open flame to the vapors. The responsible individual was arrested and successfully prosecuted.
- New Orleans, LA (2020), Origin and cause fire/explosion investigation of a large sugar refinery facility. Damages exceeded \$20 million. Our investigation revealed that the cause of the explosion and subsequent fire resulted from static discharge within a vertical silo/bin.
- Perkinston, MS (2018), Origin and cause of fire involving a large residential dwelling. The cause of the fire resulted from a lightning strike that damaged CSST tubing and ignited LP gas. Investigation assisted in a successful subrogation from the CSST manufacturer.
- Madison, MS (2017), Origin and cause fire investigation of a large residential dwelling. The cause of the fire was improperly discarded stain rags being placed along the exterior of the dwelling. The investigation assisted with a successful subrogation against the responsible floor contractor.
- Greenville, MS (2016), Origin and cause fire investigation of a church fire which severely damaged the structure. The cause of the fire was classified as incendiary, and the investigation resulted in the successful arrest and conviction of an individual.
- Raymond, MS (2016), Origin and cause fire investigation of a multi-million-dollar loss involving a college dormitory. The cause of the fire resulted from improper and careless hot work that was performed by sub-contractors replacing exterior staircases.
- Start, LA (2016), Origin and cause of fire involving a large residential dwelling. The cause of the fire resulted from a lightning strike that damaged CSST pipe and ignited LP gas. Investigation assisted in a successful subrogation from contractors and the CSST manufacturer.
- New Albany, MS (2014), Lead fire investigator for a multi-million-dollar fire/explosion loss involving a bio-diesel plant that burned for numerous days and resulted in evacuations of nearby residents and businesses.
- Charleston, MS (2014), Investigation of origin and cause of fire that severely damaged the clubhouse at a local country club. The cause of the fire was classified as incendiary.
- Waynesboro, MS (2013), Investigation of origin and cause of fire that destroyed a portion of a large lumber company.
- Charlotte, NC (2012), Lead fire investigator for an incendiary fire loss that severely damaged a Goodwill store. The joint criminal investigation with members of the Charlotte Fire Department, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives resulted in the arrest and successful federal prosecution of three individuals.
- Asheville, NC (2011), Origin and cause of a multi-million-dollar fire loss in a mid-rise medical office building that resulted in the death of a Fire Captain and several injuries. The cause of the fire was classified as incendiary.

## Professional Experience

### • Rimkus

2013 – Present

#### • Director, Fire Practice Group (2022-Present)

Supervises the day-to-day operations and productivity of the Fire Practice Group throughout North America. Oversees all technical services, operations, and personnel within the group. Develops short- and long-term strategies for hiring, developing, training, and retaining employees. Assist with training and career development of staff.

Completes fire and explosion evaluations in industrial facilities, commercial and residential structures, vehicles, agricultural and heavy equipment, and conveyances. Investigate fires involving appliances and electrical devices; assess potential liability and subrogation issues. Collects, documents, and preserves evidence to ensure the chain of custody. Conducts interviews with witnesses, public agency personnel, and other pertinent third-party individuals. Prepare detailed written investigative reports pertaining to fire and explosion origin and causation. Offers expert technical and scientific support to clients for subrogation and litigation purposes. Conducts code compliance research to evaluate for potential violations.

#### • District Manager/Fire Consultant (2014-2022)

Supervised the day-to-day operations and productivity of the Jackson, Mississippi; Little Rock, Arkansas; and Shreveport, Louisiana, offices. Developed short- and long-term strategies for hiring, developing, training, and retaining employees. Developed departmental budgets, business plans, and reports.

Completed fire and explosion evaluations in industrial facilities, commercial and residential structures, vehicles, agricultural and heavy equipment, and conveyances. Investigated fires involving appliances and electrical devices; assessed potential liability and subrogation issues. Collected, documented, and preserved evidence to ensure the chain of custody. Conducted interviews with witnesses, public agency personnel, and other pertinent third-party individuals. Prepared detailed written investigative reports pertaining to fire and explosion origin and causation. Offered expert technical and scientific support to clients for subrogation and litigation purposes. Conducted code compliance research to evaluate for potential violations.

#### • Fire Consultant (2013-2014)

Completed fire and explosion evaluations in industrial facilities, commercial and residential structures, vehicles, agricultural and heavy equipment, and conveyances. Investigated fires involving appliances and electrical devices; assessed potential liability and subrogation issues. Collected, documented, and preserved evidence to ensure the chain of custody. Conducted interviews with witnesses, public agency personnel, and other pertinent third-party individuals. Prepared detailed written investigative reports pertaining to fire and explosion origin and causation. Offered expert technical and scientific support to clients for subrogation and litigation purposes. Conducted code compliance research to evaluate for potential violations.

### • Donan Engineering Co., Inc.

2011 – 2013

#### • Fire and Explosion Investigator

Conducted fire and explosion evaluations in commercial and residential structures, vehicles, agricultural and heavy equipment, and conveyances. Investigated fires involving appliances and electrical devices; assessed potential liability and subrogation issues. Collected, documented, and preserved evidence to ensure the chain of custody. Conducted interviews with witnesses, public agency personnel, and other pertinent third-party individuals. Prepared detailed written investigative reports pertaining to fire and explosion origin and causation. Provided expert technical and scientific support to clients for subrogation and litigation purposes. Conducted code compliance research to evaluate for potential violations.

- **City of Charlotte, NC Fire Department** **2008 – 2013**
  - Fire Investigator
 

Conducted fire and explosion origin and cause investigations, collected and preserved evidence, interviewed and obtained statements from witnesses and suspects, and composed detailed investigative reports related to fire and explosion incidents. Worked directly with detectives from the Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Department and special agents from the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives to prosecute arson cases within the city limits of Charlotte, North Carolina. Prepared cases to be presented to the Mecklenburg County Assistant District Attorney's Office for prosecution. Assisted in the education of juveniles through the juvenile fire setters' program and other members of the community.
  
- **City of Norfolk, VA Department of Fire-Rescue** **2002 – 2008**
  - Fire/Arson Investigator (2006-2008)
 

Conducted complex investigations within the City of Norfolk, Virginia. Duties included investigating fire and explosion incidents, illegal possession and manufacturing of explosives, environmental crimes, agency-involved vehicle collisions, and internal affairs. As a law enforcement officer, was responsible for collecting and preserving evidence, interviewing witnesses and suspects, obtaining and executing criminal search and arrest warrants, providing factual and expert courtroom testimony, and completing detailed written reports.
  - Firefighter/Paramedic (2002-2006)
 

Responded to emergent and non-emergent incidents within the City of Norfolk, Virginia. Duties included fire suppression, technical rescue, hazardous materials mitigation, basic and advanced life treatment and transportation, fire code enforcement, fire investigation, and public education.
  
- **City of Suffolk, VA Department of Fire & Rescue** **1999 – 2002**
  - Firefighter/Paramedic
 

Responded to emergent and non-emergent incidents within the City of Suffolk, Virginia. Duties included fire suppression, technical rescue, hazardous materials mitigation, basic and advanced life treatment and transportation, fire code enforcement, fire investigation, and public education.

## Education and Certifications

- **Criminal Justice, B.S.:** East Carolina University
- **Graduate Degree Studies in Human Resource Management:** University of Richmond
- **Certified Fire Investigator:** International Association of Arson Investigators, Certificate # 24-031507
- **Certified Fire and Explosion Investigator:** National Association of Fire Investigators
- **Certified Vehicle Fire Investigator:** National Association of Fire Investigators

## Continuing Education

- **International Association of Arson Investigators (CFITrainer.net)**
  - Principles of Fire Investigation, 67 hrs. (2024)
  - Fire Investigator Scene Safety, 3 hrs. (2024)
  - Fire Flow Analysis, 3 hrs. (2024)
  - Residential Natural Gas Systems, 3 hrs. (2024)
  - Ethics and the Fire Investigator, 3 hrs. (2024)
  - Critical Evaluation and Testing of Commonly Reported Accidental Causes, 3 hrs. (2024)

- Understanding Undetermined, 3 hrs. (2024)
- Effective Investigation and Testimony, 3 hrs. (2021)
- Fire Chemistry, 3 hrs. (2018)
- Motor Vehicles, Transmission, Exhaust, Brake and Accessory Systems, 3 hrs. (2017)
- Motor Vehicle, The Engine, Electrical and Fuel Systems, 3 hrs. (2017)
- Residential Electrical Systems, 4 hrs. (2014)
- NFPA 921 and 1033 Changes, 8 hrs. (2012)
- Writing the Initial Origin and Cause Report, 3 hrs. (2012)
- Strengthening Relationships Between Public & Private Sector Fire Investigators, 8 hrs. (2011)
- Explosion Dynamics, 4 hrs. (2010)
- Expert Vehicle Fire Examination, 8 hrs. (2010)
- Wildland Fire Investigation, 5 hrs. (2010)
- Fundamentals of Residential Building Construction, 3 hrs. (2010)
- Electrical Arc Mapping, 4 hrs. (2010)
- Post Flashover Fires, 4 hrs. (2009)
- Fire & Explosion Investigations: Utilizing NFPA 921 and NFPA 1033, 4 hrs. (2009)
- The Scientific Method for Fire and Explosion Investigation, 3 hrs. (2009)
- Managing Complex Fire Scene Investigations, 4 hrs. (2009)
- Documenting the Event, 4 hrs. (2009)
- Investigating Fatal Fires, 4 hrs. (2008)
- Insurance and the Fire Investigation, 4 hrs. (2008)
- Physical Evidence at the Fire Scene, 4 hrs. (2008)
- Introduction to Evidence, 4 hrs. (2007)
- **Louisiana Arson Investigators Association**
  - Investigating Fuel Gas Fires and Explosions, 4 hrs. (2020)
  - Investigation of Vehicle Fires, 4 hrs. (2020)
  - Expert Report Writing and Documentation, 8 hrs. (2015)
  - Investigation and Prevention of Commercial Kitchen Fires, 8 hrs. (2014)
- **Public Agency Training Council**
  - Vehicle Fire Investigation, 20 hrs. (2012)
  - Electrical Fire Investigation, 20 hrs. (2012)
- **American Academy of Applied Forensics**
  - Investigation of Social Networking Sites, 16 hrs. (2010)
  - Credit Card Fraud Investigations, 24 hrs. (2010)
  - Cell Phone Forensics, 16 hrs. (2009)
- **Federal Bureau of Investigation**
  - Crime Scene Survey, Documentation and Reconstruction, 32 hrs. (2008)
  - Post Blast Investigators School, 40 hrs. (2008)
- **Virginia Fire Marshal Academy**
  - Certified Forensic Fire Investigator Module 3, 16 hrs. (2007)
  - Law Enforcement for Fire Marshals, 320 hrs. (2007)
  - Environmental Crimes Investigation, 40 hrs. (2005)
  - Certified Forensic Fire Investigator Module 2, 24 hrs. (2007)

- Certified Forensic Fire Investigator Module 1, 16 hrs. (2007)
- Fire Inspector, 120 hrs. (2004)
- Fire Investigator NFPA 1033, 120 hrs. (2002)
- **Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives**
  - Electrical Fire Investigation, 16 hrs. (2010)
  - Post Blast Investigator, 32 hrs. (2006)
- **Virginia Chapter International Association of Arson Investigators**
  - Electrical Fire Scene Analysis, 24 hrs. (2005)
  - Forensic Fire Scene Reconstruction, 32 hrs. (2003)
- **Mississippi Fire Investigators Association**
  - Fire Dynamics, 16 hrs. (2022)
  - Chimney and Fireplace Fire Investigations, 4 hrs. (2022)
  - Fire Investigation and Expert Report Writing, 16 hrs. (2022)
  - Electrical Appliance Fire Investigations, 8 hrs. (2019)
  - Natural Gas Fire and Explosion Investigations, 4 hrs. (2019)
  - Legal Aspects of Fire Investigations/Expert Testimony, 4 hrs. (2019)
  - Fire Origin and Cause Determination, 4 hrs. (2019)
  - Fire Origin and Cause Determination, 4 hrs. (2018)
  - Fire Scene Documentation, 4 hrs. (2018)
  - Mississippi Fire Investigators Association, Spring Training Conference, 20 hrs. (2014)
- **Tidewater Regional Arson Panel**
  - Fire Debris Analysis, 4 hrs. (2008)
  - Fall Fire Investigator Update, 20 hrs. (2004)
- **Other**
  - Louisiana Chapter of International Association of Arson Investigators, Investigating Vehicle Fires, 4 hrs. (2019)
  - Louisiana Chapter of International Association of Arson Investigators, Investigating Fuel Gas Fires and Explosions, 4 hrs. (2019)
  - Charlotte Fire Department/John J. Lentini, Scientific Protocols for Fire Investigation, 16 hrs. (2017)
  - Arkansas Chapter of International Association of Arson Investigators, Fall Conference (Agricultural Equipment Fire Investigations, Vehicle Fire Investigations, Electrical Survey/Arc Mapping, Fireplace/Chimney Fire Investigations) 12 hrs., tested (2016)
  - International Association of Arson Investigators, International Training Conference, 32 hrs., tested (2016)
  - Tennessee Chapter of the International Association of Arson Investigators, 51st Annual Training Conference, 30 hrs. (2013)
  - National Association of Fire Investigators, Vehicle Fire, Arson, and Explosion Investigation Seminar, 40 hours (2011)
  - National Fire Academy, Forensic Evidence Collection, 48 hrs. (2011)
  - International Training Academy for Linguistics and Kinesics, Interviewing and Interrogation, 40 hrs. (2010)
  - NC/SC Chapters International Association of Arson Investigators Fire Investigation Approaches, 36 hrs. (2009)
  - Mitchell Community College, Mooresville, NC, Fire Death Investigation, 16 hrs. (2009)
  - NC Chapter International Association of Arson Investigators, Advanced Fire Investigation, 32 hrs. (2008)



- Tripwire Operations Group, Documentation, Recovery & Interpretation of the Fatal Fire Victim, 8 hrs. (2008)
- Norfolk Police Department, Homicide Investigations, 16 hrs. (2008)
- New Mexico Tech Energetic Materials Research and Testing Center, Incident Response to Terrorist Bombings Technical Operations Course, 32 hrs. (2004)

## Presentations

- **“Fire Origin and Cause Investigations/Live Burn Demonstrations.”** New Orleans, LA, March 2024
- **“Undetermined or Under-investigated Fire Scene Analysis”** Mississippi Defense Attorneys Association, Oct. 2023
- **“Structural Fire Analysis.”** AMI Insurance Company, June 2015
- **“Selecting the Right Fire Investigator.”** Mississippi Claims Adjustors Association (Presentation), Sept. 2015
- **“Structural Fire Analysis.”** Mississippi Defense Attorneys Association, Oct. 2014
- **“Vehicle Fire Origin and Cause Investigation/Live Burn Demonstration.”** Mississippi Fire Investigators Association, Oct. 2014
- **“Fire Origin and Cause Investigations.”** Biloxi, MS, May 2014
- **“Structural Fire Analysis.”** Flowood, MS, July 2013
- **“Fire Origin and Cause Investigations/Live Burn Demonstrations.”** Chesterfield County, VA, Nov. 2012
- **“Fire Origin and Cause Investigations for Insurance Adjustors/Live Burn Demonstrations.”** Spartanburg, SC, Oct. 2011
- **“Fire Origin and Cause Investigations/Live Burn Demonstration.”** Hattiesburg, MS, Oct. 2014
- **“Selecting the Right Fire Investigator/Live Burn Demonstration.”** Little Rock, AR, July 2016
- **“Selecting the Right Fire Investigator/Live Burn Demonstrations.”** Flowood, MS, Sept. 2016
- **“Investigation and Documentation of Vehicle Fires/Live Burn Demonstrations.”** Heber Springs, AR, Oct. 2016
- **“Fire Origin and Cause Investigations/Live Burn Demonstrations.”** Flowood, MS, Oct. 2013