



Fire Debris Analysis

By Eric Stauffer, Julia A. Dolan, Reta Newman

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The study of fire debris analysis is vital to the function of all fire investigations, and, as such, *Fire Debris Analysis* is an essential resource for fire investigators. The present methods of analysis include the use of gas chromatography and gas chromatography-mass spectrometry, techniques which are well established and used by crime laboratories throughout the world. However, despite their universality, this is the first comprehensive resource that addresses their application to fire debris analysis.

Fire Debris Analysis covers topics such as the physics and chemistry of fire and liquid fuels, the interpretation of data obtained from fire debris, and the future of the subject. Its cutting-edge material and experienced author team distinguishes this book as a quality reference that should be on the shelves of all crime laboratories.

- Serves as a comprehensive guide to the science of fire debris analysis
- Presents both basic and advanced concepts in an easily readable, logical sequence
- Includes a full-color insert with figures that illustrate key concepts discussed in the text

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Editorial Review

Review

"**Fire Debris Analysis** bridges a gap between the fire investigator and the forensic analyst and provides a collection of chemical and physical properties and chromatograms of typical flammable and combustible liquids used as accelerants and, to a lesser extent, animal/vegetable oils. It provides additional information and thus gives the reader a fuller picture of the analysis of fire debris samples. I have already noticed this 2008 published book in the reference libraries of private sector fire investigators."

--Elizabeth C. Buc, Fire and Materials Research Laboratory, LLC, Eastpointe, MI, in *Fire Technology*, 44, 199-201, 2008.

"The authors have produced what is by far the most comprehensive text on the subject of fire debris analysis ever written. Any criminalist who wants to learn how to conduct a proper fire debris analysis should read this book. Upon completion, the reader will know how the task is done. Experienced criminalists who already know fire debris analysis will appreciate the depth of understanding conveyed by this book, and all of the subtle nuances that it covers.

The authors present the advantages and disadvantages of each choice that a fire debris analyst might make, and in almost all cases provide their own recommendation. The book is replete with small sidebars that go into the subtle details of new concepts as they are presented. The graphics are excellent, and a companion website to the book presents additional resources.

Compilations by multiple authors frequently suffer from the appearance of having been written by committee, but this volume is nearly seamless. The authors demonstrate not only a deep understanding of fire debris analysis, but also a genuine enjoyment of their work. Where else could one find an author extolling the aesthetic beauty of a chromatogram in which the retention time in minutes equals the carbon number?

Fire Debris Analysis covers every important subject in the discipline, including the history of the various techniques, those techniques that have been found unsuitable for fire debris analysis, as well as those that may someday be of value in routine cases.

This is truly a masterful work compiled by three masters of the discipline."

John Lentini, Scientific Fire Analysis, LLC

About the Author

Eric Stauffer is a criminalist presently living in Switzerland. In 1998 he obtained his Master-equivalent degree in forensic sciences from the Institut de Police Scientifique et de Criminologie at the University of Lausanne in Switzerland. In 1999 he moved to the United States and, two years later, obtained another Master's degree in forensic sciences from Florida International University in Miami, Florida. Mr. Stauffer is certified as a Diplomate and a Fellow of the American Board of Criminalistics, with a specialty in the area of fire debris analysis. He is also a Certified Fire and Explosion Investigator (CFEI) and a Certified Fire Investigation Instructor (CFII) both from the National Association of Fire Investigators (NAFI).

During his early career as a criminalist, Mr. Stauffer worked as a crime scene officer and a firearms and toolmarks examiner. In 2001, he moved to Atlanta and joined the private sector as a fire investigator and fire

debris analyst. As such, his duties involved the investigation of numerous residential, commercial, and vehicle fire scenes to determine their origin and cause and, at the laboratory, the examination of fire debris samples for ignitable liquid residues. In 2006, he moved back to Switzerland to conduct research in forensic sciences, notably in fingerprint enhancement techniques and fire investigation. He is currently pursuing doctoral studies at the School of Criminal Sciences at the University of Lausanne.

From 2003 to 2006, Mr. Stauffer was Chair of the Fire Laboratory Standards and Protocols committee of the Scientific Working Group on Fire and Explosives (SWGFX). He also served as a subject matter expert for the development of the fire debris validation kit produced by the National Forensic Science Technology Center (NFSTC).

Mr. Stauffer is a recognized speaker and instructor in the field of forensic sciences and, more particularly, in fire investigation and fire debris analysis.

Julia Dolan has worked in the field of forensic science for eighteen years, primarily in the area of fire debris analysis. Her professional career began at the Commonwealth of Virginia, where she worked in the areas of seized drug analysis and trace evidence. Following her work at the Northern Laboratory of the Division of Forensic Science, she moved to the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), where she has focused on fire debris analysis and various aspects of fire investigation. Currently, she serves as Chief of the Arson and Explosives II section of the ATF Forensic Science Laboratory-Washington, where she oversees a variety of forensic disciplines.

In her career at ATF, Ms. Dolan has conducted research and has responded to numerous fire and explosion scenes of national significance. She has served as a member of ATF's National and International Response Teams. She has developed numerous training programs, and has served as a principal instructor for the ATF/NCFS series of fire debris courses. In this capacity, she has benefited from the opportunity to meet and work with hundreds of forensic professionals throughout the United States. Ms. Dolan has been involved in a number of professional associations, including serving in various leadership capacities in the American Board of Criminalistics (ABC) and the Mid-Atlantic Association of Forensic Scientists (MAAFS). She is a Fellow of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS) and is a member of ASTM Committee E30 on Forensic Science, the American Chemical Society (ACS), the Chemical Society of Washington (CSW) and the International Association for Arson Investigators (IAAI), where she serves on the Forensic Science Committee. She has served in various roles in the Scientific Working Group on Fire and Explosives (SWGFX). Ms. Dolan is certified as a Fellow of the American Board of Criminalistics, with a specialty in the area of Fire Debris Analysis.

Reta Newman is the Director of the Pinellas County Forensic Laboratory in Largo, Florida. She has a Bachelor of Science Degree from Missouri State University. She has been a forensic chemist since 1989 and has specialized in fire debris analysis since 1991. She is a principal instructor for the NCFS-ATF Basic and Advanced Fire Debris Analysis courses that are provided annually to train forensic analysts in the complex analysis of fire debris. She is an author of the widely distributed *GC-MS Guide to Ignitable Liquids* and has authored several other book chapters and analytical papers in the area of fire debris analysis. Ms. Newman is also very active in the quality assurance aspects of forensic sciences. She has taught workshops on QA/QC as it pertains to fire debris analysis and laboratory management. She is a legacy inspector for the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors Laboratory Accreditation Board (ASCLD/LAB) and an assessor for

the ASCLD/LAB International ISO 17025 program. She has served on committees to develop a comprehensive validation program for forensic fire debris analysis and is a previous Committee Chair of Fire Laboratory Standards and Protocols Committee of the Scientific Working Group on Fire and Explosives (SWGFX). She has also served on an ASTM working groups for the revisions of the ASTM Fire Debris Standards. Ms. Newman is very active in the forensic science community. She is certified with Fellows in both Fire Debris Analysis and Drug Analysis by the American Board of Criminalistics (ABC). She is a Fellow of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS) and holds memberships with the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors (ASCLD), Midwestern Association of Forensic Scientists (MAFS), the Southern Association of Forensic Scientists (SAFS), the Association of Forensic Quality Assurance Manager (AFQAM), and ASTM International. She is currently the Exam Committee Chair of the American Board of Criminalistics.

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