



**Electric Utility
Wildland Fire
Prevention Task Force**

11/15/19

Wildfire Investigations – Electrical Utility Cases



Responsibility To Conduct Investigations

- Determine if a criminal act occurred
- Determine if negligence caused the starting, spreading or existence of a fire
- Restitution / Fire suppression cost recovery
- Future Prevention Measures



Authority

- **RCW 76.04.015(c,i) States in part, “ Investigate the origin and cause of all forest fires to determine whether either a criminal act or negligence by any person, firm, or corporation caused the starting, spreading, or existence of the fire.”**



Background

- To do this, the agency has approximately 100 National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) trained & certified personnel statewide to conduct such investigations.



Background Cont'd

- **The Fire Investigation Unit (FIU) has three Senior Wildland Fire Investigators supervised by a sergeant.**
- **The FIU members have additional training, experience and resources.**



Background Cont'd

- The FIU has oversight of the fire investigation program.
- FIU is involved in cases related to Arson, Railroad, Electrical Utilities, serious injury or death and high cost fires.
- FIU also provides technical or procedural assistance upon request.



Dispatch/Investigation

- **Incident commander on scene determines if an investigator is required, and what level of investigator should respond.**
- **Upon arrival of the INVF, scene information and first responding unit information is obtained and origin protected.**



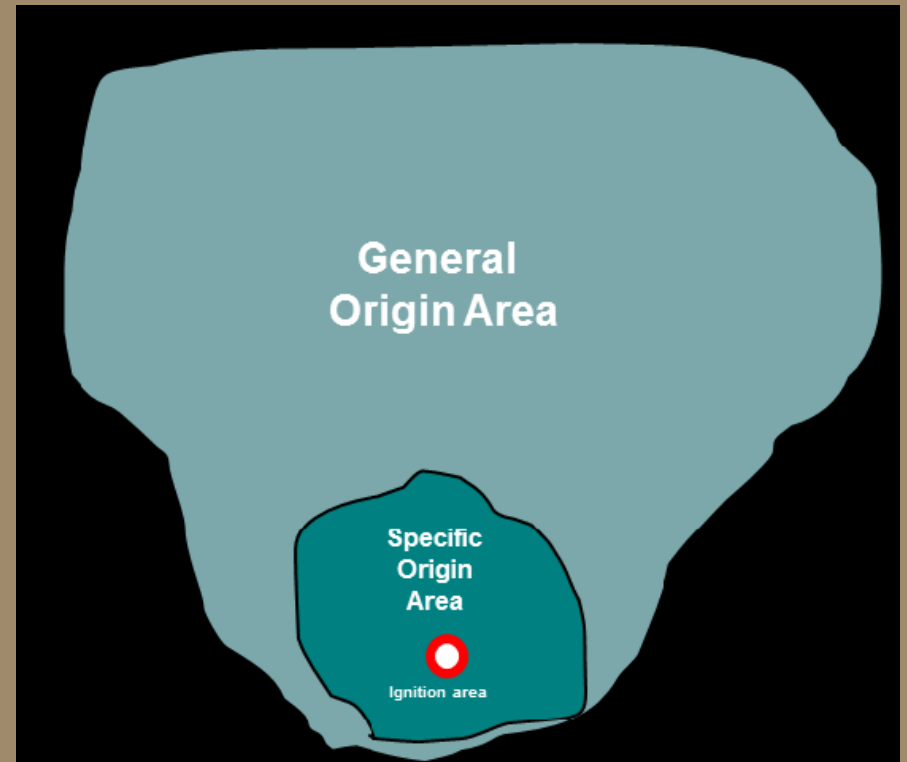
Investigation

- **Fire Investigators utilize the 11 Fire Pattern Indicators along with other evidence observed at the scene to lead them back to the origin area of the fire.**



Investigation

- **General Origin Area**
- **Specific Origin Area**
- **Ignition Area**



Cause Categories

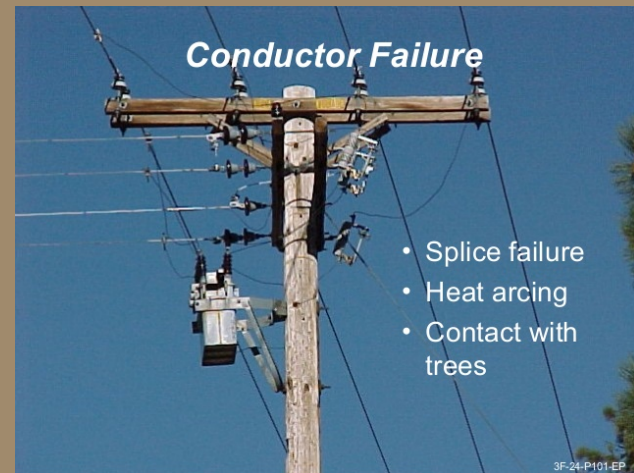
- Lightning
- Campfires
- Smoking
- Debris Burning
- Arson/Incendiary
- Equipment Use
- Railroad
- Children
- Miscellaneous*

Misc. Fires Include:

- Powerlines
- Fireworks
- Cutting, Welding, Grinding
- Firearms Use
- Structures
- Blasting
- Spontaneous Combustion
- Glass Refraction



Potential Powerline Causes



Potential Powerline Causes

- Pole Failure
- Conductor Failure/Fault
- Line Sag or Slap
- Condition of Insulators & Clamps Fail
- Tree or Tree Limbs
- Birds
- Fuses



Evidence

- **Per RCW 76.04.015 (c,i) States in part; “In conducting investigations, the department shall work cooperatively, to the extent possible, with utilities, property owners, and other interested parties to identify and preserve evidence.**



Evidence Cont'd

- **Per RCW 76.04.015 (c,i) States in part; “ To the extent possible, the department shall notify the person, firm, or corporation of its intent to take possession or control of the evidence. The person, firm, or corporation shall be afforded reasonable opportunity to view the evidence and, before the department takes possession or control of the evidence, also shall be afforded reasonable opportunity to examine, document, and photograph it.”**



Questions



