

Here is the entry for ARSON to illustrate the Investigative Information that should be developed during the investigation and/or that the subject should be asked about during the interview, as well as the phrasing of the Behavior Provoking questions, possible Interrogation Themes and Alternative Questions.

ARSON

Investigative Information

What is the suspect's alibi?

Are there alibi witnesses?

Can the alibi be objectively verified (surveillance video, incarceration, etc.)?

Could the suspect have hired someone to start the fire?

Financial Motivation

Was the property over-insured or recently insured?

Was there a major upcoming expense with the property?

Were there unusual survivors like a pet, insurance policy or expensive artwork?

Revenge Motivation

Does the suspect know the victim?

How was their relationship?

Did the suspect verbally threaten to harm the victim in any way?

Are there threatening emails to the victim?

Psychological Motivation

Has the suspect started small fires in the past?

How many fires has the suspect personally witnessed in the last 3 years?

What is the suspect's explanation for evidence?

Was the suspect under the influence of drugs or alcohol at the time of the fire?

Behavior Provoking Questions

Purpose

What is your understanding for the purpose of the interview today?"

You

"Jim, we are investigating the fire that occurred (date/location)." "If you had anything to do with starting that fire you should tell me that now."

Knowledge

"Do you know for sure who did start that fire?"

Suspicion

“Who do you suspect may have started that fire? Any name you give me will not be released back to that person?”

Credibility

“Do you think that fire was started by someone?”

Attitude

“How do you feel about being interviewed concerning this fire?”

Think

“Did you ever just think about starting a fire (at location)?”

Approach

“Has anyone ever approached you about starting a fire?”

Happen Before

“Have you ever been questioned before about starting a fire?”

Objection

Tell me why you wouldn't start a fire (at location).”

Results

“Once we complete our entire investigation how will it come out on you?”

Punishment

“What do you think should happen to the person who started that fire?”

Second Chance

“Under any circumstances, do you think the person who started that fire deserves a second chance?”

Happen before

“Have you ever been questioned before about starting a fire?”

Tell loved one

“Who have you told about your interview today?” “What was (that person's) response?” “At any time did (that person) ask if you started that fire?”

Bait (surveillance video, footprints, fingerprints)

“Is there any reason why we would (see you outside location of fire on a surveillance video)? I'm not saying you had anything to do with this fire, maybe you were outside for some other reason.”

Interrogation Themes

Financial

Blame poor economy, unfair competition

Blame accomplice for suggesting the fire or pressuring the suspect into starting it
Blame insurance company for raising rates, declining prior claim
Minimize dollar loss

Revenge

Blame victim for causing the suspect to act out of character
Blame alcohol or drugs for causing poor judgment
Minimize number of fires set
Contrast starting a fire in hopes of killing victim, or just to send victim a message

Psychological

Blame stress for causing the suspect to act out of character
Blame alcohol or drugs for causing poor judgment
Blame need for attention
Minimize number of fires set

Alternative questions

Financial

Was this whole thing your idea or did someone suggest the fire to you?
Was that fire set to cover up another crime like a murder or embezzlement or was it just to get the insurance money?
Have you been planning this thing out for months in advance or did it just happen on the spur of the moment?
Did you do this as a get rich scheme or just to break even on your investment?

Revenge

Did you plan this out for weeks in advance, or did it just happen on the spur of the moment?
Did you do this hoping to kill (her) or just cause a little smoke damage?

Psychological

Did you do this hoping to kill people or just for excitement because you were bored?
Describe an acceptable reason for starting the fire (to keep warm, to burn brush, etc.)
Have you set dozens of fires all over the county or was it less than that? We're not looking at 12 or 15 fires are we?