

A person wearing a dark hoodie is silhouetted against a background of intense fire and smoke. The person is holding a lit match, with a small flame visible. The background shows the skeletal remains of a building being consumed by fire, with bright orange and yellow flames and thick black smoke rising. The overall scene is dramatic and somber, suggesting a crime scene investigation related to arson.

# **RCMP Arson Investigations in Alberta**

**A glimpse behind the numbers...**

# Total events recorded in 2015

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- There were 968 total events scored as arson either unsolved, solved with suspect that are chargeable, or unfounded/ non-criminal.
- These numbers are approximate as scoring of some events is still being reviewed and supervisor input may not be completed and can change the totals.

# Unfounded...

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- 166 files were reported to be arsons but later determined to be unfounded complaints. Some examples;
  - Garbage fire found to be scouts roasting marshmallows;
  - Vehicle fires from electrical causes;
  - Smudging outside trailer believed to be a house fire;
  - Controlled grass burning on a rural property called in as a wildfire.
- Some files reviewed appeared to have investigative avenues open to explore to determine if it was, in fact, arson.

# Cleared other...

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- A total of 29 files were cleared otherwise. There were a number of factors that resulted in not being forwarded to criminal prosecution;
  - Mental health issues;
  - Offenders under the age of 12;
  - Departmental discretion/ diversion.

# Unsolved...

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- 632 scored as complete but unsolved
  - a large number of Stolen Vehicles
  - Un-cooperative victims and witnesses
  - Rural or isolated areas no wit, no cameras, nothing recovered for forensic evidence
- Some files reviewed appeared to have investigative avenues not explored. There were witnesses not spoken to, suspects not followed up with.
- Some of our investigative tools were not used;
- Specialists were not called or consulted.

# Still under investigation...

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- There is a total of 94 files not yet cleared were there is continuing investigation. Some examples include:
  - Awaiting forensic results such as fingerprints or DNA analysis;
  - Outstanding video to be seized or analyzed;
  - Outstanding investigative avenues to be pursued or followed up on.

# Charged or chargeable...

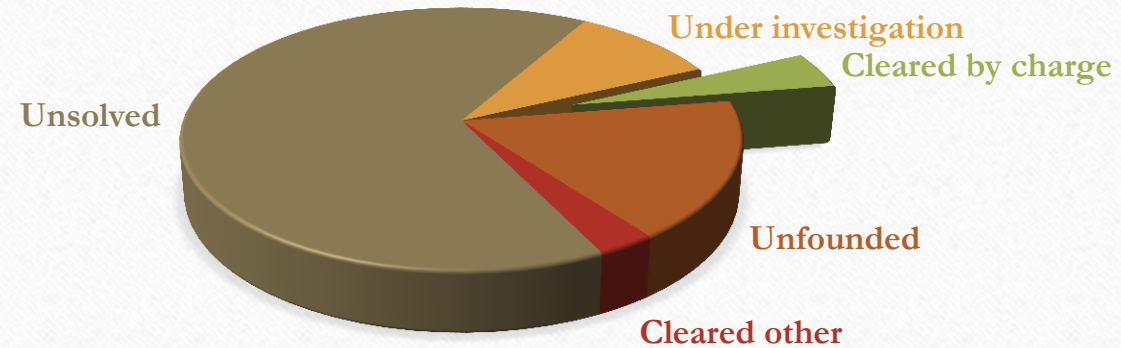
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- A total of 43 files were cleared by charge.
  - Some found at scene or pointed out by witnesses near by the scene;
  - Some forensic evidence that yielded results to identify the offender;
  - Offences committed by someone known to the victim like in a domestic dispute;
  - Some good investigative interviewing and suspect interviews leading to the necessary evidence.

# The breakdown for 2015

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## ARSON INVESTIGATIONS





Some specialist services to assist

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# Computer program could help solve arson cases

## Sifting through chemical clues

- A computer program developed by U of A Faculty of Science professor James Harynuk, his team of researchers and the RCMP Forensic Laboratory Services reduces the wait time to find out the cause of a deliberately set fire.



# Criminal Investigative Analysis

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## Criminal profiling

- An investigative tool used within the law enforcement community. The analysis is based on a review of evidence from the crime scene and from witnesses and victims.
- The analysis is done from an investigative and behavioural perspective. The analysis can provide insight into the unknown offender (characteristics and traits) as well as investigative suggestions and strategies for interviews and trial.

## Geographic Profiling





# Forensic Identification Section

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## Members role...

- Property crimes are the most common and frequently attended scenes. Members are required to take a more proactive role in securing evidence and preserving the scene until FIS can attend.
- Any evidence outside, which could potentially be lost, is moved inside and documented where it originated. Physically secure the scene by having the key holder lock and/or board it up.

## Fingerprinting

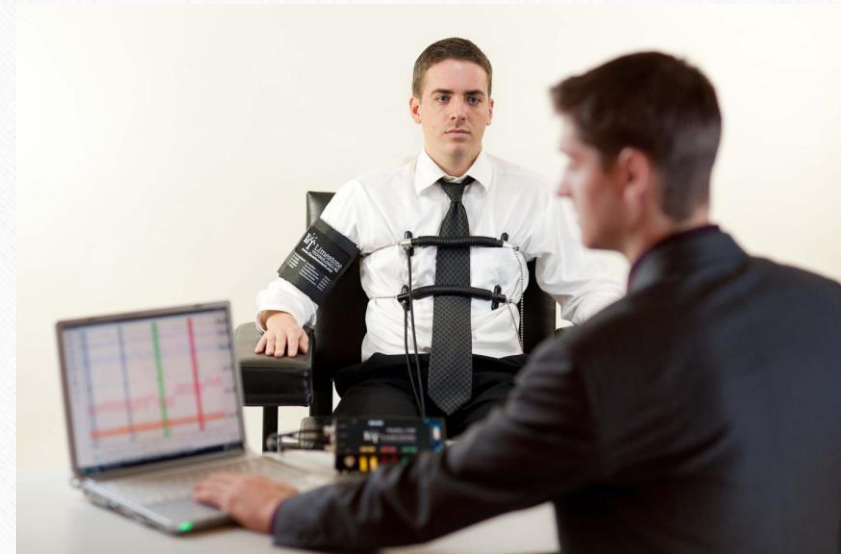
- **Most productive for FIS examination:**
- Glass (windows, mirrors, etc.), Window and screen frames, items believed to be handled by suspects, papers that have been walked on (footwear impressions)
- **Least productive items for examination:**
- Tools left behind (screwdrivers, pry bars, etc.), door knobs, unpainted wooden surfaces of all kinds, fabrics and textiles (unless DNA is present)

# Polygraph

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## Interview and interrogation

- *“It is through words that people are most practiced at lying. We learn at a young age to monitor what we say and how we say it. But there is no person that can lie without revealing traces of deception. Therefore, every word is important and should be scrutinized closely.”*





This fire resulted in the arrest, and ultimately conviction, that would end a 10-month arson spree in the City of Wetaskiwin.



At 20:41:06 On November 26, 2014, City of Wetaskiwin Fire Services received a call to 5805-56 Avenue for a possible structure fire.

City of Wetaskiwin Fire Services  
Fire Chief Leigh Sawicki



Alberta Emergency Management Agency  
2015 Stakeholder Summit





Parkland Fertilizer

Dispatch Time: 21:30:24

February 22, 2014









Vanouk Welding Shop

Dispatch Time: 07:19:22

April 9, 2014

420-46AVE

Entrance

WAYNE **VANOUCK**  
WELDING & MACHINE LTD.  
PH. 352-4425 WETASKIWIN, ALTA.











CP Rail Yard  
Dispatch Time: 04:36:46  
August 11, 2014





FIRE  
EXTINGUISHER  
IN CAB

FIRST AID  
KIT  
IN CAB



CP Rail

G.W. 6000

5017-T5

Engineering Services

DANGER  
HARMFUL

235 PSI

4000 LBS



Parkview RV

Dispatch Time: 03:05:57

August 22, 2014











Wetaskiwin Aircraft Hanger

Dispatch Time: 02:35:40

October 6, 2014









By-The-Lake Park Hall  
Dispatch Time: 21:57:59  
November 23, 2014













Wood Art Industries

Dispatch Time: 20:41:58

November 26, 2014

















Unsolved Arsons - 2014

A large fire is burning on a pile of railroad ties at night. The fire is bright orange and yellow, with thick black smoke rising from it. In the foreground, a curved metal structure, possibly a fire hydrant or a piece of equipment, is visible. The background is dark, with some faint lights in the distance.

Railroad Tie Fire  
Dispatch Time: 23:14:17  
May 11, 2014





Mega Pawn

Dispatch Time: 05:38:28

December 14, 2014











