

FIRE INVESTIGATORS STRIKE FORCE
MEMBERSHIP HANDBOOK



Brief History of the Fire Investigators Strike Force

From an article in the Arson update newsletter of the Illinois Advisory Committee on Arson Prevention dated April 1984.

What started out to be an informal get together of a few Northern Illinois Firefighters has evolved into an organization of fire and police officials in 35 communities who help each other improve their effectiveness as fire investigators. The Fire Investigation strike Force began in November 1981 as a result of talks between IACAP board members, George A. Lechner, chief of Fire Prevention Des Plaines, Ill. and Lonnie Jackson of Mt. Prospect, Ill. We were involved in separate fire investigations and had similar problems, Lechner recalled. We decided it might be a good idea to get a bunch of committees together to talk about these things. The group began meeting the second Wednesday of each month - first in Des Plaines, then in various other cities that were represented. Eventually, the strike Force put together a list of Goals and Objectives:

1. Better communication and Education to Attack the arson problem.
2. Direct lines of communication for exchange of information.
3. Making the organization able to assist its members in investigation.
4. Association with other agencies in the same field to assist in gathering information.
5. Developing a reference list of members who are available for teaching, training, and speaking.

"We decided to have a one-hour program as part of each meeting," said Lechner. We've had speakers on using video equipment to process a fire scene, how to help prosecutors build a case, and better ways to handle evidence."

The strike Force's next project was to set up a mutual aid system to make it easier for communities to assist each other in fire fighting and fire investigation. Each town sends out a number of 5X7 cards, each containing a unique number designating a certain location in that town and specifying what type of equipment should be sent to a fire

at that place. If they get a call for help from my department, they know right away what kind of equipment to send. The same thing is true if my department gets a call from another town. On a shopping mall fire that is suspicious, for example, you need more than one

investigator. Through the mutual aid system, you could call others in to do the preliminary work and pinpoint

departments that can help with photographers and special equipment. As a result of the strike Force, fire investigators have been more successful in detecting patterns of arson," Lechner said. "We're less reluctant to

ask each other for help now, he said.
This organization started out as the:

NORTH COOK COUNTY FIRE INVESTIGATORS STRIKE FORCE

On December 10, 1981 the first formal meeting was held in Des Plaines, in attendance were 14 persons from 8 departments. On the Agenda was the following item:

...was brought up that something of a cooperation agreement such as MABAS could be set up so various fire investigators could work together to obtain experience and cover area wide arson incidents. Each to discuss matter with their own chief to see if there is an interest...

Our main function for now would be:

1. to update investigation techniques
2. Exchange ideas regarding fire investigation
3. Exchange incidents of fires to see if participating communities are experiencing any "trends"
4. Exchange school and legislative matters.

By January 1982 the strike force had grown to 22 members from 14 departments.

There was a presentation at each meeting in 1982 and by October the membership had grown to 26 departments and an involvement of 55.

February of 15, 1983 brought the first elected officers of the strike force, as the MABAS concept evolved the strike force prepared to present it to division I. On May 4, 1983 it was made to the executive board of MABAS and it was well received.

In June of 1983 the SOP checklist was finished, while a committee was formed to conduct a 1 day BASIC FIRE INVESTIGATION seminar.

I.D. cards were discussed in July and the final writing of the by-laws had been undertaken.

In October a scheduled seminar had to be canceled due to lack of registrants. Only 9 persons had signed up.

By December 1983 the box cards were ready to go in service in some departments in division 3.

At the February meeting 1984, the organization changed its name to: **FIRE INVESTIGATORS STRIKE FORCE**

The Lake county fire inspectors association was voted in as an associate member of the Strike Force.

In March of 1984 the following committees were staffed:

1. TRAINING
2. MEMBERSHIP
3. PROGRAMS

Programs to be held every other month to allow for business matters, and longer programs. Discussion of MODS, I, II, & III.

It was also decided to accept individual Lake county departments *in* place of accepting the entire county of Lake as a group.

In May of 1984 the by-laws were revised and adopted.

July of 1984 Division 1 accepted the strike Force in MABAS August brought a discussion of meeting sites with a rotation to towns north, south, and west. George Lechner also reported on his use of the Strike Force for a lumberyard fire in Des Plaines.

The September meeting was held at Lutheran General Hospital and was the first *long* program. It was hosted by ATF.

In October and November the strike Force hosted MODS, I & II. In November a discussion of the strike Force being used in Northbrook for a fatality. Farbman(North Maine) and Lechner (Des Pl.aines) assisted in cause and origin, this was due to the State Fire Marshal being unable to send an Investigator to the scene in a timely manner.

December 1984 the FISF was accepted as a chapter member of the: ILLINOIS FIRE INSPECTORS ASSOCIATION

MODS I, II, & III were taught in April, May, and June of 1985, at North Maine F.D.

At the November meeting the following was discussed and noted. MABAS Division 1 has announced that with the implementation of box cards for investigators, it is there position that only towns with reciprocal arrangements for responding of investigators will be acknowledged. This is an attempt to prevent towns from using mutual aid investigations in lieu of training their own people to do investigations.

In 1986 the following items were discussed or completed: static display board

Rework training committee

Establish a computer database

Centrally located meeting place

Extra mailings to police departments

2 day basic arson program

FIRE INVESTIGATORS STRIKE FORCE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

To provide an on-going source of training and information on current topics and advancements in the science of fire investigation.

To provide an established forum for the exchange of information ideas relevant to current problems in fire causation.

To provide a means for investigators from different agencies to create and cultivate relationships which will further the investigation of fire causation.

To act as a vehicle for increased visibility and professionalism of role of the fire investigator.

CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS
THE
FIRE INVESTIGATORS STRIKE
FORCE

ARTICLE I NAME AND PURPOSE

ARTICLE II MEMBERSHIP

ARTICLE III GOVERNMENT

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ARTICLE VI MEETINGS

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ARTICLE IX RATIFICATION

ACCEPTED AND RATIFIED: FEBRUARY 8, 1984

AMENDED: MARCH 11, 1987

AMENDED: DECEMBER 16, 1987

AMENDED: DECEMBER 14, 1988

AMENDED: DECEMBER 9, 1992

AMENDED: DECEMBER 1, 1993

AMENDED: DECEMBER 10, 1995

AMENDED: FEBRUARY 12, 1997

ARTICLE I

NAME AND PURPOSE

SECTION A - NAME

The Organization shall be known as the Fire Investigators Strike Force herein referred to as the Organization.

The name of the Organization shall only be used to carry out the purpose of the Organization or with the expressed permission of the Board of Directors.

SECTION B - PURPOSE

1. The purpose of the organization is as follows:
 - A. To provide on-going training to fire and police investigators in the determination of fire origin and the investigation of fire causation.
 - B. To educate the public as to the importance and impact of the crime of arson, as well as to the need for proper fire prevention.
 - C. To act as a training clearinghouse, for the use by member departments in establishing minimum training requirements for investigators.
 - D. To provide an on-going record of training for use by member departments for annual statistics and re-certification purposes.

ARTICLE II

MEMBERSHIP

SECTION A - ACTIVE MEMBERS

- A. Any local, state or federal governmental unit, or any other agency as approved by the Board of Directors, may be an active member if engaged in some phase of the fire investigation process. These activities may include, but are not limited to: the investigation of fire suppression of arson, or the administration of justice.
- B. Any member must be at least 18 years of age.

A representative of an active member organization shall be eligible to do the following:

- A Attend all meeting and functions.
Have the floor to speak and propose ideas and motions for action.
May run and hold any elected office in the Organization.

SECTION B - ASSOCIATE MEMBER

- 1 Any person, partnership, corporation or association with interests in fire investigation, and complying with the Constitution and By Laws of this organization, is eligible to be an Associate member. This is subject to the approval of the Board of Directors upon receipt of the application at a meeting.
- 2 An associate member shall have the privileges of an active member with the following exceptions:
 - A Is ineligible to vote.
 - R Is ineligible to hold an elected office.

SECTION C - HONORARY MEMBERS

Every person who is honorably retired or discharged in good standing from employment or association with current or past Active member organization, who has interest in the field of fire investigation, is eligible to apply for membership as an honorary member. This is subject to the approval of the Board of Directors. An Honorary member shall have the same privileges as that of an active member with; the exception that the honorary member is exempt from the requirements of annual dues or other assessments.

2. Honorary member status shall continue annually unless a resignation is tendered by the member, or the membership is withdrawn by the Board of Directors for cause.

SECTION D - APPLICATION

The Membership Committee shall review all requests for membership with regard to the professionalism and personal character of the organization or applicant.

SECTION E - ELIGIBILITY

No person, group or concern shall be eligible for membership who is or becomes a member of a subversive organization or any organization whose objectives and operations are inconsistent with the Fire Investigators Strike Force or those of the Government of the United States.

SECTION F - TERMINATION

Termination of any membership may be by voluntary request or as recommended by the Board of Directors, which is subject to a two-thirds vote of the members present at a regular meeting.

ARTICLE III

GOVERNMENT

SECTION A - STRUCTURE

The organization shall be a non-profit and self-governing sub-chapter under the charter of the Illinois Fire Inspectors Association.

2. The Organization shall be governed by a Board of Directors consisting of the following officers:
 - A. President.
 - B. Vice-President.
 - C. Secretary.
 - D. Treasurer.
 - E. Executive Director.
 - G. Chairman of the Training and Membership Committees.

ARTICLE IV

OFFICES AND ELECTIONS

SECTION A - OFFICES

1 The Offices and duties shall be as follows:

- A. President: to preside over all meetings and functions and to direct committees towards organizational goals.
- B. Vice-President: to assist the President and act in his behalf in his absence.
- C. Secretary: to keep records of all meetings and functions, and to maintain all records of the Organization.
- D. Treasurer: to keep records of all financial transactions and to prepare the proper statements.
- E. Executive Director: to assist the President and Board of Directors in the discharge of their duties.

SECTION B - TENURE:

1 The tenure of all offices shall be one year with the change of offices taking place at the conclusion of the December meeting, after proper election at the same meeting.

2 The succession of office shall be from treasurer to secretary, secretary to vice-president, and vice-president to president. This succession is not automatic, and is subject to nomination at the November regular meeting, and subsequent majority vote by those in attendance at the December regular meeting.

3 Anyone may nominate an officer candidate at the December meeting, prior to the official vote.

The executive director shall be named by the incoming president; with the selection being made from past presidents. The

outgoing president shall be given first consideration for selection.

Vacancy in any office shall be filled by the Board of Directors for the unexpired portion of the term.

SECTION C - ELECTIONS:

1. Shall be held at the December regular meeting, by closed ballot, unless waived by proper motion from the membership present at the meeting.

SECTION D - VOTING:

Each active member organization representative, and honorary member in attendance during any vote will have one vote for each such balloting or election

ARTICLE V

COMMITTEES

SECTION A - FUNCTIONS

All committees will function under the direction of the Organization President

SECTION B - CLASSIFICATION OF FUNCTIONS

Membership Committee: to review and recommend approval of applications for membership- The committee shall actively recruit new members, and maintain a liaison with existing members. The Chairman shall be appointed by the president, and approved by the Board of Directors.

- 2 Training Committee: to arrange for monthly training speakers and topics, as well as to organize and coordinate seminars and special functions. The committee shall also be responsible for maintaining annual training records for all members, and providing a copy of this record to the respective member organization training officers. The chairman shall be appointed by the president, and approved by the Board of Directors.

ARTICLE V

SECTION C-COMMITTEE SIZE

The number of persons serving on a committee will be determined by the Committee Chairman, as needed, with the concept of the president.

ARTICLE VI

MEETINGS

SECTION A - MEETING SCHEDULE

Regular meetings shall be held the second Wednesday of each month, at 0930 hours, except October when the meeting is held the third Wednesday. Each meeting shall provide two hours of training on a relevant topic. There are no meetings during the months of July and August.

2. An eight hour seminar shall be held twice annually in May and October. The seminars shall take the place of the regular monthly meeting.
3. Special meetings may be called, as needed by the president.

ARTICLE VII

FINANCIAL STRUCTURE

SECTION A - DUES

Dues shall be \$75.00 per year per membership concern, agency and/or municipality. Only one due is required per town, covering both the fire and police departments. There is no limit as to the number of personnel who may be representatives of each member.

Dues shall be billed by April 1, of each year and payable by June 30 of the same year. All delinquent members shall have membership privileges suspended effective September 30 of the same year, until payment is made.

SECTION B - DISBURSEMENTS

Disbursements and payments may be made with the approval of the President and Board of Directors by a simple majority vote.

SECTION C - AUDIT

The organization, through the treasurer, shall have an annual outside audit completed concerning the financial transactions of the Organization for the previous year.

ARTICLE VIII

AMENDMENTS

SECTION A - ACCEPTANCE

Any article or section of these by-laws may be amended, rescinded or expanded by approval vote of two-thirds of the members present at a regularly scheduled monthly meeting. This vote shall occur one month after the first reading and publishing of the changes in the monthly minutes.

ARTICLE IX

RATIFICATION

SECTION A - ACCEPTANCE

1 Upon ratification acceptance by two-thirds vote of members present at the February 8, 1984 meeting, all provisions and articles shall become effective and enforceable by the Organization.

AMENDED: 3-11-87
AMENDED: 12-16-87
AMENDED: 12-14-88
AMENDED: 12-09-92
AMENDED: 12-01-93
AMENDED: 12-13-95
AMENDED: 02-12-97

FIRE INVESTIGATORS

SAMPLE STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

Following the outline for Fire Ground Command, hereafter referred to as the FGC, this sample STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE for the Fire Investigators has been established.

Section 1

The Fire Ground Commander has within his sector structure a Fire Investigation Sector. It is from this level the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) has been designed. To accomplish this SOP, the D Department and/or Agency must:

- A Establishes the responsibility for Fire Investigation Sector on a certain individual within their Department and/or Agency.
- B Establish an effective framework outlining the activities, responsibilities, and duties assigned to the Fire Investigation Sector Officer of the Department and/or Agency.

The responsibilities assigned to the Fire Investigation Sector Officer shall include, but not limited to, the following specific items:

- A Effective control over the Fire Investigation scene.
- B Conserve the property after the control of the scene is achieved.
- C Request whatever assistance that may be required to achieve precise and effective investigation.

The Fire Investigation Sector Officer shall report directly to the Department and/or Agency FGC regarding the fire investigation.

- 1-4 The Fire Investigation Sector Officer will be responsible for the entire investigation. The initial investigation stage will consist of:
- A. Assume the responsibility of the Fire Investigation Sector from the FGC of that Department and/or Agency.
 - B. Evaluate the fire investigation scene
 - Size of the fire scene.
 - Existing conditions.
 - a) Weather
 - b) Structural
 - c) Environment
 - C. Develop a plan of investigation
 - Local personnel and equipment
 - Outside agency personnel (FISF, OSFM, etc.)
 - D. Provide continuous overall supervision of the investigation and progress reports within the framework of the Fire Investigation Sector.
 - E. Assigns task areas of the fire scene to personnel under Sector command.
 - Reviews and evaluates investigative efforts and revises the investigation as may be needed.
 - G. Requests additional personnel and or resources from FGC.
 - H. Releasing of outside personnel once the initial fire scene investigation is completed and informing the FGC of this.

Section 2

2-1 Task Assignment

When all of the steps as specified in **section 1-4 (A) and (B)** are completed and indications are that the need for additional assistance is needed, a request for the Fire Investigators

Strike Force can be implemented. This request should be from the Fire Ground Commander by using the MABAS Fire Investigator Box Card system.

Only state of Illinois Certified Fire Investigators are eligible to respond to this request. All MABAS Box Alarm cards should be comprised of these investigators only. All investigators shall respond with full protective clothing and all necessary equipment to complete their assigned tasks.

A photographer responding for the purpose of mutual aid will be equipped with proper protective clothing and all necessary photographic equipment and film to complete assigned tasks. Photographer shall have knowledge and training in the field of fire and arson investigation photography.

Upon arrival of Investigative personnel, the sector commander shall make task assignments for initial fire investigation. It is from this level of supervision that task assignments have been designed to accomplish the following:

- A Task assignments will reduce the amount of overall control of the supervisory function to manageable units.
- B Task assignment supervisory procedures provide a system for the Sector Officer to divide moderate to large scale investigations into effectively sized units.
- C When effective task assignments have been established, the Sector Officer can concentrate on the overall strategy and resources. Each task assignment will have an officer in charge. This task assignment officer must maintain proper investigation procedures using the resources at their disposal.

The task assignment officer must have the capability to communicate with the personnel under their control to maintain the proper function assigned to them.

- D The task assignment will keep

the Fire Investigation Sector Officer informed of conditions in the task assignment area through regular progress reports. They are to immediately notify the Sector Officer of significant changes regarding the investigation. These changes include the inability to complete the investigation, hazardous conditions that may exist, and the finding of physical evidence relating to cause and origin.

Communication within the task area should utilize non-radio modes whenever possible.

2-2 Fire Investigation Sector - Structure

Fire Ground Command

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*

Support Sector Officer

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*

Fire Investigation Sector Officer

*
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Task Officer

*
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Task Group

FIRE INVESTIGATORS STRIKE FORCE

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

1. Do hereby make application for Department/Agency membership in the Fire Investigators Strike Force in accordance with its Constitution and by-laws. I understand that upon acceptance by the membership, a submittal of \$40.00 (or that amount to cover the months up to the end of the fiscal year) for annual dues will be required.

(PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT) DATE OF APPLICATION

DEPARTMENT/AGENCY INFORMATION
NAME OF DEPARTMENT MABAS DIV.
ADDRESS CITY ZIP CODE

TELEPHONE NUMBERS (Emergency) Business)

CONTACT PERSON

INVESTIGATOR INFORMATION

(NOTE: If there are more than four investigators, please duplicate this form.)

NAME RANK

LEVEL OF STATE CERTIFICATION (Basic Advance Other)

NAME RANK

LEVEL OF STATE CERTIFICATION (Basic Advance Other)

NAME RANK

LEVEL OF STATE CERTIFICATION (Basic Advance Other)

NAME RANK

LEVEL OF STATE CERTIFICATION (Basic Advance Other)

Documentation of Certification Level for each investigator must be submitted at the time of application.

Approval by Chief of the Department/Agency

Name

Signature

FIRE INVESTIGATORS STRIKE FORCE

CLARIFICATION

This is a general information application requesting information that will benefit all the participates in the Fire Investigators Strike Force.

Some explanation is required concerning the LEVEL OF CERTIFICATION section of the application. The different descriptions of the certification levels are as follows.

- BASIC 80 hour Basic Department of Law Enforcement / Arson Investigator course, or;
- State of Illinois Fire Service Institute Modules I & II
OR
- National Fire Academy 80 hour Fire/Arson Investigator course
- ADVANCED 40 hour Advance Department of Law Enforcement Fire/Arson Investigator course, or;
- State of Illinois Fire Service Institute Modules I & II
- National Fire Academy 40 hour Advance Fire/Arson Investigator course.
- OTHER 240 hour State Arson Investigator course or:
- Equivalency of any of the above with the approval of the General Board.

The SPECIALTIES section is were you would indicate whether the investigator is a photographer, evidence technician, lab specialist, etc.

Your cooperation and interest in the cause and origin of fires is appreciated.

SCHOOLS/SEMINARS

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These are specific courses pertaining to the field of fire and arson investigation. Related courses are those courses that add additional support to the investigative field, (interview, interrogation, photography, evidence collection, etc.). Upon successful completion of the course, the student will receive d certificate of completion.

CERTIFICATIONS -

Awarded to persons in recognition of their successful completion of requisite courses in fire science, investigation techniques and support systems.

Personnel must have demonstrated their knowledge and abilities in the investigative field. A document is then presented recognizing them as certified in their particular field of expertise.

Certifications are recognized by the Fire Investigators Strike Force from the following educational institutes:

Office of the State Fire Marshal, Division of
Personnel Standards and Education;

- * Illinois Department of Law Enforcement
- * National Fire Academy
- * Fire Service Institute University of Illinois
- International Association of Arson Investigators
- * Illinois Chapter, IAAI
- * International Fire Photographers Association
- * Fire Science degrees from recognized colleges and universities.

Certification from institutes other than those listed will be recognized and approved at the recommendation of the Board of Directors. All certifications claimed must be documented by submitting a copy of Certification to the Fire Investigators Strike Force.

(215 ILCS 145/)

(215 ILCS 145/0.1)

Sec. 0.1. This Act shall be known and may be cited as the "Property Fire Loss Act".

(Source: P.A. 81-682.)

(215 ILCS 145/1)

Sec. 1. (a) The Fire Marshal, the director of the Department of Insurance or personnel from any other authorized fire department or law enforcement agency charged with the responsibility of investigating a fire loss or potential fire loss, may request any insurance company that has investigated or is investigating a fire loss or potential fire loss of real or personal property to release any factual information in its possession which is pertinent to this type of loss or potential loss and has some relationship to the loss or potential loss itself. The company shall release the information and cooperate with any official authorized to request such information pursuant to this Section. The information shall include, but is not limited to:

- (1) Any insurance policy relevant to a fire loss or potential fire loss under investigation and any application for such a policy;
- (2) Policy premium payment records;
- (3) History of previous claims made by the insured for fire loss;
- (4) Material relating to the investigation of the loss or potential loss, including statements of any person, proof of loss, and any other relevant evidence.

(b) If an insurance company has reason to believe that a fire loss to its insured's real or personal property was caused by other than accidental means, the company shall notify the Fire Marshal, the director of the Department of Insurance or any other appropriate law enforcement agency charged with the responsibility to investigate fire losses and furnish such persons with all relative material acquired during its investigation of the fire loss, cooperate with and take such reasonable action as may be requested by any law enforcement agency, and cooperate with the Court and administrative agencies of the State, and any official from the Fire Marshal's office, the office of the director of the Department of Insurance or any law enforcement agency charged with the responsibility to investigate the fire. Such insurance company may request officials and departmental and agency personnel receiving information on fire losses or potential fire losses to release information relative to any investigation it has made concerning any such fire loss or potential loss reported by such company. Subject to the provisions of subsection (a) and paragraphs (i), (iii), (iv), (v), (vii) and (viii) of subsection (c) of Section 7 of the Freedom of Information Act, such insurance company shall have the right to receive, within a reasonable time, not to exceed 30 days after the receipt of such request, the relevant information requested.

(c) In the absence of malice, no insurance company, or person who furnishes information on its behalf, or authorized person, department or agency as defined in subsection (a) who releases information, is liable for damages in a civil action or subject to criminal prosecution for any oral or written statement made or any other action taken that is necessary to supply information required pursuant to this Section.

(d) The officials and departmental and agency personnel receiving any information furnished pursuant to this Section shall hold the

(continued from previous page)

information in confidence until such time as its release is required pursuant to this Section or a criminal or civil proceeding.

(e) Any official referred to in paragraph (a) of this Section may be required to testify as to any information in his possession regarding the fire loss of real or personal property in any civil action in which any person seeks recovery under a policy against an insurance company for the fire loss.

(f) As used in this Section, "insurance company" includes the Illinois Fair Plan Underwriting Association, and all district, county and township mutual insurance companies.

(g) (1) No person shall intentionally or knowingly refuse to release any information properly requested, pursuant to paragraph (a) of this Section.

(2) No person shall refuse to make the necessary notification of a fire loss pursuant to paragraph (b) of this Section.

(3) No person shall refuse to supply to the proper authorities pertinent information required to be furnished pursuant to paragraph (b) of this Section.

(4) No person shall fail to hold in confidence information required to be held in confidence by paragraph (d) of this Section.

(h) Whoever violates paragraph (g) (1), (2), (3) or (4) of this Section is guilty of a Class C misdemeanor and is subject to a fine not to exceed \$100. It shall not be considered a violation of this Section if an insurance company in good faith, believes it has done everything required of it by this Statute.

(i) A fire department or law enforcement agency that has investigated or is investigating a fire loss or potential fire loss of real or personal property may release to an insurer of such property any factual information, including statements, in its possession which is pertinent or related to the type of loss or potential loss.

(Source: P.A. 86-1021.)