

CV vs RESUME

Origin & Cause Fire Investigation

What You Need, When You Need It, and How to Build It Right

Topics Covered: Purpose • Key Differences • Requirements • Building Your Documents



UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCE

CURRICULUM VITAE (CV)

Academic & Professional Record

- Comprehensive career history
- Education, certifications, training
- Publications and research
- Expert witness experience
- Awards and honors
- Conference presentations
- Professional memberships

Length: No limit — often 5–20+ pages

VS

RESUME

Targeted Job Application Tool

- Tailored to a specific position
- Highlights relevant experience
- Skills and key competencies
- Quantified accomplishments
- Summary or objective statement
- Technology proficiency

Length: 1–2 pages maximum

WHEN TO USE EACH DOCUMENT

USE A CV WHEN...

Expert Witness Testimony

Court cases, depositions, legal proceedings require a full CV

Academic/Research Positions

University, NIST, fire research labs expect a CV

Government Appointments

BATFE, FEMA, NFPA board positions

Professional Credentialing

IAAI-CFI, PE licensure boards, accreditation panels

Grant Applications

Research funding, technical fellowships

USE A RESUME WHEN...

Fire Department Employment

Hiring managers want a concise 1–2 page summary

Private Investigation Firms

Targeted application for investigator roles

Insurance Carrier Positions

Staff investigator or SIU unit hiring

Consulting Firms

Business-focused, results-driven format preferred

Law Enforcement Agencies

ATF, FBI, state fire marshal offices

FIRE INVESTIGATION CV: REQUIRED SECTIONS

1

CONTACT & CREDENTIALS

Name, certifications (IAAI-CFI, CFEI, PE), agency, contact info

2

PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Brief narrative of expertise, specializations, and career focus

3

EDUCATION

Degrees, fire science programs, engineering, criminal justice

4

CERTIFICATIONS & LICENSES

IAAI-CFI, CFEI, CVFI, state certifications, PE license

5

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Chronological history with agency, role, dates, key responsibilities

6

EXPERT WITNESS HISTORY

Courts testified in, case types, jurisdiction, years

7

TRAINING & CONTINUING ED

NFPA, IAAI, ATF FTTTC, NFA, specialized fire courses

8

PUBLICATIONS & RESEARCH

Articles, reports, technical papers, studies authored

9

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

IAAI, NAFI, SFPE, IAFCI, state associations

FIRE INVESTIGATION RESUME: REQUIRED SECTIONS

1 HEADER Name, phone, email, LinkedIn, certifications after name (e.g. John Smith, IAAI-CFI)

2 PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY 2–3 sentences: years of experience, specializations, unique value proposition

3 KEY COMPETENCIES Fire cause & origin, accelerant detection, scene documentation, report writing

4 CERTIFICATIONS IAAI-CFI, CFEI, CVFI, state fire investigator license — with expiration dates

5 PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE Position, agency, dates; 3–5 bullet points with quantified accomplishments

6 EDUCATION Degree, institution, year; relevant coursework if recent graduate

7 TECHNOLOGY & TOOLS GC-MS, FDS modeling, Leica laser scanning, CAD, evidence management software

KEY CERTIFICATIONS TO DOCUMENT

GOLD STANDARD

IAAI-CFI

Certified Fire Investigator

Int'l Assoc. of Arson Investigators

INDUSTRY STANDARD

CFEI

Certified Fire and Explosion Investigator

NAFI

SPECIALTY

CVFI

Certified Vehicle Fire Investigator

NAFI

SPECIALTY

CIFI

Certified Insurance Fire Investigator

NAFI

ENGINEERING

PE (Fire)

Professional Engineer – Fire Protection

State Licensure Board

FEDERAL

ATF FTTTC

Fire/Explosives Investigations Training

ATF National Center

WRITING TIPS FOR FIRE INVESTIGATORS

CV BEST PRACTICES

List every investigation type handled (structure, vehicle, wildland, marine)

Include NFPA 921 & 1033 compliance statements

Document deposition and trial testimony separately

List all training with hours and dates — even if decades ago

Include peer-reviewed article citations in APA/AMA format

Document supervisory roles and jurisdictional authority

RESUME BEST PRACTICES

Use action verbs: Investigated, Determined, Testified, Documented, Coordinated

Quantify achievements: '200+ fire scenes investigated', '\$2M in fraud detected'

Tailor keywords to the job posting for ATS scanning

Place certification acronyms (IAAI-CFI) directly after your name

Emphasize recent experience — older roles need only title and dates

Keep to 2 pages maximum; use white space strategically

NFPA 1033 COMPETENCIES TO HIGHLIGHT

NFPA 1033 (Standard for Professional Qualifications for Fire Investigator) defines the minimum job performance requirements. Both your CV and resume should demonstrate mastery of these competency areas:

Scene Examination

Systematic scene search, origin determination, documentation, evidence collection

Fire Analysis

Cause determination, burn pattern analysis, fire dynamics, fuel load assessment

Evidence Collection

Physical evidence, documentation, chain of custody, laboratory coordination

Interview Techniques

Witness interviews, first responder debriefs, statements

Legal Considerations

Fourth Amendment compliance, subpoena response, report preparation

Technology & Tools

GC-MS, FTIR, photography, diagramming software, 3D scanning

SIDE-BY-SIDE QUICK COMPARISON

FEATURE	CURRICULUM VITAE (CV)	RESUME
Purpose	Complete academic & professional record	Targeted job application tool
Length	No limit (5–20+ pages)	1–2 pages maximum
Update Frequency	Ongoing — add every experience	Tailored per application
Tone	Formal, comprehensive, academic	Professional, concise, results-focused
Expert Witness	Mandatory — full testimony history	Brief mention if space allows
Research/Publications	Complete bibliography	Omit unless directly relevant
Certifications	All certifications, dates, CEU hours	Current/active certifications only
Primary Audience	Courts, academia, credentialing boards	HR departments, hiring managers

YOUR ACTION PLAN

01

AUDIT YOUR CURRENT DOCUMENTS Review existing CV/resume against NFPA 1033 competencies. Identify gaps in certification documentation, training records, and case history.

02

BUILD YOUR MASTER CV FIRST Create a comprehensive master CV with every certification, training hour, court appearance, publication, and investigation type — this is your source document.

03

TAILOR RESUMES FROM YOUR MASTER CV For each job application, extract and customize a 1–2 page resume targeting the specific role. Adjust keywords to match each posting.

04

DOCUMENT ONGOING EXPERIENCE After every significant case, training, or testimony — update your master CV immediately. Schedule quarterly reviews.

05

VERIFY PROFESSIONAL REFERENCES Maintain a current list of references who can speak to your investigative competency, court demeanor, and professional standards.