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Review of: *Kirk's Fire Investigation*, Sixth Edition

REFERENCE: DeHaan JD. *Kirk's fire investigation*, 6th ed. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2007; ISBN 0-13-171922-X, \$84.

Depending on whom you ask, either a lot is changing in the field of fire investigation or not much needs to change. My guess is that there is an age bracket around the former and the latter with the mass of fire investigators settled somewhere in between. Fires are the worst form of crime scene, in that, not only do you have to contend with the hazards and obstacles common to every crime scene, but most of your evidence has been compromised or damaged by the fire, heat, and efforts to contain the fire. Teaching about investigating fire scenes, therefore, requires a well-organized, well-written textbook.

The sixth edition of *Kirk's Fire Investigation* serves this purpose admirably. From the basics of fire chemistry and combustion through the fundamentals of fire scene investigation, DeHaan's newest edition does a credible job of being readable and informative. Specifics regarding certain types of fires, such as wildland and clothing fires, build on the essential chapters. The chapters on toxicology and pathology relating to fires are interesting and add to the flexibility the text provides for teaching. The discussion of arson

separately as a crime will also help disabuse eager students from thinking every fire is a criminal act.

Although ample illustrations and photographs support the text, some of the black and white photos seem flat and lack pointers to the specifics in them. For example, Fig. 16.4 indicates a scorch mark from a wire but the scorch is so faint that an arrow would be useful to indicate it. Another example is in Fig. 12.2j, which purports to show "status of gas service to building" but only shows a row of gas line meters—I'm not sure what was intended in that photo. The color photos which appear in the book are good. This is a cost decision on the part of the author and publisher: DeHaan's book is \$41 less than Lentini's *Scientific Protocols for Fire Investigation*, but Lentini's book is full-color throughout.

I found it odd that DeHaan cites the various standards and regulations for fire investigation but fails, at least to my eye, to mention the Technical Working Group on Fire and Explosives (TWGFEX, at <http://ncfs.ucf.edu/twgfex>), which has a wealth of information. It would also be helpful if the various ASTM standards, laws, and regulations relating to fire investigations could be tabulated in the text.

Other than these minor nitpicks, the sixth edition of the venerable *Kirk's Fire Investigation* is a rare text well done.

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