



THE ILLINOIS CHAPTER/IAAI

PRESENTS THE

43RD ANNUAL TRAINING CONFERENCE SEPTEMBER (20TH TAILGATE) 21ST - 23RD, 2026

HOLIDAY INN & SUITES, GRAND PRAIRIE

7601 NORTH ORANGE PRAIRIE LANE

PEORIA, ILLINOIS 61615

SPECIAL ROOM RATES AVAILABLE, (\$110.00/NIGHTLY), FOR ATTENDEES - FIRST COME FIRST SERVE

PLEASE CALL THE HOTEL DIRECTLY FOR RESERVATIONS AND REFERENCE THE CONFERENCE - (309)-683-3399

IL-IAAI MEMBER REGISTRATION - \$325.00 NON-MEMBER REGISTRATION - \$425.00 DINNER GUEST - \$45.00

To register, go to www.il-iaai.com, click on 2026 AGM/ATC Button

Breakfast and Lunch Provided for Registered Attendees

Sunday - Sept. 20th - {2:00 - 6:00 p.m.} - *Location TBA - Evidence Collection Tech. (ETC) Practicum*

Those taking the ECT Practicum Must Be Registered and Have Already Paid Through IAAI Prior to Class

[Click Here for IAAI Registration Page](#)

Sunday - Sept. 20th - {6:00 - 11:00 p.m.} *Suite Fire Restaurant/Bar (On-Site) - Tailgate Event w/Beverages and Light Appetizers Provided*

Monday - Sept. 21st - {8:00 - 8:30 a.m.} - Opening Ceremonies

Monday - Sept. 21st - {8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.} - Morning Session} Grand Ballroom –

“The Events of 9/11, Looking Through the Fire Investigator’s Eyes - Instructors...Steve Avato and Matt Regentin

With this being the 25th Anniversary of that tragic day, September 11th, 2001, Steve and Matt, both retired ATF - CFI Agents were at ground zero, *Steve at the Pentagon Scene and Matt at the Shanksville, PA scene*, during the months following the attack. Together they will bring not only direct insight into the subsequent investigation following this catastrophic event, but also into the events discovered leading up to that fateful day, talking also about the Twin Towers Site as well. Bringing to you the perspective of seeing the incidents through their eyes, with an in-depth analysis of what the investigators on scene encountered, the obstacles surrounding a scene of that magnitude, and the effects it had on everyone involved.

Lunch - 12:30 - 1:30 p.m.

Monday - Sept. 21st - {12:30 - ??? p.m. - Afternoon Session} - “The Events of 9/11, Looking Through the Fire Investigator’s Eyes, Cont’d. and Trip to the Peoria Riverfront Museum for the “We Remember: Stories from the 9/11 Memorial & Museum Exhibit”

*****NOTE - THIS DAY MAY BE SOMEWHAT LONGER DUE TO THE MUSEUM TOUR*****

The training subjects provided meet their respective requirements of NFPA1033, 2021 edition. This conference is providing 24 tested hours of training. Testing will be done through CFITrainer.net, using a PIN number that will be provided at the end of the conference via the IL-IAAI App, which must be downloaded from the App Stores on either platform, (Apple or Android). Disclaimer: No liability is assumed by the IL-IAAI for changes in program content, speakers, or venue. The instructor’s presentation and content thereof are the responsibility of the individual instructor and not necessarily endorsed by any of the persons or organizations associated with this seminar. The IL-IAAI reserves the right to cancel, alter, or substitute any class or instructor without advanced notice. **Cancellation policy - Full refund available up to 31 days before conference start, 50% refund available 30 days or less before conference start.**

Tuesday – Sept. 22nd - {8:00 - 5:30 p.m.} Grand Ballroom - NFPA 1033 – Documenting Your JPR’s and Solidifying Your CV - Instructor...Joe Herzberg

Lunch - 12:30 - 1:30 p.m. (WORKING LUNCH - 2026 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING & ELECTIONS)

Tuesday - Sept. 22nd - {6:00 - 9:00 p.m.} Grand Ballroom - 2026 Dinner and Awards Banquet

Wednesday - Sept. 23rd - {8:30 - 10:30 a.m.} Grand Ballroom - Scene Documentation

Instructors...Greg Trosper and Dan Huff

Wednesday - Sept. 23rd - {10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.} Grand Ballroom - Fire Investigations Involving Heavy Equip.

Instructor...Seth Ricker

Lunch - 12:30 - 1:30 p.m.

Wednesday - Sept. 23rd - {1:30 - 3:30 p.m.} Grand Ballroom - Effective Report Writing & Curriculum Vitae Best Practices - Instructor...Greg Trosper

For info, please contact: First Vice Pres./T & E Chairman Jake DeMay - jakenfd@gmail.com or Past Pres. Greg Vespa - Membership@il-iaai.com

INSTRUCTOR BIOS...



Steven J. Avato is a retired Captain/Asst. Fire Marshal III/Investigator, who served with the Loudoun County (VA) Fire Marshal’s Office from 2016 until 2022. Prior to his employment with Loudoun County, Steven was employed by the United States Department of Justice, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (BATF & E) from May 1989 until his retirement in 2016. During that time, he served in numerous fire and explosion related specialty positions including ATF Division Chief at the National Explosives Task Force (NETF), Resident Agent in Charge (RAC) of the Falls Church I (Arson / Explosives) Field Office (2005 - 2013) Certified Fire Investigator Training Manager (Arson and Explosives Division), National Response Team (NRT) Supervisor and the National Response Team Program Manager. Steven was a BATF & E Certified Fire Investigator (CFI) and an ATF Certified Explosives Specialist (CES) investigating incidents in Southeastern Pennsylvania while assigned to the Philadelphia Arson Task Force and in Southern New Jersey while assigned to the Trenton (NJ) Field Office.

Steven is currently an International Association of Arson Investigators (IAAI) Certified Fire Investigator, and in 2000, he was honored by the IAAI as Investigator of the Year in recognition of his involvement in the investigation of a double fatality fire in Southeastern Pennsylvania.

Prior to joining ATF, Steven served with the Philadelphia (PA) Police Department from 1981 to 1989 as a Sergeant and Police Officer. He holds a Bachelor’s Degree (BA) in Biology from Temple University, a Bachelor’s Degree (BS) in Fire Science from the University of Maryland University College, a Master’s Degree (MS) in Biodefense from George Mason University and a Post-Graduate Certificate of Intelligence Studies in Leadership and Management in the Intelligence Community from the National Intelligence University.

Contact info: [linkedin.com/in/steven-avato-a7aa618](https://www.linkedin.com/in/steven-avato-a7aa618)

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Matthew Regentin... Before joining Duquesne University's Forensic Science and Law program, Professor Regentin spent 22 years as a Special Agent with the U.S. Department of Justice - Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), beginning his career just before September 11, 2001. He conducted his first forensic crime scene investigation at the United Flight 93 crash site in Shanksville, Pennsylvania. Over the years, he processed numerous crime scenes involving arson, explosives violations, bombings, firearms trafficking, shootings, narcotics trafficking, and tobacco trafficking. From 2010, he specialized in fire and explosion investigations, earning certifications as a Certified Fire Investigator (CFI) from both ATF and the International Association of Arson Investigators (IAAI). He served for eight years on ATF's National Response Team (NRT), responding to large-scale incidents nationwide. Professor Regentin has testified in criminal courts as an expert in fire investigations and continues to instruct at the ATF National Academy, the National Fire Academy, and various training courses. Before his ATF tenure, he worked for five years as a surveillance specialist with the FBI on national security and espionage cases. Despite his focus on his role as a Teaching Assistant Professor at Duquesne, Professor Regentin remains involved in providing instructional and case analysis services to investigators at all levels of government. He has a Master of Forensic Science Degree from Oklahoma State University and a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Foreign Affairs from the University of Virginia. Fire and explosion dynamics expert and experienced instructor for law enforcement professionals, fire investigators, and university community.

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Joe Herzberg... Currently the owner of the Fire Investigation Training Group, out of Manahawkin, NJ, started his career as firefighter within Bordentown Township Fire District #2 in 1989. During his twenty-four-year career, he held many titles, including Fire Lieutenant, Fire Marshall, and Fire Captain/Senior Fire Officer within his district, overseeing three shifts that operated a squad and ladder company, ultimately retiring in 2012 due to an injury sustained during a structure fire. Since 2014, he has worked within the private sector as a fire investigator in New Jersey, currently working for Atlantic Professional Services, where he specializes in transportation related fires, dealing with everything from passenger vehicles to heavy trucks and construction equipment. To date, he has investigated over 800 vehicles. Along with fire investigations, Joe also teaches for the New Jersey Chapter of the IAAI and the New Jersey State Department of Criminal Justice, along with the IAAI, where he is a current Director for the IAAI Board, as well as the Co-Chair of the site Selection committee.

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Greg Trospen... The President of F.E.C., Fire and Explosion Consultants, LLC, out of Dayton, OH, and holds a Juris Doctorate and Bachelor of Arts Degree, with twenty plus years of business management and ten years in Fire Investigation Management. Greg currently serves as the IAAI's Marketing Committee Chair, as well as sitting on its Site Selection and Insurance Outreach Committees. He also is Vice President of the Miami Valley Fire Investigators Association, a largely public fire investigator's association, and has also been nominated for a 2027 IAAI Board of Directors position.

Contact Info.: 247@fec-fire.com



Dan Huff... Brings over 16 years of fire and explosion investigation experience to FEC. Dan will lead FEC's investigation services in the state of Indiana. Dan is a Certified Fire Investigator (CFI) through the International Association of Fire Investigators and a Certified Fire and Explosion Investigator (CFEI) through National Association of Fire Investigators.

Dan Huff graduated from Indiana University with a Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice. While finishing his college degree he was employed as superintendent with a commercial and multi-family general contractor in Indianapolis, Indiana. He began his career in fire investigation in 2000.

Dan is a court qualified fire origin and cause expert having testified in local, state, and federal courts. He is an active member of the IAAI, NAFI, and National Fire Protection Association. He is currently a board member of the Indiana Chapter of the International Association of Arson Investigators (IAAI) where he is the liaison with Indiana Fire Chief's Association.

Over his career, he has investigated and/ or assisted with over 1,800 fire investigations in; residential, commercial, motor vehicle, and heavy equipment fire losses. Dan Huff's experience and training in fire, arson, and explosion investigation exceed the standards set forth by the National Fire Protection Association standards (NFPA 1033).

Contact Info.: danhuff@fec-fire.com



Seth Ricker... Brings mechanical engineering and commercial farming operations experience to FEC. Seth began as an Intern with FEC in 2015, performing a dual role as an evidence collection technician and engineering assistant. In May of 2018, Seth graduated from Ohio Northern University with a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering. He joined FEC in full capacity shortly after his graduation as a Mechanical Engineer.

Seth's education at ONU included detailed knowledge in thermodynamics, heat transfer, fluid dynamics, material science, mechanical design, manufacturing technology, electric circuits, and nondestructive testing methods. During his time at ONU, Seth was a member of the Men's Soccer program.

Growing up in northwest Ohio, Seth spent years in his family's show pig farming operation providing him with the experience of working long days, his attention to details, and working in outdoor environments.

Seth is a member of the International Association of Arson Investigators, the Ohio Chapter of the IAAI and National Association of Fire Investigators. He is currently pursuing the Fundamentals of Engineering (FE) exam, the first step on his way to becoming a professional licensed engineer (PE).

Contact Info.: sethricker@fec-fire.com