



COLORADO

Division of Fire Prevention & Control

Department of Public Safety

State Involvement on Fire Investigations

Background

CRS 24-33.5-1203(1)(a) requires that the Division of Fire Prevention and Control assist local jurisdictions with fire investigations. In 2018, the State's one Fire Investigator and Accelerant Detection Canine were transferred from the Colorado Bureau of Investigation to DFPC to better support local governments when they request assistance with fire investigations. DFPC's Fire Investigator performs investigations on wildland fires, structure fires, and vehicle fires when requested by local governments..

In 2021, DFPC's Fire Investigator assisted local jurisdictions with 43 fire investigations. So far in 2022, DFPC's Fire Investigator has assisted local governments with 25 fire investigations, including a 10-day assist with the investigation on the Marshall Fire.

Fire Investigations in Other States

Here is how Colorado compares to surrounding states that are similar in size and Fire Investigations responsibility:

State	Area (sq. mi)	Population	State Fire Investigators
Kansas	82,278	2,940,865	9
Utah	84,899	3,271,616	6
Wyoming	97,914	576,850	5
New Mexico	121,591	2,117,522	5
<i>Colorado</i>	<i>104,094</i>	<i>5,773,714</i>	<i>1</i>

Challenges

As a single resource, the State's one Fire Investigator and Accelerant Detection Canine are unable to respond to every request for assistance, specifically when multiple fires occur at the same time. It is critical that a Fire Investigator is able to respond to the scene as quickly as possible so that evidence is not compromised, and significant travel time will delay the effectiveness of the investigation. In addition to performing fire investigations when requested, DFPC's Fire Investigator is also responsible for performing daily training for the Accelerant Detection Canine, writing reports for use by local law enforcement, obtaining job-specific training to maintain qualifications, and general administrative work.

The Colorado Fire Commission has approved Recommendation 21-03 to address some of these challenges.