

James Braidwood

200 year anniversary



Name: Watch Commander Jonathan Honeyman

Role: Fire Investigation Officer and Fire Investigation Dog Handler. JH is also lead of NFCC workstream for FIDs UK. Chair of the National Association of Fire Investigation Dog Handlers and member of NFCC Canine working group

Dog: Phoenix

Fire Investigation (FI) is continually improving and SFRS are striving to deliver one of the UKs most capable FI teams. To achieve this, there are many wide-ranging aspects that are being progressed including; compliance with National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) guidance, adopting ISO 17020 principles, and, the introduction of a quality management system.

Many world leading Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) routinely use FIDs to support FI activity. FIDs offer an enhanced opportunity to detect Ignitable Liquids (ILs) at a fire scene or other (remote from scene but related) location. Without the capability to detect ILs using FIDs, the investigation and discovery of ILs may go undetected, potentially leading to mis-interpretation of a fire scene, resulting in a flawed investigation.

A number of UK FRS's have used an FID resource as far back as 1996, with 17 FID teams (some with multiple dogs) now in operation. This provides permanent coverage for 80% of the UK, with arrangements in place for the remaining 20%.

The dogs are certified in detection of ILs to meet the best practice criteria contained in the "Association of Fire Investigation Dog Handler Teams (Guide to Best Practice)"

The FID is trained to identify a range of liquids with chemical properties that make them ignitable. A trained FID is far more effective at detecting the presence of ILs at a scene than a human being, and also exceeds the capabilities of portable instrumentation.

The FID selectivity is toward ILs and not products of pyrolysis allowing the FID to differentiate between naturally occurring hydrocarbons and those introduced. The FID can detect odourless ILs and as a result of the training methodology has the ability to identify ILs that have not been trained for, providing an inbuilt level of resilience.

The capability to identify traces of burnt and unburnt IL is a valuable resource for the SFRS and primarily supports SFRS FIOs during investigations of fire scenes. It has also been deployed to crime scenes in the past, to support partners in PS and the SPA.

Where ILs are identified at a scene, robust working arrangements with our partners at PS and the SPA ensures that areas with IL identified by the FID are subject to further detailed forensic analysis and testing.

Operationally, the FID has proven to be a key asset on many occasion. The resource has been influential in indicating the presence of IL which has led to successful investigation outcomes and criminal convictions. Both SFRS and partners at PS and the SPA value the availability of this resource and understand the crucial role an FID can play in identifying IL evidence at fire scenes and other remote scenes connected to the incident.

As well as supporting investigations, the FID can be deployed to support Community Safety Engagement (CSE) activity. This facilitates those adversely affected by fire and working with those seldom heard.

The presentation will include how fire investigation has developed over the years and the many benefits it has delivered for communities, the public and firefighters. Current methods and fire investigation protocols will be discussed. The second part of the presentation will reflect on the FISD and its abilities showcasing how we use the dog and its amazing sense of smell. Phoenix will attend and give a short demonstration and a meet and greet.

