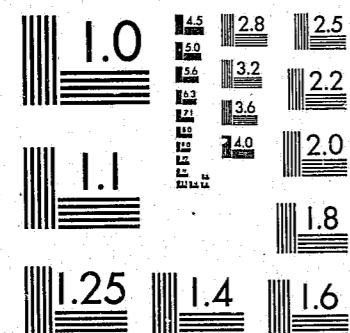


National Criminal Justice Reference Service



This microfiche was produced from documents received for inclusion in the NCJRS data base. Since NCJRS cannot exercise control over the physical condition of the documents submitted, the individual frame quality will vary. The resolution chart on this frame may be used to evaluate the document quality.



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART  
NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS-1963-A

Microfilming procedures used to create this fiche comply with the standards set forth in 41CFR 101-11.504.

Points of view or opinions stated in this document are those of the author(s) and do not represent the official position or policies of the U. S. Department of Justice.

National Institute of Justice  
United States Department of Justice  
Washington, D.C. 20531

4-23-82



THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
**ARSON STRIKE FORCE**  
51 CHAMBERS STREET  
5th Floor  
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10007  
566-6033

THOMAS A. MARTIN  
Coordinator

ARSON-FOR-PROFIT INFORMATION CENTER

FINAL REVIEW AND EVALUATION REPORT

SEPTEMBER, 1981

88572



THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
ARSON STRIKE FORCE  
51 CHAMBERS STREET  
5th Floor  
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10007

566-6033

ROBERT G. M. KEATING  
Criminal Justice  
Coordinator  
ANTHONY B. GLIEDMAN  
Commissioner  
Department of  
Housing Preservation  
& Development  
CHARLES J. HYNES  
Commissioner  
Fire Department  
JACK KRAUSKOPF  
Administrator/Commissioner  
Human Resources  
Administration  
JOHN LoCICERO  
Special Advisor  
to the Mayor  
ROBERT J. McGUIRE  
Commissioner  
Police Department

THOMAS A. MARTIN  
Coordinator

#### ARSON-FOR-PROFIT INFORMATION CENTER

#### FINAL REVIEW AND EVALUATION REPORT

Steven Ernst  
Director  
Information Analysis Project

Jane Bickford  
Director  
Arson-for-Profit Research Unit

Lynne Cooper  
Associate Director  
Information Analysis Project

NCJRS

SEP 30 1981

ACQUISITIONS

The Arson-for-Profit Information Center is financed by two grants awarded to the New York City Arson Strike Force. Arson-for-Profit Information Analysis Project (# 79SS-AX-0027) was funded by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, United States Department of Justice. The Arson-for-Profit Research Unit (# 80-CA-AX-0008) was funded by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, Office of Community Anti-Crime Programs.

September, 1981

Points of view and opinions are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice or the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration.

#### Acknowledgements

The development and successful operation of the New York City Arson Strike Force's Arson-for-Profit Information Center has required the cooperation and concerted efforts of many individuals. At this time we wish to express our appreciation to all those who have assisted, although it is impossible to list the names of all the people who have contributed to the Information Center.

A very special thanks is extended to John P. Engel, the founding coordinator of the Arson Strike Force, and to Carole Sayle, former Director of Research and Analysis. We also want to thank Ron Rosenblum of the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration's Community Anti-Crime Program; Jeff Lobel of Urban Academy for Management, Inc.; Carol Kaplan and Thimi Mina of the United States Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, for their helpful guidance and support. We are deeply grateful to all the arson investigators and prosecutors whose technical advice and participation was extremely valuable. Without the computerized link to the Department of Finance, and the Department of Housing, Preservation and Development's on-line systems, the project would not have been a success. A special thanks goes to those two agencies. The professional research skills and enthusiasm of the senior citizen researchers provided the backbone of the project. To each researcher we extend special and heartfelt thanks.

U.S. Department of Justice  
National Institute of Justice

This document has been reproduced exactly as received from the person or organization originating it. Points of view or opinions stated in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the National Institute of Justice.

Permission to reproduce this copyrighted material has been granted by

PUBLIC DOMAIN/ LEAA

to the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS).

Further reproduction outside of the NCJRS system requires permission of the copyright owner.

Project Review and EvaluationCONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
I. Introduction .....	1
II. Creation of Arson-for-Profit Information Center .....	3
III. Inter-Agency Coordination .....	14
IV. Grant Concept Change .....	20
V. Arson Case Research .....	23
Chart 1 Processing Time .....	31
Graph Processing Time .....	32
Chart 2 Cases Researched .....	33
Chart 3 Type of Research Conducted .....	34
VI. Database Development .....	35
VII. Evaluation Survey .....	38
VIII. Conclusion .....	45
Newspaper Articles .....	49
Letter of Commendation .....	51

Appendix A	Requirements Analysis
Appendix B	Research Forms
Appendix C	Researching Arson-for-Profit: A Manual for Investigators and Prosecutors
Appendix D	Procedures Guide
Appendix E	Ownership-Link Database User's Guide
Appendix F	Evaluation Survey:
	Response Tally
	Questionnaire Part I.
	Questionnaire Part II.

Arson-for-Profit Research UnitProject Review and EvaluationI. Introduction

On February 7, 1980, the Urban Academy for Management, Inc. and the New York Arson Strike Force were jointly awarded a grant (# 80-CA-AX-0008) from the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration's Community Anti-Crime Program aimed at assisting arson investigators in assembling information essential to the arrest and successful prosecution of arsonists.

The basic objectives of the project, the Arson-for-Profit Research Unit, were to:

- . increase successful prosecutions of arson-for-profit;
- . reduce arson generally;
- . aid in policy formulation; and
- . design a replicable model.

Although arson was reaching epidemic proportions in New York City (44,151 structural fires in 1980, 8,373 of them determined to be arson), arrest and conviction rates remained relatively low. In its preliminary exploration of the arson-for-profit problem, the Arson Strike Force found that building, financial and ownership data available in City administrative records could provide a wealth of clues relating to financial motives for arson and could assist in the identification of likely suspects. However, the collection and collation of this information proved to be prohibitively time-consuming and complex. As a result, law enforcement personnel undertook this research only in the later stages

of investigations, in those unusual cases in which direct incriminating evidence was available.

To meet this apparent need, the Arson Strike Force initiated the nation's first computer-aided arson-for-profit research system with funding received through two grants. The Arson-for-Profit Research Unit grant funded a staff of researchers to manually collect data of relevance to the successful investigation and prosecution of arson-for-profit cases while the Arson-for-Profit Information Analysis Project, funded by the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics, financed the design of a system to provide timely and relevant computerized data. The two projects were combined to form the Arson-for-Profit Information Center. The Center developed a research system staffed by ten part-time senior citizens to manually collect data on mortgage and ownership transactions and access computerized administrative records of building conditions and financial histories. Through the Center this information can be obtained during the initial stages of investigations, freeing investigators from tedious bureaucratic paper-chasing and enabling them to concentrate their efforts on criminal investigative activities. A more efficient and effective allocation of expensive investigative staff time is therefore possible.

This final report reflects activities pursued by the Information Center under the Arson-for-Profit Research Unit grant for the time period June 1, 1980 to May 31, 1981.

### III. Creation of Arson-for-Profit Information Center

Three basic activities were involved in the creation of the Arson-for-Profit Information Center. The project's first activity entailed an assessment of the information needs of arson investigators and prosecutors. A series of meetings were held with representatives of the Police Department, the Fire Department and the City's District Attorney's Offices in order to determine the exact nature of the information needed to pursue an arson-for-profit investigation. The research system, which the project set out to develop, would be organized to provide as much of this information as it could within as short a time period as possible. A survey of existing resources available to meet these needs was also conducted. Representatives of the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) were contacted. The Requirements Analysis, which is included in Appendix A, represents a synthesis of information gleaned from these meetings and additional research. This report details initial perceptions of the information needs which the project was to address, assesses resources available to meet these needs and outlines the preliminary direction of the project. In addition, appendices to the Requirements Analysis contain an evaluation of the evidentiary requirements of arson cases, a description of the existing arson investigation and prosecution process and an account of the recent arson case.

4

Since the purpose of the project was to provide information of relevance to arson-for-profit investigators and prosecutors for a large number of cases within a short period of time, it was determined to use data that already existed. This information, collected by public and private agencies for purposes other than arson investigation, could be obtained more economically and more swiftly than information collected solely for arson investigation.

The second activity, developing and designing research forms, began before the Center was officially inaugurated. It was decided that standardized forms were required in order to refine data collected for a multitude of administrative purposes into an information package designed to assist in the evaluation of the investigative potential of arson cases. When a case appeared promising, the investigator would develop additional evidence, specifically required for the particular investigation. As the project proceeded and staff expertise grew, the Information Center expanded the basic package of information provided and became more involved in assisting the investigator by developing and tailoring information according to the individual nature of a case.

A great deal of emphasis was placed on utilizing computerized information whenever possible since its ready access made it possible to provide this information to system users within a short period of time. On-line computer access to the Finance and HPD computer systems was required since each of these systems contain hundreds of thousands of records which are constantly being updated. Cost estimates were obtained from four companies for the installation and rental of computer terminals and a printer to access the various City computer systems at the Arson Strike Force.

Before terminals were installed at the Strike Force, project staff began by using computer terminals located at other City agencies to research cases taken from reports of the Fire Department's Division of Fire Investigation. Preliminary case investigation forms were developed on the basis of this research. Initial forms were organized in a format similar to that used by the computer systems. Format design was geared to assist the researcher in collecting data and therefore the forms became important training tools. A copy of this form and all other research forms is contained in Appendix B.

Cathode ray terminals which access computer systems of the Finance Department and the Department of Housing, Preservation and Development via telephone lines were installed at the offices of the Arson Strike Force in May, 1980. The system's user agencies, the Police Department, the Fire Department and the City's five District Attorney's Offices, were then requested to submit recently closed arson cases for research. Use of the system to research closed cases with verified data served as a means of evaluating the accuracy of computer information and assisted in the development of research methods and time estimates for the processing of active case referrals. The enthusiasm of user agencies during the experimental phase of the project was so great that many active cases were referred. Research conducted on these cases was used to train the project's staff, to plan research methods, to develop case handling procedures and to revise research forms. Final computer research forms were gradually developed into a format designed to present significant information in as clear a manner as possible to the system's users.

In addition to the final computer research form, a scaled down computer form was developed for the Fire Department's Division of Fire Investigation (DFI). Emphasizing property ownership, the DFI utilizes this form to provide immediate feedback to Fire Marshals in the field from computer terminals which are located at their headquarters. The Information Center has recently developed a similar quick referral form so that all investigators and prosecutors can have access to ownership information within one working day.

Separate forms were developed for collecting important records about a property's fire history and ownership from the Division of Fire Investigation (DFI) Reports. These records, which are updated once or twice a year, are obtained from computer printouts which are provided by DFI.

Unfortunately, much of the information of relevance to arson-for-profit investigation is not available in computerized form. For instance, data on the transfer of title and mortgage of real property has to be retrieved from records maintained on microfilm at the City's five county Registers. Procedures for conducting this research have been established and a staff of senior citizen researchers has been trained. When conducting this research the researchers utilize two forms. The first is used to obtain basic transfer information from Deed and Mortgage Ticklers and the other is used to develop complete title and mortgage histories.

Information about insurance coverage is crucial to arson-for-profit investigation. The Information Center uses two forms to collect this information and relay it to investigators and pro-

secutors. The first form is used for information obtained from the New York Board of Fire Underwriters and the second for information received from the New York Property Insurance Underwriting Association (NYPIUA). ~

The Uniform Commercial Code (UCC) is a valuable source of data when investigating arson in commercial properties. A separate research form has been developed for obtaining these records which are maintained in manual filing systems at the County Clerks' offices.

The history of the transfer of the titles and mortgages of a property, which the Information Center develops from many sources, is often very complex. Since a flow chart is often provided to system users to help clarify lines of transfer, a standardized flow chart form was developed by the Information Center.

When research is completed and all forms have been filled out, the information is relayed by mail, messenger or telephone to a liaison in the agency that referred the case. Each of the system's user agencies have appointed a liaison to coordinate the referral of cases to the Information Center. The agency coordinator is responsible for establishing case priorities and working with the Information Center's staff when a thorough case analysis is conducted. Individual investigators and prosecutors contact the Information Center when a quick referral, requiring an immediate response, is requested.

The third activity undertaken was the hiring and training of 10 part-time field researchers. Candidates were recruited through the Department of the Aging, the Path Program of the Federation of the Handicapped, and various local senior citizen

centers. Over twenty senior citizens between the ages of 62-78 applied for the jobs. Men and women with a variety of occupational backgrounds applied. As the job description stated, the people who were hired were those "who enjoy doing detailed work, who are able to organize and manage information, who can work independently, and who feel comfortable working with machines and microfilm". An informal test was given to each applicant to gauge his/her reaction to the data with which he/she eventually would be working, and afterwards references were checked. On July 7 three senior citizens began work, followed in August by the other seven.

It was next necessary to develop an efficient and comprehensive training program. Because the work included researching and collecting computerized and non-computerized data, it was necessary to teach each researcher a variety of new skills. The field researchers were taught procedures for operating the computer terminals and the meaning of codes used to store the financial and building condition data contained in the system. Further, they learned to interpret reports issued by the Fire Department's Division of Fire Investigation; became familiar with the information available at the City's Registers; and learned to read and analyze documents which register mortgage/ownership transactions, liens, and formal complaints. Finally, procedures for locating addresses on Sandborn Land-Use Maps and for filling out all forms associated with the various information sources were explained.

In order to teach the field researchers these functions the Information Center developed techniques, which were later incorporated into the project's user's manual: Researching Arson-for-Profit: A Manual for Investigators and Prosecutors. In-

structions which correspond to the computer research form were developed for training in the use of the computer systems. These instructions list the information that can be obtained from each computer code and cross-reference this to the computer research form. For registry work, a teaching form was created which lists all relevant information needed to be collected.

In addition to written instructions, field researchers helped and taught each other. During the first month, after the actual training period ended, a supervisor was available at all times to answer questions or help resolve problems. However, it was mostly by working together as a team that the field researchers became expertly skilled in their work.

The Arson-for-Profit Information Center was introduced to the City's arson investigators and prosecutors at group meetings held on July 16 and 17, 1980. A demonstration of the Center's information retrieval capabilities was presented to over 50 individuals from the Fire Department, the Arson/Explosion Division of the Police Department, and the District Attorney's Offices. The response to the demonstrations was so enthusiastic that referrals began before the official inauguration date of July 21, 1980.

The Information Center has researched over 2400 cases since July 21, 1980. Although the service has greatly expanded since then, its operation is based on a centralized Case Referral Service. Fire addresses and owners' names are referred to the Center on the telephone by coordinators in each of the seven agencies involved in arson investigation and prosecution. An average of 40 requests per week are received by the Center,

located at Arson Strike Force headquarters.

Case referrals generally fall into three categories, representing successive stages of the investigative process. These three categories are: recent arson fires, major investigative cases, and pre-trial cases. Approximately 80% of the referral caseload is made up of recent arson fires. Investigators in these cases are seeking to determine if a possible arson-for-profit motive existed and to develop leads to potential suspects.

Referred addresses are first checked against the DFI reports. The computer systems are then accessed to obtain as much building, ownership and financial information as possible. All information is transcribed to the forms designed for use by arson investigators.

The Information Center's staff then conducts a preliminary case review in order to determine whether the initial research has turned up conditions, such as extensive tax arrears or names of known arsonists with an interest in the property, which may signal a potential arson-for-profit situation. The referring investigator is alerted and, in consultation with Information Center staff, a decision is made as to the feasibility of pursuing the investigation and undertaking additional research in the City Registers. When additional information is required, field researchers gather information on the title and mortgage history of the property which enables the investigator to develop a more complete picture of the ownership network and sales pattern of the address referred and of the other properties owned by the parties in interest.

This type of case analysis is even more crucial in the second

referral category, the major case investigation. In these cases, investigators have already completed considerable information gathering and have amassed much material that is often contradictory and confusing. The investigator seeks help from the Center in following up clues, developing new directions of inquiry, obtaining information from other City agencies, analyzing networks of relationships and diagramming patterns of transactions. Referrals of this type currently constitute 15-20% of the caseload, but are increasing as the Center's staff increases its expertise and develops a reputation in the investigative community. When the Arson-for-Profit Information Center becomes involved in a major case, the staff works in close conjunction with fire investigators and prosecutors on all aspects of the research.

Intensive consultations are held and there is a continuous exchange of information.

The basic research conducted on a major case referral follows the same steps described for recent arson fires. However, special emphasis is placed on uncovering other properties owned by principals in the case and on analyzing the patterns of ownership and mortgage transactions. In addition, Information Center staff involved in major case investigations have acted as coordinators among City agencies by helping the investigator to obtain relevant records and by facilitating communication.

In pre-trial cases, the third referral category, information provided can have the most direct effect on actual convictions. In these advanced cases prosecutors are seeking additional circumstantial evidence to solidify a case. Center staff work very closely with Assistant District Attorneys in tracking down

leads, developing new sources of information, and analyzing information already obtained. Complex ownership flow charts, which portray associations amongst suspects, are often prepared for pre-trial cases.

After the Information Center had been in operation for 5 months, staff members became concerned that investigators were not aware of the wealth of public information available. In addition, some investigators could not interpret this information. As a result, the Information Center insitituted a series of training sessions. The first sessions were held on December 10, 11, 12 of last year. These lectures were given to over 100 investigators from the Fire Department, Police Department, State Commission on Investigation, FBI, and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (Department of Treasury). All aspects of the services provided by the Information Center were explained. Topics covered included a discussion of the various sources of information available, an explanation of the Center's forms, and a description of ways to evaluate the various clues from different sources to develop a picture of the physical condition and economic viability of the property under investigation.

Staff members have also lectured on the activities of the Information Center at regional conferences on arson-for-profit investigation held by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms in New Jersey in April of 1980 and in New York on August 18.-22, 1980 and by the New York City Police Academy on February 19-27, 1981. At each of these conferences staff members outlined the operations of the Information Center and described the types and sources of public records of relevance to arson-for-profit

investigation. After each presentation the enthusiasm expressed for the services provided by the Information Center has been overwhelming. Many of the arson investigators in attendance have referred cases to the Center since the presentations and most have requested a copy of the manual: Researching Arson-for-Profit: A Manual for Investigators and Prosecutors.

A final series of training sessions began on June 1, 1981 when Center staff started visiting field offices of the Fire and Police Departments. Discussions were held with small groups of investigators which centered on the needs of the investigators and possible ways in which the Center could assist them. These sessions give the staff an opportunity to get to know the investigators and to determine the nature of cases that they are working on. In an informal setting staff and investigators can discuss the best ways to proceed. Such meetings give new investigators an opportunity to become familiar with the services provided by the Center. These sessions were so successful that investigators have requested their continuation on an on-going basis.

### III. Inter-Agency Coordination

Cooperation and coordination among the agencies concerned with the arson problem is crucial for the successful investigation and prosecution of arson cases. In New York City investigative responsibility is shared by the Fire and Police Departments. Traditional difficulties associated with this shared approach, such as a lack of communication and duplication of efforts, are exacerbated in New York City because of the existence of a separately elected District Attorney responsible for arson prosecution in each of the five counties or boroughs that comprise the City. While fire investigators are responsible for initial cause and origin investigations, the responsibility for continuing investigations is either divided between police and fire officials or placed exclusively with the Police Department. (For further information on arson investigation in New York City, see Requirements Analysis Appendix A)

The Information Center is devoted to identifying arson-for-profit investigative problems and assisting agencies in the resolution of these problems. The duplication of investigative efforts by agencies involved in arson investigation and prosecution was identified by the Arson-for-Profit Information Center as a major factor hindering the investigative process. The discovery of this institutional problem during initial work on the project was a major consideration in the establishment of the Information Center as a permanent centralized facility. Because of its unique position within the law enforcement community the Center has proved to be ideally suited to monitor, on a city-wide basis, casework duplication therefore allowing for the better allocation of scarce

investigative resources. Of the 2400 cases referred to the Center approximately 200 were duplicate or multiple references. In these instances the following procedures were followed:

- 1) if a case was referred by both a District Attorney's Office and by either the Police or Fire Department, only the District Attorney's Office was notified;
- 2) if a case was referred by both the Brooklyn and Bronx District Attorney's Office, both Offices were notified on the same day;
- 3) if a case was referred by the Police and Fire Departments, both offices were notified on the same day.

When alerted to the investigative efforts of other agencies, the prosecutor can gather all information developed by assigned investigators and give direction as to the type of evidence that would be most appropriate to aid case prosecution. It has become apparent to Center staff that duplicate or multiple referrals often occur in major case investigations. Early prosecutorial involvement may be exceedingly valuable, particularly in complex arson-for-profit cases which require many months of investigation and extensive documentation. Efforts to monitor the duplication of investigative efforts are important since they reduce jurisdictional conflicts, promote a more professional approach to the investigative process, and improve the prosecution's court presentation.

Through the Information Center formal cooperative links were established between the law enforcement community and data producing agencies which store and maintain valuable administrative records pertinent to arson-for-profit research. An example of the

Center's efforts in this regard is apparent through work conducted on a series of related commercial arson-for-profit cases researched for one of the District Attorney's Offices. To identify parties-with-interest in these properties and to ascertain whether a profit motive for arson existed, procedures were developed for obtaining information from the City's Buildings Department, the Health Department, the State Department of Agriculture, and the Business Certificates which are maintained in the County Clerk's offices. Information obtained from these sources proved to be invaluable for the success of the investigation.

Arson investigators have repeatedly discussed their inability to obtain insurance information on a routine basis. This key data element is often crucial in identifying and developing arson-for-profit cases. In an attempt to solve this problem the Information Center has established a system for accessing and disseminating the records of three major insurance associations: The New York Property Insurance Underwriting Association (NYPIUA), the Property Insurance Loss Register (PILR) and the New York Board of Fire Underwriters.

Investigators previously received insurance information from NYPIUA in two ways. The first method was initiated when the investigator called the Claims Department of NYPIUA with an arson property address. The information relayed to the investigator, which included the name of the insured, the policy number, and the policy's expiration date was sent in a letter to both the investigator and to headquarters (Fire Department at 110 Church Street, or to the Police Department at 1 Police Plaza). The second method used for obtaining the information was to review a

list of claims sent by NYPIUA for the previous week to the headquarters of each investigative agency. The list was sent regularly but often a lag of two weeks occurred before the list was received and information was filtered down to individual investigators. The use of the first procedure resulted in several problems. Because investigators spend a great deal of time in the field and regularly work night shifts, it was often difficult for them to place an inquiry with NYPIUA. As a result, requests were frequently not placed or the information was returned after a decision to close the case had been made. Additionally, many investigators did not know about the importance of information available through NYPIUA because these inconveniences prevented its use as a research source.

A second problem identified was the length of time it takes for the investigator to receive information. NYPIUA sends the information in a letter which states that they are allowed to furnish the information under section 336 of the Insurance Law. Two copies of the letter are sent, one to headquarters and the other to the investigator. Often it takes two to three weeks before the investigator receives the information. Since it takes the Claims Department considerable time to systematically process referrals and since the mailing process increases turn-around time, serious delays often occurred before the investigator received the information. If the information was received in a timely manner, it would help the investigator to determine whether to close a case, request further information from NYPIUA, or develop the case into a full-scale arson-for-profit investigation.

Considering the difficulties outlined above, Information

Center staff determined that a more efficient system would not only assist investigators in the development of cases but also aid in the prosecution of cases through the application of important background information contained in the insurance carrier's Proof of Loss Statement.

Project staff met with the Claims Manager of NYPIUA to discuss possible solutions to these problems. As a result of this meeting the Claims Manager visited field offices of the Fire and Police Departments to brief investigators about the information available through NYPIUA. It was determined that the Center, because of its central position in the investigative bureaucracy is best able to coordinate and expedite efforts to obtain NYPIUA information on a routine basis. The Claims Manager has agreed to work with the Center to develop a direct referral system between the Center and the Claims Department that includes the designation of a staff member to process information requests.

Enabling investigators to channel requests through the Information Center will have a major effect on the present system. A centralized approach will allow investigators to obtain information from the Center and from NYPIUA with one telephone call. Problems caused by the changing work schedules of investigators will be eased by the constant availability of the Information Center's referral service which will be available on a 24 hour basis after September, when a telephone answering machine will be installed. In addition, the Information Center will act as a facilitator between NYPIUA and investigators in sensitive cases. Confidentiality, as always, will be maintained. The Information Center's role will be to inform the investigator that NYPIUA has

information available. The swift exchange of insurance information should be insured by these procedures.

The Information Center has also developed other sources of insurance information. For addresses referred by the Center, the Property Insurance Loss Register (PILR) will provide the names of adjusters of claims that have been filed and information that has been entered into their computer system. In addition, the Center has access to insurance information filed by landlords at HPD. If the information is not filed for an address under investigation, the Center has been given permission by HPD to send the landlord a letter (on HPD letterhead) stating that this information is required by law.

A final source of insurance information is the New York Board of Fire Underwriters. Upon request, the office of the Superintendent of the Bureau of Fire Prevention and Public Relations will locate the insurance carrier of a referred property address and return the information to the Center by messenger.

#### IV. Grant Concept Change

During the course of its development, the Information Center has reached an improved understanding of information requirements and underlying investigative problems of arson cases. The original concept of the project called for the eventual decentralization of the arson-for-profit information system through the installation of separate sets of computer terminals in user agency offices. During the development of the system it was realized that merely having relevant information readily available was not the panacea that it was thought to be. While a great deal had been accomplished, additional development of the Information Center in its existing centralized position was required to reach the goal of improved arson-for-profit investigation and prosecution. The decision to maintain a centralized system, made in November of 1980, was precipitated by the following factors:

1. The role of the Information Center had expanded quickly beyond that of an initial source of data used to evaluate the investigative potential of a case to that of a source of technical knowledge of government records and procedures, real estate transactions, and links between suspects and properties. Much of the data uncovered through research involved complicated financial dealings, complex real estate transactions, and confusing governmental procedures such as local tax foreclosure policies.

Specialized knowledge in these fields was required in order to understand the implications of this information. It was deemed essential that a technical staff develop this expertise and apply it to arson-for-profit investigation. The Information Center was in the unique position to do this since active cases are referred

to it for research from throughout the City. An understanding of the technical schemes by which it is possible to profit from arson would result from the application of this specialized knowledge to real cases. It would therefore be possible for investigators in New York and throughout the nation to focus attention on the most probable suspects by following clues found in administrative records. This knowledge would also allow prosecutors to develop cases based upon circumstantial evidence that is convincing to juries. The main objective and primary challenge facing the Information Center was therefore to provide investigators with information and training beyond what was currently available, and more particularly to provide an interpretation and informed analysis of the information obtained.

2. The links between individuals, corporations and properties that are formed in arson-for-profit schemes are often too complex to analyze without the aid of a computer. The Information Center started development of a computerized database (see section V) to aid in the analysis of these relationships. The continuation of a centralized system was considered essential to insure the availability of data from case research, upon which the system would be built.

3. It was believed that a centralized system would encourage and facilitate inter-agency coordination in arson investigation and prosecution. (see section III).

While the Information Center was maintained as a centralized research facility, the concept of providing computer terminals to individual agencies so that direct access could be provided to investigators in the field was not abandoned. The Fire Department

installed terminals at the Division of Fire Investigation headquarters in order to provide Fire Marshalls with immediate property ownership information. The Information Center staff was called upon to train marshalls in the use of the terminals and to devise a research form for the Division. (see Appendix B) The DFI system is intended to be augmented by follow-up case referrals to the Information Center for in-depth research and analysis. In this vein, it should be mentioned that the Information Center has recently instituted a quick referral service which provides ownership information over the telephone within one working day so that field investigators from all agencies can have direct access to this information.

#### V. Arson Case Research

During March and April the Center's staff began a series of evaluation meetings with investigators and prosecutors who had used the system during the proceeding months. Meetings were held with representatives of the Fire Department, the Police Department, the FBI, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, the State Commission on Investigation, and the Brooklyn and Staten Island District Attorneys' Offices. Although the enthusiasm and support for the project was tremendous, the consensus criticized the Center's case processing time.

The average time needed to process a case was 17 days. (see Chart 1). However, there were three periods during which processing time appeared to be very high. (see Processing Time Graph). In September and October, for instance, it took approximately 35 days to complete work on a case. There were several reasons for this initial fluctuation. The first concerns an internal organization problem. Although the Information Center officially started accepting referrals on July 21, 1980, six of the Center's researchers did not begin work until August 4. The 34 cases referred in August were used to train the researchers. (see Chart 2). When the case load tripled (to 106 cases) and quadrupled (to 122 cases) in September and October, the Research Unit was not trained well enough to quickly process this many cases. The Center's organizational structure was unable to accommodate the enormous demand placed on its system.

A second factor related to the type of research conducted (see Chart 3). In August 50% of referrals required only computer research, while in September 71.7% required computer and Register research and in October 86.9% required computer and Register

research. The addition of title and mortgage research increases the turn-around time since it must be manually obtained. It often takes a full day or longer to complete a title search.

The delay in processing cases was compounded by excessive computer down time. In order to diagnose the underlying cause of this problem a log was kept for each terminal to record the time a problem developed, the nature of the problem, the total down time and the method by which the problem was resolved. Possible causes of the problem included:

- 1) host system (Finance or HPD) malfunctioning;
- 2) malfunctioning of computer equipment located at our site;
- 3) malfunctioning of modems located at our site;
- 4) malfunctioning of telephone lines which connect our site to host systems; or
- 5) improper operation of equipment at our site.

A six week survey was conducted to pinpoint the problem. The survey indicated that the Information Center's HPD terminal had been down approximately 18% of the time while the Finance terminal was down only 2% of the time. The major cause of the down time was malfunctioning of the equipment located at our site. After the survey was completed the supplier of this equipment, Raytheon Data Systems Company, agreed to extensively test the unit. The results of testing indicated that major voltage fluctuations had caused the HPD terminal to malfunction and would eventually cause similar problems in the Finance terminal. A dedicated electrical line was installed solely to the terminals to reduce the power surges that had resulted from the sharing of a line with other purposes.

The logs of terminal operations have been maintained and are still used to identify the cause of problems that arise. The installation of dedicated electrical lines has resulted in less down time and therefore has aided the Information Center's efforts to reduce case processing time.

A second period of high turn-around time occurred in February and March when the processing time per case rose to 23.4 days in February and 25.8 days in March. One factor directly related to this increase was the type of research conducted. In December the State Commission on Investigation began an exploratory study of the arson-for-profit problem. At that time the supervising attorney for the study met with Center staff to plan the direction that the investigation would take. In December and January the State Commission referred 29 property addresses to the Center before deciding to develop the study into a formal investigation. In February and March 109 additional addresses were referred by the State. A full work-up, which includes computer and Register research, the gathering of data from relevant administrative records, the analysis of all data, and the diagramming of findings into network/relationship charts, was requested for all the cases referred. The average processing time was 59.8 days in February and 44.8 days in March. The State Commission requested that referred cases be completely researched and processed as a group and was unconcerned with case research turn-around time.

Compounding the work load caused by doing in-depth research and analysis for the State was a back log of cases that had developed as a result of the large number of police referrals in November, December and January. In November the Police Department began referring for screening purposes all property addresses that

had experienced a fire to which a police officer had responded. In November 179 property addresses were referred to the Center, in December 296, and in January 343. Research on between 8 and 12 addresses, classified as "Dailies", was requested each day. The high amount of computer down time during this period in conjunction with a very large influx of referrals resulted in an average processing time of two to three weeks per case.

In February the Center re-evaluated its internal procedures for processing cases and in March a Procedures Guide (Appendix D) was developed. The purpose of the Procedures Guide is to increase the Project's ability to respond well to a large case load. It describes each task necessary to complete the various stages of the case handling process. Steps described include the following: contacting user agencies, entering referred information onto a case referral sheet and into a log book; assigning a case number and preparing a file folder; entering the case number into the research flow chart; and putting the folder into the first of a series of bins which represent each step of the process. The process is carefully delineated in the Procedures Guide so that each case can be tracked and located through each stage of the process.

The Procedures Guide also outlines policies for handling problems which frequently arise. As has been indicated, a chronic problem in arson investigation is the lack of inter-agency coordination which often leads to a duplication of effort in cases where several agencies are involved. The Procedures Guide outlines the methods used for handling duplicate requests for research. Another problem plaguing case research is the fact that various agencies often maintain records for the same property under dif-

ferent addresses. This frequently occurs when corner properties are being investigated. The Procedures Guide contains a breakdown of the steps required to identify alternative addresses under which records are maintained.

After tightening internal procedures for processing cases and installing dedicated lines, the Center's case processing time has steadily dropped since April. The one exception was in June when processing time rose to 19.7 days per case. This figure is somewhat misleading since the delay was due to the low priority given to 169 "Landlord Contact" cases. Under the Landlord Contact program, which is another Arson Strike Force project, teams of fire marshals contact owners of properties which have been identified as arson-prone. The Information Center conducted computer research for this project to determine the financial history, physical condition, and ownership of properties in the program's sample of buildings. Processing of these cases was delayed at the request of the Director of the Landlord Contact Program to allow time for this newly established project to fully train staff and establish administrative procedures.

In addition to correcting factors contributing to high case processing time, it was determined that additional flexibility was needed in the research process to meet the specific needs of each user. For example, while prosecutors from the District Attorney's Offices have the time and need for in-depth case analysis, investigators from the Police and Fire Departments require immediate feedback from the Information Center. The massive case load facing each investigator requires a decision within a few days as to the investigative potential of a case. To meet this

need the Center has instituted a new Quick Referral Service which is designed to provide investigators with the name and address of a property's owner within one working day. So far the processing time for these cases has averaged approximately 30 minutes. Initial responses of investigators to the Quick Referral Service has been very positive; in fact some consider it to be one of the most worthwhile services provided by the Center.

With the addition of the Quick Referral Service the Center currently can provide investigators with three levels of service, each relating to a different level of the investigative process. During the initial stage of the process, which begins immediately after a suspicious fire occurs, the investigator can request ownership information from the Quick Referral Service. If the case is subsequently closed, no more information is requested. If it is pursued, the Information Center provides computer and Register information for use in developing lists of potential suspects and motives.

A second level of service is available for major case investigations. A major case investigation occurs if a fire causes costly physical damage, injuries or deaths or if an investigator discovers a suspect involved in several arsons. The Center has often alerted investigators to situations of this kind.

When a major case is under investigation, the Center becomes an active participant by assisting the investigator to plot out a course of research. The direction varies depending upon whether commercial or residential property is involved. If a residential property is under investigation an information package is developed which includes:

- 1) Computer data from the Finance Department and HPD;
- 2) Insurance data (name of carrier, coverage, policy number, and date of expiration);
- 3) Lists of liens against the building (sidewalk, mechanic, and sheriff's liens).
- 4) History of title and mortgage transactions including sales price; and
- 5) If property is owned by a corporation: corporate information (location of corporation, date of incorporation, name and address of incorporator).

If the property is commercial the Center will develop an information package from administrative records from such sources as:

- 1) The Uniform Commercial Code File;
- 2) Certificate of Doing Business (County Clerk's offices);
- 3) Buildings Department;
- 4) Department of Health and Human Services;
- 5) State Department of Agriculture and Markets; and
- 6) Corporate Division of the Department of State.

The thrust of this information is to give a more comprehensive picture of the business including: ownership, financial status, and violations or complaints.

The third stage of an investigation occurs when the District Attorney's Office or a law enforcement agency on the State or Federal level becomes actively involved. In these situations Center staff consult with the investigator and/or prosecutor to prepare the case for a hearing, Grand Jury or trial. Certified copies of documents are obtained, link charts depicting networks

and relationships are created, and an analysis of the data is developed. In addition, the Center frequently acts as a coordinator between the law enforcement agent and other organizations. In performing this liaison function the Center has developed an important connection between investigators and insurance carriers. This has opened up access to insurance files which often contain information not easily available to investigators.

CHART 1  
PROCESSING TIME (WORK DAYS PER CASE)

MONTH TYPE OF RESEARCH	JULY '80	AUG. '80	SEPT. '80	OCT. '80	NOV. '80	DEC. '80	JAN. '81	FEB. '81	MAR. '81	APR. '81	MAY '81	JUNE '81	JULY '81	AUG. '81	AVERAGE (ENTIRE PROJECT)
COMPUTER	12.6	4.4	56.5	6.6	14.	10.2	15.5	11.	12.6	8.5	5.8	22.3	7.3	7.8	14.
REGISTRY	—	11.	—	67.	—	9	—	36	—	—	15	7.4	8	—	21.9
COMPUTER & REGISTRY	29.5	7.6	25.9	40.	15.8	23	19.1	19.5	27.3	9.6	12.8	17.8	12.6	6.5	19.1
COMPUTER & REGISTRY PLUS ADD'TL SOURCES and/or ANALYSIS	—	—	—	25	—	—	—	59.8	44.8	9	9.9	17.3	6	4.6	22.1
DAILIES	—	—	—	—	19.1	13.4	11.5	5	—	—	—	—	—	—	12.3
QUICK REFERRALS	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1.1	1	1
TOTALS FOR ALL AGENCIES	15.8	6.1	34.6	36.4	18.1	14.7	13.4	23.4	25.8	8.9	10.8	19.7	6.4	5.3	17.1

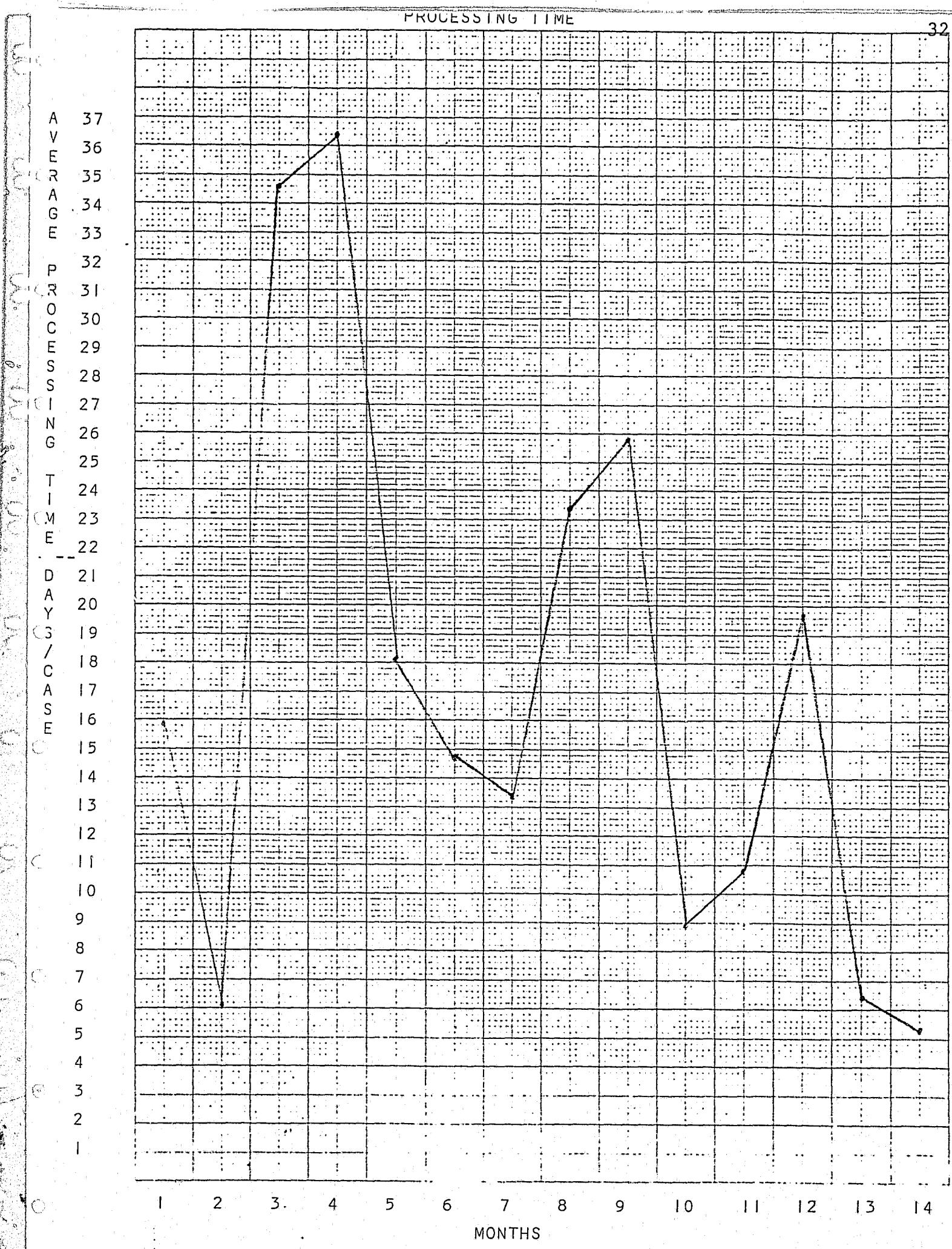


CHART 2  
CASES RESEARCHED

AGENCY \ MONTH	JULY '80	AUG. '80	SEPT. '80	OCT. '80	NOV. '80	DEC. '80	JAN. '81	FEB. '81	MAR. '81	APR. '81	MAY '81	JUNE '81	JULY '81	AUG. '81	TOTAL
POLICE DEPT.	7	7	39	41	179	296	343	22	86	33	45	41	73	58	1270
FIRE DEPT	73	11	63	59	13	102	96	48	13	6	6	25	18	16	549
BROOKLYN D.A.	19	—	—	14	4	2	1	5	11	5	—	1	—	—	62
STATEN ISLAND D.A.	—	11	2	6	—	1	—	—	1	4	3	—	—	1	29
BRONX D.A.	—	5	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	8	—	3	11	1	30
LANDLORD CONTACT	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	19	4	169	33	10	235
STATE COMMISSION	—	—	—	—	—	17	12	38	71	10	11	7	3	—	169
SO. BRONX REDEVELOPMENT	—	—	—	2	—	—	1	—	—	4	37	—	—	—	44
FBI	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
ATF	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	2	—	1	1	—	2	—	7
COMMUNITY OUTREACH	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	2	—	—	5
TOTAL	99	34	106	122	197	420	455	116	182	90	107	248	140	86	2,402 TOT.

CHART 3

TYPE OF RESEARCH CONDUCTED  
(Percentages)

MONTH TYPE OF RESEARCH	JULY '80	AUG. '80	SEPT. '80	OCT. '80	NOV. '80	DEC. '80	JAN. '81	FEB. '81	MAR. '81	APR. '81	MAY '81	JUNE '81	JULY '81	AUG. '81	AVERAGE (ENTIRE PROJECT)
COMPUTER	80.8	50	28.3	10.7	1.5	12.4	7.5	46.6	24.7	55.6	25.2	72.2	54.3	57	37.6
REGISTRY	—	2.9	—	.8	—	.2	—	.8	—	—	2.8	2.0	2.9	—	.9
COMPUTER & REGISTRY	19.2	47.1	71.7	86.9	27.9	17.9	20.9	31	63.2	35.6	58.9	16.5	13.6	2.3	36.6
COMPUTER & REGISTRY PLUS ADD'TL SOURCE and/or ANALYSIS	—	—	—	1.6	—	—	—	19.8	12.1	8.9	13.1	2.8	3.6	9.3	4.2
DAILIES	—	—	—	—	70.6	69.5	71.6	1.7	—	—	—	—	—	—	16.6
QUICK REFERRALS	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	6.5	25.7	31.4	—	4.1
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	99.9	100%	100%	100%	100%	100.1	100%	100%

## VI. Database Development

The Information Center has developed a computerized Ownership Link Database which identifies patterns of transactions and links between and among individuals, corporations and properties uncovered through case research. A systems analyst was hired on a consulting basis to design this database using the RAMIS database package. Detailed information on a building's financial or physical condition, such as amounts of outstanding tax arrears or numbers of housing code violations, are not included in this system since this data is constantly updated and can be obtained from other computer systems. Instead the database is built around the names and addresses of individuals and corporations that have a present or previous interest in a property where a suspicious fire has occurred. The system searches all data on cases that have been referred to the Center and researched to develop links and associations among addresses, individuals and corporations found to be related to these cases. The complex networks and relationships established in arson-for-profit schemes can then be unraveled.

Ownership data collected by the Information Center's field researchers from the City's five County Registers and from the computer systems of the Department of Finance and the Department of Housing, Preservation and Development (HPD) is entered into the database by project staff through terminals which access the City's central computer facilities. The complex process of entering data has been simplified by the development of data entry programs which prompt entry clerks with simple questions for which only a limited number of responses are accepted. In addition,

procedures have been developed for changing or updating records that have previously been entered. The ownership data that is entered is used to augment data from the Division of Fire Investigation Reports which was loaded into the system in wholesale fashion from computer tapes. The data from the Registers' offices could not be entered in this manner since it is not computerized. Only select data from HPD and the Department of Finance is used, making the mass entry of data from computer tapes impractical.

The information available through the database has been organized into reports which are designed for users without computer backgrounds. Because of the complexity of the data, time and financial limitations, many compromises had to be made in report formats. The basic reports available through the database include the following:

1. Transaction Report - This report provides a history of title changes, mortgage transfers, fire incidents and other events of interest to arson investigation. It is accessed by fire address.
2. Link Report - This report provides lists of fire addresses and documents in which a particular corporation, individual or party address appears.
3. Count Report (available through either Transaction or Link report).
4. Key-Address Report (available through either Transaction or Link Report)

This report provides lists of fire addresses in the database to which a particular individual name, corporation or party address is linked.

5. Association Report - This report provides lists of all fire addresses, owners' names, corporations or party addresses linked to a particular fire address, owner's name, corporation or party address under investigation.
6. Scan Report - This report provides the names of all individuals, corporations or party addresses that appear in the database more than a selected number of times.

The Ownership Link Database User's Guide, which can be found in Appendix D, contains detailed information on procedures required to enter data and request reports from the system. Approximately 130 cases have been entered into the database, in addition to all DFI reports from June, 1977 through December, 1979. The ability of the database to provide investigators with lists of potential suspects for use in analysing arson-for-profit cases will be more fully realized as additional cases are entered into the system.

#### VII. Evaluation Survey

The dynamic nature of this experimental effort to apply pertinent administrative records to arson investigation has made the evaluation and re-evaluation of the project an on-going and active concern. Policies affecting the Information Center's structure have been established, amended or deleted as problems concerning investigative needs were identified. Efforts to plan these policy changes on the basis of arrest and conviction statistics have proved fruitless since there is presently no city-wide system for determining the number and type of convictions for this crime. In addition, the Information Center, which was not established until July, 1980, has not been in existence long enough for arrest statistics to be developed. Gathering these statistics would not provide a total evaluation of the usefulness and success of the Arson-for-Profit Information Center because much of the Center's first year was devoted to developing expertise in real estate, fire insurance, tax laws and governmental procedures and policies. It became apparent during development of the project that merely providing background information for case development was not enabling investigators to identify patterns of criminal behavior which are peculiar to this crime. To improve investigations and subsequently increase the number of good arrests which would lead to successful convictions, project staff determined it necessary to focus attention on developing "economic intelligence" for arson-for-profit cases. The investigators' ability to organize and decipher the often scattered and confusing pieces of evidence and circumstances that are typical in arson-for-profit situations would therefore be bolstered.

Since arrest and conviction statistics could not be obtained, a formal systematic survey of the systems' users was conducted to enable the Center to refine and tailor further case research and analysis to the agencies' specific needs. An overall project evaluation questionnaire and a specific case research evaluation questionnaire was sent to each of the system's user agencies. Follow-up meetings were then held to discuss the survey findings with the seventeen investigators and prosecutors who responded. A copy of each questionnaire and a tally sheet of percentages of responses to the first questionnaire are contained in Appendix F.

The first part of the overall project evaluation survey was concerned with the users' general impressions of the Information Center. Responses to the first question confirmed that the Arson-for-Profit Information Center's system is serving a number of complementary purposes. The main reasons given by users for referring cases proved to be the system's ability to assist investigators in determining property ownership and to aid in developing cases in which experience or initial clues indicate a profit motive.

Questions 2 and 3 of the survey (Evaluation Questionnaire, Part I) relate to the types of information deemed most important to investigators. Responses indicate that information pertaining to motive, such as the computerized fire, building and financial data, is extremely useful. Approximately 50% of the respondents to question 2A indicated that computerized information was always requested while 31% requested it often. Twenty-nine percent listed computerized ownership data (deed holder, taxpayers, meter payer, managing agent) as the most useful, 23% found ownership

transfer and mortgage history data important, while 20% of those responding found the financial data (property tax arrears, emergency repairs, assessed value) to be the most important.

Questions 4,5 and 6, concerned with estimating the effectiveness of the information provided by the Center, measured the relevancy, accuracy and timeliness of the data generated. Users' impressions of the efficacy of the information and procedures developed for transmitting it were generally very good. Ninety-four percent of the respondents found the information provided to be either extremely relevant or useful, while 100% stated that information was either very accurate or generally accurate. Seventy-seven percent of respondents rated the time it takes to obtain the information as excellent or good. All responses to question 7 indicated that the Center's present organization is excellent or good, which is consistent with the findings of questions 4,5 and 6.

Question 9 documents users' reactions to forms used to present the information to investigators. The majority of users found the data forms to be easy to understand. Seventy-five percent believed that the computer data forms were easily understood while 50% found the Registry forms easy to understand. Additionally, 75% of those responding to question 9e suggested that a summary or analysis of the data be included in order to speed data interpretation and therefore augment the usefulness of the forms.

Question 10 evaluates the utility of the Center's "case analysis" service. Twelve percent of respondents always used

this service, 12% used it often, 29% used it sometimes and 47% never used it. Insights gained through follow-up meetings with investigators showed that the 47% who never used the "case analysis" service represent those respondents who refer cases to the Center for screening purposes, during the initial stages of an investigation, while those using the service on a regular basis were applying case analysis to on-going and major case investigation. Of those who used the service, 88% found it to be either extremely, useful or useful. Forty-two percent of these investigators would like the Center to increase its real estate expertise while 42% would like additional insurance expertise. (question 11).

Questions 12 and 13 detail various impressions of the system's strengths and weaknesses. Twenty-nine percent of those responding listed timeliness, that is the rate at which information is retrieved, processed and received by the referring agency, as the main strength of the system. However, 36% considered slow response time a major weakness of the system. This apparent contradiction was cleared when raised with investigators during follow-up meetings. Information turn-around time was considered excellent for those cases in which a considerable amount of information was accumulated, in other words when initial clues or previous experience indicated a profit motive or when research was conducted for long-term or major case investigations. It was noted that the Center's mechanism was considered too slow when ownership information was required on an immediate and continuous basis for case screening purposes.

Question 14 was concerned with users' suggestions for the future development of the Center and relates to question 8 which lists the respondents' comments on the types of additional informa-

tion that would be useful. The majority of investigators responding thought that the availability and analysis of insurance and real estate data constituted the main areas of concern for the Center's future development.

Part II of the evaluation survey consists of a specific case evaluation questionnaire which focuses on assessing the affect of information provided on cases that were referred to the Center. Out of the approximately 40 questionnaires that were sent out, 20 responses were received. The low rate of responses was caused by various factors, one of which was the fact that several investigators had been transferred or promoted and therefore were no longer handling the cases referred. In addition, in several instances investigators had lost track of cases that had either progressed to higher levels of the criminal justice system or were re-assigned to other investigators. Of those questionnaires that were returned, responses to specific questions were often omitted because the question didn't apply to the particular case. Therefore a general analysis of responses to the second questionnaire was most appropriate since very few responses were received.

The majority of investigators polled reported that most cases referred for research were those where a profit motive had been established and information was needed during the follow-up aspect of the investigation. Other cases were referred in order to ascertain investigative potential. Questions 2 and 2b, involving the status of the cases selected for evaluation, showed that more than half of the cases referred received further follow-up. The current status of these cases is as follows: 54% have investigations in progress; 23% were closed after some further investiga-

tion; 15% resulted in arrests; and 8% were referred to the District Attorney's Office.

Eighty-four percent of respondents found the information provided by the Center to be valuable to the case under investigation, while 100% said the information was accurate. The majority of those polled, 60%, concluded that the information aided in evaluating the investigative potential of the case, while 35% specified it assisted in identifying a motive or a suspect. Respondents generally agreed that all of the information provided was of use. The majority of the investigators responding to question 10 indicated that if the Information Center did not exist they would have done this research on their own. However, a considerable amount of investigative time would have been expended.

Insurance information was the only other type of information that would have been of assistance to the investigation of these cases. Forty-five percent of responses to question 12 concluded that additional real estate or insurance expertise would be of assistance in interpreting the information provided.

Reactions of investigators and prosecutors to the survey questions made it clear that the Arson-for-Profit Information Center has become an integral part of the City's arson investigation system and that it is meeting important investigative needs. The evaluation survey has also served to identify further outstanding needs and information gaps which arson investigators and prosecutors face. As previously indicated, the Information Center instituted several new policies and procedures to address some of these significant problems and to fill some of the information gaps identified through the evaluation survey.

To speed the transmission of information from the Center to users, case referral and handling procedures were modified, tested and implemented. In addition, dedicated electrical lines were installed in order to reduce computer down time. Finally, a new service was initiated which provides ownership and property information to investigators by telephone within one day. It will also soon be possible to place referrals with a telephone answering machine on a 24 hours a day basis, to accommodate those investigators working night shifts.

Cooperative agreements to exchange insurance information were recently concluded with The New York Property Insurance Underwriting Association, the New York Board of Fire Underwriters, the Property Insurance Loss Register and the City's Department of Housing, Preservation and Development in response to survey findings that indicated that insurance was a required key information element. In-depth "case analysis" was also identified as an important function and much needed service provided by the Center. To meet the demand for this service, project staff have attended real courses aimed at increasing their level of expertise and therefore ability to analyze cases. In addition, the Center has increased efforts to provide summaries of cases and ownership flow charts to assist investigators in developing patterns of transactions and links between suspects.

### VIII. Conclusion

Any investigator or prosecutor familiar with the arson-for-profit problem knows that its challenge is a demanding and frustrating one. In New York City the difficulties are compounded because of the sheer magnitude of the problem. Of the 7,993 structural arson recorded city-wide from July 1, 1980 to June 30, 1981, thirty percent were thought to be economically motivated and referred to the Information Center for research. These 2402 cases were referred by arson investigators and prosecutors from federal, state and local agencies. The steady flow of case referrals and the positive response of system users to the information returned has shown that the project has accomplished its primary objective of establishing an Arson-for-Profit Information Center that is an accepted member of the investigative community.

While the motive for committing arson-for-profit is economic gain, the nature of the cases referred to the Center have varied widely. Some of the criminal schemes uncovered through case research include the following: actions of a business rival to drive out competition; attempts to reap enormous gains by inflating insurance coverage beyond a building's value; efforts to limit economic losses before oncoming financial disasters; and attempts to empty buildings of existing tenants so that a property can be converted for a more profitable use. All of these cases require extensive research and analysis of a property's ownership, financial status and physical condition.

To increase the ability of investigators to understand information generated by the Center, the project has given considerable attention to upgrading the investigators' level of expertise

in highly technical areas such as real estate, insurance, tax and government practices. This was accomplished by presenting lectures, system demonstrations and training sessions at field offices. In addition, Center staff working closely with investigators has applied this expertise to individual cases resulting in the recognition of arson-for-profit patterns and schemes. Coordinated case analysis efforts have been extremely successful and in one instance aided in the arrest and indictment of 10 suspected arsonists. Two newspaper articles about the case and a letter of commendation received from the supervising Lieutenant of the Police Department's Brooklyn Arson and Explosion Division is attached to the end of this report.

The importance of the Center's liaison and coordinating functions was reaffirmed by the work done on the case mentioned above. The combined efforts of the Information Center, data producing agencies and investigators have led to the development of additional information sources and the establishment of cooperative relationships which will bring about better investigations and the subsequent prosecution of landlord-arsonists. As more successful team investigative efforts become the rule rather than the exception the full potential of the Center's information will be realized.

To aid investigators in researching arson-for-profit cases, the Center produced a manual for investigators and prosecutors which is constantly requested by arson control planners and investigators from throughout the nation. The manual details the steps necessary for developing a computer-aided arson-for-profit information system and specifically presents New York City's

method for applying the system to the investigative process. On the basis of discussions with investigators in other cities and states, Center staff has become convinced that the system described in the Instruction Manual is a model that can be replicated by other jurisdictions interested in attacking arson-for-profit.

The staff of the Research Unit conducts most of the Information Center's research. The Unit is composed of 10 senior citizens who have witnessed the deterioration of their own neighborhoods over the years and bring to this work a special commitment and desire for meaningful community involvement. This commitment is apparent in the superior level of performance that the Research Unit has reached in the often tedious and difficult tasks required to research arson-for-profit.

A tool that holds great promise in the area of case analysis is the Ownership Link Database. The Information Center will complete the development of the computerized database which links together individuals, corporations and properties uncovered through case research. The database will enable investigators to unravel the complex networks and relationships established in arson-for-profit schemes. With the addition of this system, the Information Center will not only be able to analyze cases referred by other agencies but also will have the ability to recommend that investigations be initiated and pursued.

In an attempt to recognize previously undetected arson rings, research will be conducted on properties owned by individuals and corporations that appear frequently in the database. Database research and its application presents an unprecedented opportunity to prevent arson by assisting in the identification of potential

arsonists before they have an opportunity to burn additional properties.

Federal support for the Information Center ended in July 1981. This effort will be continued during fiscal year 1981-82 with funds allocated from New York City's tax levy budget.

Arson Explosion Division  
One Police Plaza  
New York, New York 10038

June 11, 1981

National Criminal Justice Reference Service

**ncjrs**

Copyrighted portion of this  
document was not microfilmed  
because the right to reproduce  
was denied.

① pg 49, The New York Times  
"10 are Accused of Plot to Burn  
Stores of Rivals"  
Thurs., June 4, 1981

② pg 59 New York Dailey News  
"10 Indicted in Market Fires"  
Thursday, June 4, 1981

Arson Strike Force  
51 Chambers Street  
New York, New York

Dear Mr. Thomas Martin,

I would like to bring to your attention at this time the outstanding performance and assistance extended by Steven Ernst, Lynne Cooper, Jane Bickford and Otto Grant to members of the Brooklyn Arson Unit in a complex official investigation.

The information supplied by your department will be of great value in the preparation of an upcoming trial of landlords in an Arson for Profit ring.

The above named exhibited a fine spirit of cooperation and their actions were most commendable. I wish to take this opportunity to express through you my appreciation.

Very truly yours,

William P. Rose

*William P. Rose*

Deputy Inspector  
C.O. Arson Explosion Division

## Appendix B

Urgent:

Information Center

Case Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Arson-for-Profit Information Center

Type of Referral:

Address      Owner      Other

Initial Referral      Secondary Referral

Date Referred: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Returned: \_\_\_\_\_

I.) Information Provided by User Agency:

Address of Fire: \_\_\_\_\_ boro \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Fire Origin (apartment number or public part) \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Fire: \_\_\_\_\_

Owner (if known): \_\_\_\_\_

Address of owner: \_\_\_\_\_

Referring Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

Agency reference number: \_\_\_\_\_

Additional research  
requested  
(secondary referrals) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_Remarks \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_II.) Case Handling Process:

<u>Step</u> (Check line if step required)	<u>Process</u>	<u>Date- Completed</u>	<u>Time Required</u>	<u>Researcher</u>
1.	Case Referral	_____	_____	_____
2.	DFI	_____	_____	_____
3.	Computer Address Research	_____	_____	_____
4.	Landuse Maps	_____	_____	_____
5.	Computer Research	_____	_____	_____
6.	Preliminary Quality Check	_____	_____	_____
7.	Title History	_____	_____	_____
8.	Quality Check	_____	_____	_____
9.	Clerical Duties	_____	_____	_____

Remarks \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

page 1

## Appendix B

Information Center

Case Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Agency Reference Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Arson-for-Profit Information CenterComputer Data

Address referred: \_\_\_\_\_ Boro \_\_\_\_\_

Systems accessed: FINANCE (CAPITAL LETTERS) HPD (small letters)

A.) Building Information

1) BLOCK: \_\_\_\_\_ 2) LOT: \_\_\_\_\_

3) ADDRESS (FINANCE): \_\_\_\_\_ BORO: \_\_\_\_\_

4) address (HPD): \_\_\_\_\_ boro: \_\_\_\_\_

5) CORNER: \_\_\_\_\_ 6) BUILDING TYPE: \_\_\_\_\_

7) NUMBER OF BUILDINGS ON LOT: \_\_\_\_\_ 8) STORIES: \_\_\_\_\_

9) number of apts: \_\_\_\_\_ 10) number of SRO units: \_\_\_\_\_

11) date of last inspection: \_\_\_\_\_ 12) building status: \_\_\_\_\_

13) unsafe building: \_\_\_\_\_ yes or no \_\_\_\_\_

14) number of pending violations: \_\_\_\_\_ 15) item number of last violation: \_\_\_\_\_

16) number of violations by hazard class:

immediately hazardous (C): \_\_\_\_\_

hazardous (B): \_\_\_\_\_

non-hazardous (A): \_\_\_\_\_

other: \_\_\_\_\_

17) number of outstanding complaints: \_\_\_\_\_

Remarks \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Note: Printouts of all complaints and the last 10 violations are attached.

## Appendix B

page 2

Information Center  
Case Number: \_\_\_\_\_

BORO \_\_\_\_\_ BLOCK \_\_\_\_\_ LOT \_\_\_\_\_

## B.) PARTIES WITH INTERESTS IN PROPERTY

18) OWNER: \_\_\_\_\_

19) DATE OF DEED: \_\_\_\_\_

20) owner or agent

21) name: \_\_\_\_\_

22) address: \_\_\_\_\_ boro \_\_\_\_\_

23) REAL ESTATE TAX PAYER: \_\_\_\_\_

24) ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_ BORO \_\_\_\_\_

25) DATE ENTERED: \_\_\_\_\_

26) METER TAX PAYER: \_\_\_\_\_

(IF MORE THAN 1 METER TAX PAYER, OTHERS ARE LISTED  
IN THE REMARKS SECTION)

27) ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_ BORO \_\_\_\_\_

28) DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

29) IN REM ACTION: yes or no \_\_\_\_\_

30) NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_ 31) DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

32) IN REM AGREEMENT: yes or no \_\_\_\_\_

33) NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

34) TITLE VESTED: yes or no \_\_\_\_\_

35) DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

REMARKS

Note: Print-outs of other properties owned by each party of interest are attached.

page 3

Information Center  
Case Number: \_\_\_\_\_

BORO \_\_\_\_\_ BLOCK \_\_\_\_\_ LOT \_\_\_\_\_

## C.) FINANCIAL INFORMATION:

36) CURRENT ASSESSED VALUE: \_\_\_\_\_

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ LAND \$ \_\_\_\_\_ TOTAL

## 37) FORMER ASSESSED VALUES:

ASSESSED VALUE \$ \_\_\_\_\_ YEAR \_\_\_\_\_

38) CURRENT TAX EXEMPTIONS: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ TOTAL

39) TOTAL TAX ARREARS: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ 40) CREDITS: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ 41) OUTSTANDING BALANCE: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

42) FIRST QUARTER OF TAX ARREARS: \_\_\_\_\_

43) TOTAL QUARTERS IN ARREARS: \_\_\_\_\_

44) unpaid emergency repair balance: \_\_\_\_\_

REMARKS

Note: Print-outs of emergency repair charges and credits are attached.

## Appendix B

ARSON-FOR-PROFIT INFORMATION CENTER  
Information Center  
Case # \_\_\_\_\_

Property History From  
Registry

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ BORO \_\_\_\_\_ BLOCK \_\_\_\_\_ LOT \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENT:

- 1) Deed (Indenture): a) Bargain & Sale \_\_\_\_\_ b) Quitclaim \_\_\_\_\_  
c) Warranty with Covenant \_\_\_\_\_ d) Other \_\_\_\_\_ (describe) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) Mortgage: a) Mortgage Agreement \_\_\_\_\_ b) Assignment of Mortgage \_\_\_\_\_ c) Subordination  
of Mortgage \_\_\_\_\_ d) Extension Agreement \_\_\_\_\_ e) Estoppel Certificate \_\_\_\_\_  
f) Satisfaction of Mortgage \_\_\_\_\_ g) Other \_\_\_\_\_ (describe) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) Assignment of Rent \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) Lease \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) Foreclosure \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) Auction Sale \_\_\_\_\_
- 7) Other \_\_\_\_\_ (describe) \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ month \_\_\_\_\_ day \_\_\_\_\_ year

INTERESTED PARTIES:

- 1) grantor \_\_\_\_\_ mortgagor \_\_\_\_\_ assignor \_\_\_\_\_ lessor \_\_\_\_\_ referee \_\_\_\_\_ party of 1st part \_\_\_\_\_  
other \_\_\_\_\_ (describe) \_\_\_\_\_  
Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_ boro \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) grantee \_\_\_\_\_ mortgagee \_\_\_\_\_ assignee \_\_\_\_\_ lessee \_\_\_\_\_ party of 2nd part \_\_\_\_\_  
other \_\_\_\_\_ (describe) \_\_\_\_\_  
Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_ boro \_\_\_\_\_  
Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_ boro \_\_\_\_\_

RELEVANT INFORMATION:

- 1) Real Estate Transfer Tax: a) amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ b) date: \_\_\_\_\_ mo \_\_\_\_\_ day \_\_\_\_\_ yr
- 2) Terms of Sale: sales price \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) Mortgage Information: a) amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ b) date due: \_\_\_\_\_ mo \_\_\_\_\_ d \_\_\_\_\_ yr  
c) interest: \_\_\_\_\_ % d) amount of installments: \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
e) frequency of installments: quarterly \_\_\_\_\_ monthly \_\_\_\_\_ yearly \_\_\_\_\_  
f) loan # \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) Title Information: a) title search # \_\_\_\_\_ b) Title Co. \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) Other: \_\_\_\_\_

NOTARY INFORMATION:

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Position & Company \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_ boro \_\_\_\_\_  
Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_ boro \_\_\_\_\_  
Position & Company \_\_\_\_\_

Page \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_

Information  
Center Case # \_\_\_\_\_

ARSON-FOR-PROFIT INFORMATION CENTER

Source: Division of Fire Investigation Reports)  
Information Referred

I.) Fire Address Referred \_\_\_\_\_ Boro \_\_\_\_\_

## Previous fires:

	Date	Time of Fire	Cause Code	Owner	Owner's Address	Boro
1)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
2)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
3)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
4)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

II.) Owner's Name Referred: \_\_\_\_\_

## Additional Properties:

	Fire Address	Boro	Date of Fire	Time of Fire	Cause Code	Owner's Address	Boro
1)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
2)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
3)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
4)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

III.) Owner's Address Referred: \_\_\_\_\_

## Other Owners listed at Owner's Address:

	Owner's Name	Fire Address	Boro	Date of Fire	Time of Fire	Code
1)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
2)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
3)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
4)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

## Cause Codes:

A= Incendiary B= Arson Attempt C= Accidental D= Not Ascertained

IV.) Remarks:

## Appendix B

## ARSON-FOR-PROFIT INFORMATION CENTER

**Source:** Fire Patrol Reports  
New York Board of Fire Underwriters

**Fire Address Referred** \_\_\_\_\_ **Boro** \_\_\_\_\_

Date      Time      Origin & Extent of Fire      Estimated Damage  
              of Fire.            Bldg      Contents

UNIFORM COMMERCIAL CODE (U.C.C.)

DATA SHEET

## Appendix B

DEBTOR

SECURED PARTY

DAT

UCC FILE #

DESCRIPTION OF DEBT

Remarks:



REQUEST FOR INSURANCE INFORMATION

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

REQUESTED BY \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE# \_\_\_\_\_

TO: New York Board of Fire Underwriters  
 85 John Street  
 New York, NY 10038

FROM: Arson-for-Profit Information Center  
 51 Chambers Street  
 New York, NY 10007

Case# \_\_\_\_\_

Owner's \_\_\_\_\_

Property Location \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Fire \_\_\_\_\_

<u>Insurance Company</u>	<u>Policy No.</u>	<u>Insurance</u>	<u>Coverage</u>	<u>Term</u>
--------------------------	-------------------	------------------	-----------------	-------------

ARSON CASE REFERRAL PROCESSPROCEDURES GUIDE

- Sec. I Agency Referral Contact Schedule
- II Case Referral and the Logging-in Process
- III Case Referral Duplications
- IV Weekly Case Research Flow Chart
- V Map Research - Address Problems
- VI Log-Out Process
- VII Statistical Sources & Compilation
- VIII Case Research Flow Bins

## Attachments:

1. Arson Case Referral Procedures
2. Case Research Flow Chart
3. Log Book Sheet
4. Weekly Tally Sheet
5. General Work Chart

#### I. Agency Referral Contact Schedule

The project's research assistant is responsible for contacting coordinators to obtain telephone referrals.

- A. Bronx A & E - P.O. Steller- contact Wednesday and Friday Mornings
- B. Brooklyn A & E - Sgt. Azzinari contact for regular referrals Tuesday and Thursday Mornings
- C. Fire Department - Supervising Fire Marshall
  - Individual investigators submit referrals to service
  - Call DiMarco to discuss workload twice a week, Monday & Thursday Mornings
- D. Dept. of State Commission of Investigation-  
Call Investigator Wheatley twice a week - Tuesday and Friday Mornings
- E. Brooklyn District Attorney's Office - A.D.A.  
Hammerman - Call Hammerman twice a week Monday & Wednesday Mornings 10:30
- F. Staten Island District Attorney's Office-  
Detective Demarest- Tuesday & Thursday Mornings
- G. Bronx District Attorney Investigator Monka -  
Wednesday & Friday Mornings
- H. Queens District Attorney Wynne - Cases are referred by Brooklyn Fire Department or DiMarco

#### II. Referral of Cases - Logging In

- See Attachment #1 for information to be obtained when taking telephone case referral.
- The project's research assistant is responsible for the following:
  - All referrals taken over the telephone must be entered immediately on case referral sheet
  - Each referral sheet is then stapled to a file folder & placed in 'Log-in Bin' on research asst's desk
  - Case number assignment is made when a case is being logged in
  - Cases requiring Initial & Secondary research must have an additional 'A' folder & a completed referral sheet which is xeroxed & attached to that folder.

#### Processing Referrals

- Telephone referrals are to be logged in as soon as possible
- Regular referrals: always ask if information is needed urgently
- Written Lists of referred addresses

Lists of cases - related cases should be processed as a group.

Number assignment should be sequential

Referral Sheet & Logging in is completed all at once.

Designate a Master Case folder for each case. List all related case numbers on the Master folder. Each individual related case must refer back to the number of the Master Case folder.

Continued-

For each case - If two stages of research are required indication must be made on each file folder referral sheet. The double case file folders should be tracked together as much as possible. When the researcher supervisor is conducting the preliminary review for a computer file folder, he is to check the case research flow chart to see if the second or registry file is complete and consult with the registry researcher supervisor to determine the whereabouts of the file. If the case is in the process of being researched at the registry and is not in-house the computer researcher supervisor will note this information on the front of the case file folder referral sheet and then place it in the registry preliminary review bin.

III. Case Referral Duplications

After a case is logged-in and file folders are prepared and a number assigned to the folder's referral sheet the researcher supervisor receives the case and channels it to a computer researcher for a block and lot search. When this is accomplished the case file with the block and lot information is checked against the Case Block and Lot Duplication List, maintained for each borough. The appropriate list is checked to see if any previously referred case listed is a case duplication, indication is made on the list next to the original entry and the new duplicate referral case number is entered next to the original case number. The case is then brought to the attention of the researcher supervisor who will alert the research asst. so that this information can be entered in the Log. The previously referred case file is then located and information can be copied and included in the second (dup.) case file folder., and sent to the referring investigator.

Notification of Duplicate Inquiries

The following procedures will be instituted to handle duplicate requests for research:

1. if a case is referred by both a District Attorney's office and either the Police or Fire Department, then notify only the DA's office;
2. If a case is referred by both the Brooklyn and Bronx DA's office, then notify both offices on the same day; or
3. if a case is referred by both the Police and Fire Departments then notify both offices on the same day;

Please notify Steven Ernst, Jane Bickford, or Lynne Cooper before making any of the above contacts and then indicate the action taken in the case log book. If any other instance of duplicate request for research occurs do not notify either referring agency. Instead contact Steve, Jane, or Lynne who will consult with Tom Martin.

IV. Weekly Case Research Flow Chart

See attachment #2

- After Logging-in is completed for all cases referred each day a work chart is made reflecting which cases are being processed for each day for one week.
- This task is accomplished by the researcher supervisor who receives days caseload directly from the research assistant

- The chart will include the date of referral and case number, property address, a separate category for each distinct research stage through the preliminary check. \*(See chart for all categories included) The chart will show what stage in the research process each case has reached.
- Two copies of the research flow chart are produced each morning and posted in the researchers office by the supervisor and in the case referral office by the research assistant.
- This chart is consulted each day and case priorities are set each evening (as indicated on the General Work Chart, See att. #5) for the next morning's work.
- Cases are arranged by category (daily or regular referral) or group (related cases) and stacked in order of priority according to the information on the chart (date of referral, & category is noted to ascertain how long the case is outstanding.) Cases are then placed in appropriate research bins in the researchers office. The Research Supervisor will be made aware of case priorities set by the research assistant, and will assign cases accordingly.
- Case work prioritization is made by stacking cases in the appropriate research bin in descending chronological order.

Note: The research flow chart is produced and updated by the research supervisors (computer and registry).

#### V. Map Research - Address Problems

##### Regular Referral Procedures

\*\* Check the oil burner books for block and lot information before beginning map research

- All identified address problem cases must be called in to the referring agency for additional information about the property location (Is the property on a corner? - Is the property residential or commercial?) before map research is conducted.
- Block and Lot information:  
If the address cannot be accessed on either computer system used for map research, obtain a street run and block run.
- See # VII. Case Flow Bins - 9, 10, and 11.
- Regular referral case research is always conducted before daily or other limited referrals.

##### Daily Referral Procedures - Screening for daily fire incidents

- Address problem cases are called in to the referring coordinator or investigator for additional property information. For example, is the property a vacant lot, is it a housing project, is it a corner property, should the case be closed?

#### Map Address research Schedule

- Three times a week, from 1 - 2 p.m. on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, the research assistant will identify address problems from the case research flow chart and reroute cases for follow-up calls and further research. The research supervisor directs cases from the researchers' office, (the first address problem bin is located there) to the research assistant who reviews the problems and categorizes the cases, e.g. daily or regular referral, and places each case folder into one of two bins located in the case referral office. (See # VII. 10 and 11)
- The research assistant or student interns will conduct map research from 2-3 p.m. at 2 Lafayette St. every week on Tues., Wed. and Thurs.

VI. Log - Out Process

- After the final review is completed by a supervising staff member the case file folder is placed in the Xerox Bin and the clerical process begins.
- Every afternoon, from 3 - 4 p.m., the research assistant directs the clerical processing of cases.

Case information is first xeroxed and information is separated within the case file folder into a section containing the copies that are to be sent out and a section for information that is to be retained for the files. When this is accomplished the research assistant reviews the case file and places the information that is to be sent out into envelopes for mailing. The remaining xeroxed information is kept in the file folder and placed in the Log - Out Bin (located in the Case Referral Office) for final processing to be completed.

- The case is considered 'logged-out' when the space in the Log Book for 'date returned - mailed' and the cover sheet on the file folder is completed. Indicate date mailed and place in filing Bin, which is located in the C.R. Office.

Note: Cases should be logged-out as soon after they are mailed as possible.

- Logging Out is directed by the research assistant

VII. StatisticsStatistical Sources and CompilationSources-

1. Weekly Tally Sheet
2. Case Research Flow Chart
3. The Log Books

1. The total number of cases logged-in and prepared for research is calculated each week and entered onto a weekly Tally Sheet.

The research asst. maintains the Tally Sheet and updates it on a weekly basis (Friday afternoon 1-3p.m.)

2. Information for this Tally Sheet is taken from the Case Research Flow Chart (see # 111 and att. 2)

Case numbers are taken off of the Flow Chart and then checked against the Log (see att. 3) to see if the case has been logged-out.

Note:

The Flow Chart will only track a case up to the preliminary review stage of the overall research process. Case flow progress is noted by the researcher supervisor who updates the chart on a daily basis.

3. Turnaround time for each case is calculated by reviewing the case entry in the Log Book and checking when the case was logged-out (date mailed or returned must be filed out before any case information is sent out).

To calculate turn-around time add the # of days from the day the case is referred to the Center to the date that the case is logged-out.

When calculating the number of outstanding cases always refer to the Log. If a case is not logged-out it is considered outstanding. Cases must be split into at least two case categories (regular and daily referrals) when presenting case numbers on the Tally Sheet.

The total number of cases referred to the Center is calculated by reviewing the Log Books for each agency. This is done four or more times a year in preparation for the Center's newsletter.

VIII. Case Research Flow Bins

1. Two sets of file folders are maintained for written lists that are submitted of case referrals for each user agency. One folder is for unprocessed requests.

The Project's research asst. is responsible for processing the lists and keeping each list in the appropriate file folder.

2. Log-In Bin- Located at the Research assts. desk. After case file folders with processed referral cover sheets attached are prepared, a number must be assigned signifying that the case referral has been logged-in. Note: Each case must be completely logged-in before a number can be assigned to a case.

The Research asst. is responsible for assigning all case numbers to case file folders during the log-in process.

All cases in this Bin are channeled into the research process by the Research Asst.

3. Start-Up Bin - Located on the research supervisor's desk in the researcher room.

The Supervisor receives new cases from the Research Asst. in the Start-up Bin. Cases are then entered onto the case research flow chart by the Supervisor and case folders are then stacked in descending chronological order and placed in to appropriate research bins located in the researchers room.

Research Bins

4. Finance                            6. Duplicate Bin  
 5. H.P.D.                            7. D.F.I.

8. Registry Bin - Located on Judy's desk in the researcher's room. The registry researcher supervisor is responsible for receiving registry work from the Research asst. and updating the case research flow chart accordingly. The Com. Researcher Supervisor enters the case onto the Case Research Flow Chart.

Address Problem Bins

Address Problems - Located in researcher's room. This bin contains cases that have been initially identified as address problem cases. The research supervisor then notes this information on the case research flow chart.

10. Address information needed - contact agency.  
Located in Case Referral Office and supervised by the research asst.

11. Map Research - located in C.R. Office - cases reviewed and prepared for map research (Block and street runs are obtained and studied before research is conducted).

REVIEW BINS

12. Computer Preliminary Review Bin  
 13. Registry Preliminary Review Bin  
 14. Related Cases Preliminary Review Bin  
 15. Review - Final  
 16. Final Review - Group cases  
 17. Xerox Bin



THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
 ARSON STRIKE FORCE  
 51 CHAMBERS STREET  
 5th Floor  
 NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10007  
 566-

ARSON-FOR-PROFIT INFORMATION CENTER

ARSON CASE REFERRAL PROCEDURES

ROBERT G. M. KEATING  
 Criminal Justice  
 Coordinator  
 AUGUSTUS A. BEEKMAN  
 Commissioner  
 Fire Department  
 JANLEY BREZINOFF  
 Administrative Commissioner  
 Human Resources  
 ADAMSON  
 ANTHONY B. GLIEDMAN  
 Commissioner  
 Department of  
 Housing Preservation  
 & Development  
 JOHN LoCICERO  
 Special Advisor  
 to the Mayor  
 ROBERT McGUIRE  
 Commissioner  
 Police Department

- A. TELEPHONE REFERRAL - Information to be obtained from referring agency.

1. Address of fire
2. Date of fire
3. All information pertaining to ownership and owners address
4. All information pertaining to fire history
5. Name of referring agency
6. Agency reference number
7. Address of referring agency
8. Name of agency coordinator
9. Name of referring agency investigator
10. Telephone # of investigator
11. All information pertaining to property address - corner property, cross streets, additional bldg. #s.
12. Is the case a regular referral or does it require immediate attention?
13. Does the case require initial and/or secondary research?
14. Is the case being referred related to any previous cases?

B. ARSON CASE REFERRAL ADMINISTRATION

1. Assign arson case number to referral (cover) sheet
2. Enter referred case onto log sheet
3. Enter case into appropriate agency log book
4. Transfer all information on referral (cover) sheet to log
5. Assign case number to file folder
6. Staple referral (cover) sheet onto the file folder at the top and bottom of the folder
7. Place the file folder into the appropriate bin.

Appendix D 12

## CASE RESEARCH FLOW CHART

Appendix D 1

page \_\_\_\_\_

Arson-for-Profit Information Center

## Log Book

**Coordinator** \_\_\_\_\_

Agency \_\_\_\_\_

**Command** \_\_\_\_\_

WEEKLY TALLY SHEET

Week of: \_\_\_\_\_

1) # Cases outstanding at beginning of week

- a. Number  $\leq 5$  days outstanding
- b. Number  $> 5$  days outstanding

2) # Cases referred this week

3) # Cases returned this week

- a. Number  $\leq 5$  days turnaround
- b. Number  $> 5$  days turnaround

4) # Cases outstanding at end of week  
( 1 + 2 - 3 )

- a. Number  $\leq 5$  days outstanding
- b. Number  $> 5$  days outstanding

5) Average turnaround time for cases returned:  
this week

Regular	Dailies	Total

## GENERAL WORK CHART

Appendix D  
15

Date	9 - 10	10 - 11	11 - 12	1 - 2	2 - 3	3 - 4	4 - 5
Monday	Write Referrals & Log-In	Call Bklyn D.A.	Call DiMarco Amend Log for Dup. Referrals			Xerox Cases & Log-Out & Send out	Prepare cases for research for next day, update chart, set priorities, transfer cases to Research Unit
Tuesday	Write Referrals & Log - In Call Bx D.A.	Call Com. of Invest.	Call Bklyn A & E Call S.I. DA	Identify Address Problems, Reroute for Research & follow-up calls	Identify Address Problems, Reroute for Research & follow-up calls	Xerox cases Log-out & Send out	"
Wednesday	Write Referral Sheets & Log - In	Call Bklyn D.A.	Call Bx. A&E	Identify Address Problems, Reroute for Research & follow-up calls	Identify Address Problems, Reroute for Research & follow-up calls	Xerox cases Log-out & Send out	"
Thursday	Write Referrals & Log - In		Call DiMarco; Review & take referrals, call Bklyn A&E, Call S.I. D.A.	Identify Address Problems, Reroute for Research & follow-up calls	Identify Address Problems, Reroute for Research & follow-up calls	Xerox cases Log-out & Send out	"
Friday	Write Referral sheets & Log-In		Call Bx A&E	STATISTICS		Xerox cases Log-out Send out	"

## Arson-for-Profit Information Center

EVALUATION SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSE TALLY

(Percentages of Responses)

## I. General Evaluation

## 1. How do you decide which cases to refer for research?

42% Ownership information needed42% Investigative experience17% Clues indicating arson-for-profit

## 2. What kind of information do you usually request:

## A. Computer information: DFI, building, financial, ownership

50% Always31% Often19% Occasionally0 Never

## B. Register work: Title and mortgage information

35% Always24% Often35% Occasionally6% Never

## C. Other information

43% Always29% Often0 Occasionally29% Never

## 3. Of the information provided to you what do you find most useful?

16% Building information (violations, complaints, description)20% Financial information (tax arrears, emergency repairs, assessed value)29% Ownership information (owners, taxpayers, meter payer, agent)9% DFI information23% Ownership transfer and mortgage history4% Other (specify: e.g. UCC, State Liquor etc.)

## 4. Overall, how relevant is this information to your investigation?

35% Extremely useful in most cases59% Occasionally useful6% Usually irrelevant0% Completely irrelevant

## 5. How accurate is the information you receive from the center?

35% Very accurate65% Some inaccuracies, generally good0 Many inaccuracies, but useful anyway0 Totally inaccurate

## 6. How would you rate the time it takes to get information back from the Center on referred cases?

24% Excellent53% Good18% Slow but still useful6% Too slow to be useful

## 7. How would you rate the Center's organization:

46% Excellent54% Good0 Sometimes inefficient0 Often inefficient

8. What additional information would you find useful?

55% Insurance

45% Additional ownership Analysis

9. Information is returned from the Center using several forms:  
how would you rate the clarity of these documents?

a) Computer data form (ownership, building and financial  
data from HPD and Finance Computer Systems)

75% Easy to understand and use

25% Some parts confusing

0 Difficult to understand

0 Do not use this information

b) Computer printouts from HPD and Finance systems (details  
of violations, complaints, other properties owned by owner)

59% Easy to understand and use

18% Some parts confusing

6% Difficult to understand

18% Do not use this information

c) DFI information forms

73% Easy to understand and use

0 Some parts confusing

0 Printouts difficult to understand

27% Do not use this information

d) Registry information forms (deeds, mortgages etc.)

59% Easy to understand and use

18% Some parts confusing (specify which)

12% Difficult to understand

12% Do not use this information

e) Do you have any general suggestions on the forms provided?

75% A summary/analysis

25% Dates on all forms

10. Do you utilize the "case analysis" services of the Center,  
i.e. discuss cases with Center staff, work with them on  
ideas, request additional flowcharts etc.?

12% Always

12% Often

29% Sometimes

47% Never

How useful is this assistance?

38% Extremely useful

50% Useful

13% Not useful

11. What type of additional "expertise" (such as insurance, real  
estate etc.) would you like available at the Center for case  
analysis?

42% Analysis of real estate transactions

42% Insurance

17% Tax

12. What do you see as the system's strengths?

29% Timeliness 7% Staff cooperation

14% Innovative program 21% Relevant information

7% Centralization 21% Analysis (e.g. ownership,  
fire history)

13. What are the system's weaknesses?

18% Organizational set-up 36% Slow response time

9% Inaccuracy of data 27% Lack of insurance information

9% Lack of tax information

14. What are your suggestions for the Center?

10% Provide additional information

10% Greater analysis

30% Decentralization

- 10% Provide tenant information
- 20% Provide Insurance information
- 10% Continue operation of Center
- 10% Develop database

## Part I

Respondent \_\_\_\_\_  
 Agency \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date \_\_\_\_\_

Arson-for-Profit Information Center  
 Evaluation Questionnaire

## I. General Evaluation

1. How do you decide which cases to refer for research?

2. What kind of information do you usually request:

A. Computer information: DFI, building, financial, ownership

- Always
- Often
- Occasionally
- Never

B. Registry work: Title and mortgage information

- Always
- Often
- Occasionally
- Never

C. Other information (specify what kind: )

- Always
- Often
- Occasionally
- Never

3. Of the information provided to you what do you find most useful?

- Building information (violations, complaints, description)
- Financial information (Tax arrears, emergency repairs, assessed value)
- Ownership information (owners, taxpayers, meter payer, agent)
- DFI information
- Ownership transfer and mortgage history
- Other (specify: e.g. UCC, State Liquor etc.)

**CONTINUED**

**10F2**

4. Overall, how relevant is this information to your investigations?

- Extremely useful in most cases
- Occasionally useful
- Usually irrelevant
- Completely irrelevant

5. How accurate is the information you receive from the Center?

- Very accurate
- Some inaccuracies, generally good
- Many inaccuracies, but useful anyway
- Totally inaccurate

6. How would you rate the time it takes to get information back from the Center on referred cases?

- Excellent
- Good
- Slow but still useful
- Too slow to be useful

7. How would you rate the Center's organization:

- Excellent
- Good
- Sometimes inefficient
- Often inefficient

8. What additional information would you find useful?

9. Information is returned from the the Center using several forms: how would you rate the clarity of these documents?

a) Computer data form (form containing ownership, building and financial data from HPD and Finance Computer Systems)

- Easy to understand and use
- Some parts of form are confusing (specify which)
- Form difficult to understand
- Don't use this information

b) Computer printouts from HPD and Finance systems (details of violations, complaints, other properties owned by owner)

- Easy to understand and use
- Some parts of printouts are confusing (specify which)
- Printouts difficult to understand
- Don't use this information

c) DFI information forms

- Easy to understand and use
- Some parts confusing (specify which)
- Printouts difficult to understand
- Don't use this information

d) Registry information forms (deeds, mortgages etc.)

- Easy to understand and use
- Some parts confusing (specify which)
- Form difficult to understand
- Don't use this information

e) Do you have any general suggestions on the forms provided?

10. Do you utilize the "case analysis" services of the Center, i.e. discuss cases with Center staff, work with them on ideas, request additional flowcharts etc.?

- Always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Never

How useful is this assistance?

11. Would you like to have additional "expertise" in real estate, insurance etc. available at the Center for case analysis?

What kind of expertise?

12. What do you see as the system's strengths?

Respondent \_\_\_\_\_

13. What are the system's weaknesses?

Agency \_\_\_\_\_

14. What are your suggestions for the Center?

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Arson-for-Profit Information Center  
Evaluation Questionnaire

II. Specific Case Evaluation

For a selected sample of cases (~40-50) we will poll the person who submitted the case.

Case Number:

Address:

Date of Fire:

Date submitted to Information Center:

Date Returned:

Information Provided by Center: HPD \_\_\_\_\_

Finance \_\_\_\_\_

DFI \_\_\_\_\_

Registry \_\_\_\_\_

Other (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

1. Why was this case referred to Information Center? (e.g.: multiple fires at address, suspected arson-for-profit for some reason etc.)

2. After you received information on this case from the Arson-for-Profit Information Center, did this case receive further follow-up?

a. If case did not receive follow-up, why did you decide not to follow-up?

Was information provided used to make this decision?

What information was used to make this decision?

b. If case was followed up:

What is the current status of the case?

- Follow-up investigation in progress
- Case closed after some further investigation
- Arrest made
- Turned over to the District Attorney
- Other (specify)

3. Did this case turn out to be related to other cases?

If yes, how did you determine this?

Was Information Center information used to make this determination?

4. On the whole, how valuable was the information provided by the Information Center in this case?

- Extremely valuable
- Somewhat valuable
- Interesting, but not relevant or usable
- Useless

5. How accurate was the information provided?

- Highly accurate
- Some inaccuracies, generally good
- Inaccurate, but useful anyway
- Totally inaccurate

6. How did you use the information provided (check all that apply)

- Aided in identifying a suspect
- Aided in identifying a motive
- Help evaluate investigative potential of the case
- Other
- Not used

7. Of the information provided, which pieces did you use?

8. Did you do additional research in City records beyond what was provided by the Center in this case?

What additional research was done?

9. Was this case discussed in detail with the Information Center Staff?

Did this discussion provide additional help? What kind of help?

10. If the information Center did not exist, would you have done this research on your own?

Which portion of the Information would you have gathered?

How long do you think this research would have taken you?

11. What other information, besides what was provided, would have been helpful in this case?

12. Could an expert in real estate, finance or insurance have helped you understand the information provided for this case?

What kind of expertise would have been necessary?