

This will be the first of a regular series of reports that I will provide to the membership of the New Jersey Chapter regarding the activities of the International Association of Arson Investigators. I would like to thank the membership for supporting me in my recent election to a position on the IAAI Board of Directors. I pledge to work hard to represent you on the Board and to provide you with the latest information.

The IAAI Annual General Meeting and Training Conference was held April 30 –May 5, 2006 in Denver, Colorado. New Jersey was well represented at this event. New Jersey Chapter members attending the conference include: President Paul Boerner, Past President Nick Palumbo, IAAI Past President Jerry Naylis, Former IAAI Director David Kircher, IAAI Sergeant-at-Arms Lloyd Mathis, members Steve Avato, Bob Czarnicki, Dan Petracca, Len Sandberg, Gary Wlasko and myself.

The educational component of this conference was outstanding. The conference featured concurrent training tracks, representing interests in the Basics, the Public Sector, the Private Sector, as well as a General Interest track. The speakers were first rate and were very well received. The committee has promised to expand this concept for next year's conference to include the latest in scientific and legal information, as well as developments in legal issues and technology.

Speaking of next year's conference, the 2007 IAAI Annual Training Conference will be held April 29, 2007 through May 4, 2007 in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. We were treated to a preview of this event. I can truly say that Victoria may be one of the most beautiful spots in the world. For those of you who have friends from Canada, you know how hospitable and friendly they can be. Make your plans now to attend this very special event.

NOTE: You will need a valid passport to fly into Canada for this event. The process for obtaining a passport takes time. Apply now to avoid any problems.

Here are the highlights of the Annual General Meeting:

- The IAAI has hired a full-time Executive Director. He is Mr. James Whitaker. Jim is a retired law enforcement fire investigator with a background in the insurance industry and management. He will be handling the day-to-day business of the IAAI. He has been very busy with several management tasks and has begun to analyze ways to make the business of the IAAI more efficient. Should you have problems or questions regarding IAAI business, he is maintaining an "open door" policy and will be responsive to your needs.
- The IAAI will be moving their offices from St. Louis, MO to the Washington, DC Metropolitan area. The office will allow the IAAI to have a visible presence on Capitol Hill and provide convenient access to the BATF Research Lab, the National Institute of Science & Technology Building and Fire Research Lab, the Consumer Product Safety Commission Lab, the National Fire Academy and the Maryland Fire Rescue Institute. We will be sharing office space and some business services with the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation, an important partner with the IAAI in fire safety matters. The details are being worked out now and will be reported to you as they are finalized.
- The IAAI realized a budgetary surplus of approximately \$110,000 for the fiscal year 2005-2006. This included a surplus of approximately \$35,000 from the 2005 IAAI Annual Training Conference. The astute fiscal management on the part of the Executive officers and the Board of Directors is to be commended.
- The IAAI currently has a membership of approximately 7800 fire investigators. This number includes approximately 550 members from countries outside the United States.
- There are currently approximately 1050 Certified Fire Investigators. This designation has become to be known as the premiere professional certification in the field of fire investigation. The IAAI has recognized the roadblock that many investigators have in obtaining the designation. That is, the requirement for courtroom testimony. To help alleviate that roadblock, the CFI Committee has turned the Expert Witness Testimony Course over to the Training and Education Committee. They are also exploring the development of a professional designation of Certified Wildland Fire Investigator. A proposal for this designation will be presented at the Mid-year Board Meeting.

- The IAAI will be hiring a full-time Training Coordinator. This person will be required to be a Certified Event Planner or the equivalent. This person will coordinate all of the details of conducting the Annual Training Conference and the delivery of Regional Seminars. As some of you who were on the 2001 IAAI Annual General Meeting Committee will undoubtedly remember, there is an enormous amount of preparation and work that goes into an IAAI event. Having a full-time member of the staff who is experienced in putting on large events will benefit the membership in terms of both quality and quantity of future IAAI training programs.
- There are several IAAI Regional Seminars planned at this time. There will be programs co-sponsored with the American Home Appliance Manufacturers in West Palm Beach, FL (July 2006) and Phoenix, AZ (November 2006). There is a proposal to conduct a joint program with the Ford Motor Co. featuring live burns of vehicles in Tulsa, OK in March 2007. More of these programs will be planned in the near future. Keep checking out the NJ Chapter website or the IAAI Website [www.firearson.com](http://www.firearson.com). Proposed future courses that are under development include, Ethics for the Fire Investigator, Fire Scene Documentation, WMD and Terrorism, Safety for the Fire Investigator and Youth Set Fire Investigation. Pres. Fee has re-appointed NJ's Jerry Naylis as the IAAI Professional Development Coordinator. He will have a very active role in these courses.
- [www.cfitrainer.net](http://www.cfitrainer.net) continues to be a tremendous success. Two new modules are planned for roll out in 2006-2007; Vehicle Fire Investigation and Working with the Insurance Industry. These are in addition to the seven current modules. The IAAI has received a \$740,000 grant from the Department of Homeland Security to continue this important project. If you have not availed yourself of the outstanding course content on this site, you are making a mistake. The courses are FREE and are very professionally produced.
- The IAAI has entered into a partnership with the BATF and the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center to promote the Advanced Arson Investigation Techniques for the Insurance Industry course. If you are employed by the insurance industry, you are eligible to attend this training. See the new website at [www.arsoninsuranceschool.com](http://www.arsoninsuranceschool.com) for details.

At the annual Awards Banquet, IAAI and New Jersey Chapter Past President Jerry Naylis was awarded Life Membership. Also, David Kircher was honored for 6 years of tireless service as a IAAI Director. On a personal note, I am honored to be associated with these two men. They serve as mentors to me and have played an important role in my career. Please join me in congratulating them on their awards.

I would be remiss if I did not comment on the 2006 IAAI Elections. This year, you were afforded, for the first time, an opportunity to directly participate in the election process, even if you were not able to attend the Annual Training Conference. This was a major project for the IAAI. The Officers and Board of the NJ Chapter aggressively promoted this opportunity and went to great lengths to "get out the vote". This was particularly important since there were two NJ Chapter members running for International positions.

Out of 7800 potential voters, only 692 members invested five minutes to vote. Based on the number of votes actually cast at the seminar, I can tell you that virtually no one from NJ voted in the election. This is disappointing and disheartening. A major criticism of the IAAI has been that the direction of the organization has been decided by a small minority of the membership. If you did not vote in this year's election, you have, in my opinion, forfeited your right to criticize the IAAI in this area. I would encourage you all to re-think your reasons why you did not vote and to participate in next year's elections.

As I stated in my remarks in Atlantic City, my purpose for running for the IAAI Board of Directors is to serve you. If you have questions or comments regarding the IAAI, please contact me at [www.wendtcfi@optonline.net](mailto:www.wendtcfi@optonline.net) or 973-927-0728.

Stay safe and have a great summer.

Respectfully submitted;  
George A. Wendt, CFI, CFPS