

BFI Fire Scene Unit

by Battalion Chief John A. Calderone

The Bureau of Fire Investigation (BFI) has the responsibility of determining the cause and origin of fires within New York City. In most cases, this is accomplished through the investigative expertise of Fire Marshals conducting an on-scene probe of the fire building. However, at certain kinds of incidents, it becomes necessary to conduct a more extensive, prolonged investigation and/or documentation of the scene.

To support such investigations, the Bureau of Fire Investigation maintains a Fire Scene Unit. This apparatus is a converted 1992 Ford ambulance that has been reconfigured to meet the needs of Fire Marshals. This unit provides BFI with the capability to document the fire scene by employing video, audio and digital technologies.

Additionally, the vehicle carries the support equipment nec-



(Above) This 1992 Ford ambulance has been reconfigured to meet the investigative needs of Fire Marshals.



photos by Battalion Chief John A. Calderone

essary to conduct a detailed, ongoing investigation. Some of the equipment carried includes a portable generator, portable lighting, electrical cables and fittings, evidence-collection bottles and bags, decontamination equipment, shovels, rakes, axe, Halligan, hook, squeegees, brooms, fire scene tape and assorted electric and hand tools. The inside of the apparatus has been converted into an interview area, with a table installed, so that witnesses and suspects can be questioned in a private, indoor area.

The Fire Scene Unit is staffed on a 24-hour basis and operates from the Bureau of Fire Investigation's Special Operations Command, which is located at the quarters of Engine 211 in Brooklyn. It is designated Squad 68F.

(Left) This well-stocked vehicle gives BFI members the capability to document the fire scene, employing video, audio and digital technologies. The interior has been converted into an interview area, which includes an installed table. The BFI Fire Scene Unit gives FDNY's Fire Marshals a secluded, indoor area in which to question witnesses and suspects.

Response assignments for the Fire Scene Unit include all fires involving the transmission of a 10-45 Code 1 or 2, three or more 10-45 Code 3, all third alarms, unusual incidents and whenever requested by a Fire Marshal conducting an on-scene investigation.

The Fire Scene Unit enables the Bureau of Fire Investigation to fulfill its responsibilities in a more timely and efficient manner.

About the Author...

Battalion Chief John A. Calderone has served the FDNY since 1973. Currently, he is working in Battalion 22. He holds a degree in Fire Protection from New York City Community College and has written extensively on the subject of fire apparatus. He is a regular contributor to WNYF.

