

TENNESSEE BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
Forensic Services Division

Violent Crime Response Team Standard Operating Procedures
Collecting Fire Debris



10. VCRT Procedures

10.28 Collecting Fire Debris

10.28.1 Scope

This procedure provides general guidelines in the collection of fire debris and flammable liquids.

10.28.2 Definitions

Refer to VCRT 11.0 Definitions and Abbreviations

10.28.3 Chemicals and Reagents

None

10.28.4 Equipment and Supplies

Unlined metal paint cans
Shovel

10.28.5 Procedure

When processing a suspected arson scene, the following items should be collected (use the collection methods described below):

- All igniting devices
- Charred debris and related material from where the accelerant was placed
- Samples of plaster, upholstery, wood or other substances that may have been penetrated by flammable liquids. Any fresh stains should be collected.
- Samples of soil which may have been saturated by flammable fluids (container should be three-quarters full)
- Samples of carpeting and/or padding which readily absorb flammable liquids collected from around the point of origin
- Suspect clothing worn at the time of the crime, including shoes, if appropriate
- Liquids containing possible accelerants
- Material used as a wick from an incendiary device (Molotov cocktail)
- Broken glass from bottles used in Molotov cocktails

When collecting arson evidence:

- Use clean unused airtight metal paint cans.
- Do not completely fill the paint cans with debris. Some air space is required for processing.
- Seal each collected item separately and securely.

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- Mark all containers with appropriate identifiers.
- Document locations from which evidence samples were collected in the notes, sketches, and photographs.