



Municipal Technical Advisory Service
INSTITUTE *for* PUBLIC SERVICE

Published on *MTAS* (<https://www.mtas.tennessee.edu>)

November 19, 2019

Investigating Fires/Demolishing Buildings

Dear Reader:

The following document was created from the MTAS website ([mtas.tennessee.edu](https://www.mtas.tennessee.edu)). This website is maintained daily by MTAS staff and seeks to represent the most current information regarding issues relative to Tennessee municipal government.

We hope this information will be useful to you; reference to it will assist you with many of the questions that will arise in your tenure with municipal government. However, the *Tennessee Code Annotated* and other relevant laws or regulations should always be consulted before any action is taken based upon the contents of this document.

Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or comments regarding this information or any other MTAS website material.

Sincerely,

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Investigating Fires/Demolishing Buildings

Reference Number: MTAS-241

Tennessee Code Annotated (T.C.A.) § 68-102-111 requires the assistant to the commissioner of the department of commerce and insurance, usually the fire chief, to investigate the cause, origin, and circumstance of all fires resulting in property damage and determine cause if possible. Further, the assistant to the commissioner, fire chief, must report all fires to the Tennessee Fire Incident Reporting System (TFIRS) within 10 days of the date of a fire. The assistant to the commissioner, fire chief, does not have to have the fire's cause determined by this time, as some fires will still be under investigation, but the fire chief must report the facts of fire's occurrence.

A fire chief, fire marshal, or mayor of a city without a fire department shall be designated an assistant to the commissioner of insurance to investigate fires, and a report of each investigation as required using the state approved method. Such an assistant may order the demolition and removal of irreparable structures at the expense of those responsible for them. In cities with no fire marshal, a fire marshal from another local government may be an assistant to the state commissioner on behalf of that city.

Under T.C.A. § 68-102-111, any assistant to the commissioner in the course of a fire investigation that finds that a building or other structure has been damaged so extensively that repair is not a feasible alternative, the assistant to the commissioner shall order the remains of the building or structure demolished, materials removed, and all dangerous conditions remedied.

TFIRS resources and information

How do you report to TFIRS? You have two free options.

You may use the NFIRS Data Entry Tool, which requires download and installation of an application on your computer. Or you may use the NFIRS Data Entry Browse Interface (DEBI), which is web-based and does not require download and installation. In either case, you must have an active user account to login. If you are not sure about your account status, contact the TFIRS Coordinator.

If you know you have an active account, you may download the Tool by going to www.nfirs.fema.gov/users [1] .

If you want to use DEBI, just go to www.nfirs.fema.gov/webtools [2] and click on the link Report Incidents (DEBI).

Can I use commercial software to report to TFIRS? Yes, but you must first export your data. Data is not automatically exported and uploaded to NFIRS. After exporting, upload the data using the NFIRS Bulk Import Utility (BIU). For additional information: <https://www.nfirs.fema.gov/NFIRSWebTools/BulkImportUpload/welcome.do> [3]

Links:

[1] <http://www.nfirs.fema.gov/users>

[2] <http://www.nfirs.fema.gov/webtools>

[3] <https://www.nfirs.fema.gov/NFIRSWebTools/BulkImportUpload/welcome.do>

DISCLAIMER: The letters and publications written by the MTAS consultants were written based upon the law at the time and/or a specific sets of facts. The laws referenced in the letters and publications may have changed and/or the technical advice provided may not be applicable to your city or circumstances. Always consult with your city attorney or an MTAS consultant before taking any action based on information contained in this website.

Source URL (retrieved on 11/19/2019 - 10:00am): <https://www.mtas.tennessee.edu/reference/investigating-firesdemolishing-buildings>



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