

INSIDE FIRE



Robert B. Whitmore, CFI

REFLECTIONS . . . TWENTY YEARS LATER, *By Robert B. Whitmore, CFI*

This year, Whitmore Fire Consultants, Inc. celebrates its 20th year in business conducting fire and explosion investigations throughout the United States! As a result, I thought it was appropriate to pause, for a few moments, and reflect on how we arrived at this point in our history. Many changes have taken place within our industry, new techniques have been developed, technology has evolved, etc., etc. The one constant, at least for us, has always been you, our loyal clients. With very few exceptions, the same clients we had twenty years ago have continued to utilize our services now two decades later.

Our first loss assignment came to us on the day we started our business, July 1, 1994. Pam Lucas, a Farmers Insurance adjuster, called me for a loss in Rochester, Minnesota that, as I recall, was a residential property that involved an air conditioning unit. Fast forward twenty years, Farmers Insurance assigned us a loss this morning in Winona, Minnesota. Pam Lucas is still at Farmers Insurance, albeit in the Alexandria, Minnesota area and I might add, she hasn't changed a bit (somehow that same attribute did not apply to me). What is even harder for me to wrap my mind around is that this is my 40th years of being involved in the fire investigation industry. So, if you will just bear with me for a few moments, I would like to take a look back, walk down memory lane, to where it all started and how we ended up today . . . Here at Whitmore Fire Consultants, Inc.

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From very humble beginnings being appointed to the York (Nebraska) Fire Department in 1974 as a firefighter riding a tailboard (yes, we still rode the tailboard in those days and I would do it again today if I could), I embarked on a career that even I could never dream of. Very quickly I ended up being the training officer and working part time for the Department of Education/Nebraska Fire Service teaching fire departments throughout Nebraska.

My efforts apparently caught the eye of one of my original mentors, John Primrose, who was the Chief Investigator with Robins, Davis & Lyons law firm (now Robins, Kaplan Miller & Ciresi), who hired me as a young fire investigator. We had a team of investigators that worked literally around the world on the largest, most complex fire and explosion investigations of our time. I was privileged to work with not only brilliant lawyers, but other investigators within our group such as G. Crawford Wiestling and Dr. Robert Schroeder, who continue to work within this industry to this day.

Today's fire investigators and fire protection engineers study notable fire cases in college such as the MGM Grand Hotel, Las Vegas Hilton, First Interstate Bank, Northwestern National Bank, PEPCON (Pacific Engineering), Illinois Bell Telephone and the World Trade Center, plus many, many more. Along with many gifted and talented experts, I investigated these fires.

After twenty years of the fire service and working in the legal arena, my wife Pam and I decided to embark on a new journey . . . thus the beginning of Whitemore Fire Consultants, Inc. was born on our four season porch in Prior Lake, Minnesota.

Assisting us in this journey were our two children, 10-year old Stacy and 8-year old Brian. Both of them accompanied me to fire scenes, helping with some of the less glamorous aspects of fire investigation, taping fire investigation photographs onto our reports for our clients, copying, etc. Today, Stacy is a graduate of the University of St. Thomas, and a successful business

manager for Paychex. She is married to her husband Alex Jadin, who is a partner in his law firm of Roeder, Smith, Jadin. Stacy and Alex have given me what I describe as "my soul", (my two children are my heart, but my grandchildren, Henry and Jacob are my soul.) Brian, as many of you know went on to graduate from the University of Nebraska (Go Big Red), and returned home to work at Whitemore Fire Consultants. He spent many years while in grade school, high school and college working with us and then worked to obtain the necessary training and education, eventually receiving his Certified Fire Investigator designation within the past two years.

Throughout the past twenty years another constant has been the extraordinary fire investigators that have worked along with me on this journey, and they too call this their home. In addition to Brian Whitemore, CFI, Mark McCue, CFI joined me in 1995, Brian Haag, CFI joined me in 2001 and Doug Noah, CFI became an investigator in 2008. I hand-picked each and everyone of these gentlemen who had fire investigation careers prior to coming to work with us. I have been proud and privileged to conduct countless fire investigations with them and watch them grow into the outstanding investigators that they have become, working diligently to meet the demands and needs of our clients.

Amy Powell is our business manager and the "bedrock" of the company with her handling of the day-to-day aspects of the company. I founded this company on the principle to "do what you do best . . . and let others do the rest." For me, what we did best was simply fire and explosion investigations. It is all we have done and it is all we will continue to do. The other aspects of our forensic world, i.e., mechanical, electrical, HVAC, etc., we leave to our learned and trusted colleagues that we have been lucky to work with throughout the years.

Countless changes have taken place throughout the past two decades that have changed the complexion and manner in which we do business. Some of these highlights include the following:

- The continued development of NFPA 921, Guide for Fire & Explosion Investigations, which was initially published in 1992. No other document or information has profoundly changed the manner in which we conduct our investigations as NFPA 921. It has "leveled the playing field" for virtually everyone involved with the fire investigation community.
- The change in case law throughout the majority of the United States pertaining to spoliation and "notice" provided to potentially responsible parties (PRP). It wasn't all that long ago that we conducted investigations, retained evidence and essentially conducted our entire investigation before any party was placed on notice. These laws have brought significant changes within our industry that have shaped how we conduct investigations today.
- Increased awareness of health risks associated with conducting fire investigations. Today, we have ongoing training programs to ensure the health and safety of our fire investigators. When I began my career we focused very little on the health hazards post-suppression while we conducted our origin and cause investigations. Today, we have much more awareness of the risks associated with our profession, albeit we still have more to learn and must always remind ourselves that safety should be our highest priority.
- Technology has continued to advance with "instant information" being available to communicate with clients, experts, attorneys, etc. During my lifetime we have evolved from the typewriter pounding out written reports to today, a myriad of options for communication avenues, i.e., email, Twitter, text messaging,

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electronic reporting, etc. It is amazing to continue to watch the evolution of our communication technology and how it can benefit all of us to communicate not only better, but more effectively in real time.

- The most used tool that we as fire investigators use every day to document our fire scenes is our cameras. Camera technology has evolved to allow us to more effectively photograph our scenes with greater precision than ever before. Digital photography has provided far reaching benefits for all of us from ease of use, greater clarity in photographs to better illustrate our investigations within our reports up to and including photographs we use in the courtroom. Our photographs continue to be very effective tools in communicating to our clients, attorneys, and juries the basis of our opinions with respect to the origin and cause of our fires and explosions.

In the end, with all the changes that have taken place throughout the years as it pertains to this business, the business of fire investigation, it still comes down to a singular process that is the same as it was when I started in this profession, “you have to get dirty to find the answers you’re looking for.” It is that simple concept that we as fire investigators employ each and every day of our careers. Whether it is hot, cold, raining, snowing, freezing or blowing, it is what we have chosen to do. To provide answers for those that seek answers as to “why?” Why their house burned, why they lost a child or a loved one, or whether their business will be able to overcome and survive. Countless questions that we work to find answers for each and every day. Our pledge to you on the 20th anniversary of this company, is that in those moments when individuals or businesses are experiencing one of the worst times of their lives, we at Whitmore Fire Consultants, Inc. will continue to be at our best and answer the timeless question of “why.”



The Adventures of Lewey



Hi, my name is Lewey (Powell) and as many of you know, I am the most recent new-hire at Whitmore Fire Consultants, Inc. I am the “Greeter” that welcomes all of our guests when they visit our offices in Elko. I have a few manners I am working on, like jumping up, barking and “staying”, but its because I am so excited to see you that I forget my manners, so please forgive me if I should get excited to see you and forget some of the duties of being the “greeter”. I’m still a baby, and am working on it.

I am now 5 months old, weigh about 48 pounds (unlike a girl, I am not ashamed to share my weight.) I spend my days not only meeting you, I play with my toys and investigate the grounds around the office.

Next time you stop by, I will be there to welcome you. Although my master “Amy” frowns upon providing me treats . . . well, we can keep that between you and me.

See you at the office



Save the Date

Annual Educational Seminar

Friday, May 1st

**Legend's Golf Course
Prior Lake, MN**

More Information to Follow

CLE's to be Applied For



Comings & Goings— A Message From Robert Whitemore



Greetings!

It's hard to believe that we are in the home stretch of 2014 and the holidays are quickly approaching. This has been a busy fire year for the State of Minnesota and surrounding areas. We are honored and privileged to represent our clients in their loss investigations. It is our goal to meet and exceed your expectations when you pick up the phone or go to our website to retain our services.

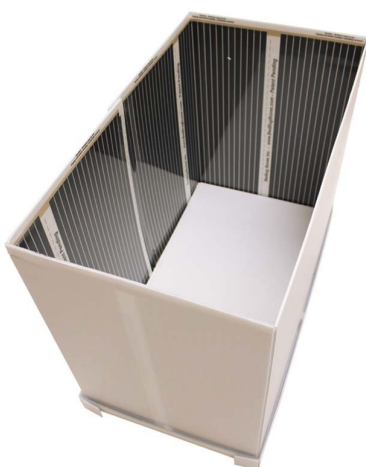
Hopefully you had a chance to read my article in this newsletter and indulged me a stroll down memory lane, taking a look back at the past 20 years. It is humbling to have the business relationships that we have with our clients that blossomed into personal friendships. Thanking you for your continued support seems to be inadequate words, but no words are more genuine and sincere. Thank you for the first fire assignment 20 years ago and thank you for the most recent one received today.

Thank you to my staff and other experts that work beside me each and every day. It is because of you that we are able to celebrate our 20th anniversary. Here's to the next 20 years!

Bob



PAB Two Recalls Bed Bug Heat Treatment System



The United States Consumer Product Safety Commission in cooperation with JAB Distributions d/b/a PAB Two LLC of Wheeling, Illinois has voluntarily issued a recall of the Bed Bug Treatment system. The flexible, electrical conducting strip at the top of the heating element can break at the corners after multiple setups, posting an electrical and fire hazard.

Approximately 1,700 units were sold at Bedbug Central Supply, Protect-a-Bed, Univar, pest control companies and pest control product distributors nationwide and online at Amazon.com from December 2011 through May 2014 for between \$189 and \$199. PAB has received four reports of the flexible, electrical strip breaking, including one report of a fire in a unit and three reports of units sparking. No injuries or significant

property damage was reported.

This recall involves the ThermalStrike Expedition bed bug heat treatment system. Consumers place items inside the system to kill bed bugs that may be in the items. The system is made of white, corrugated plastic and has four pieces: a base, a folding four-panel wall, a lid and a temperature sensor. The base and the walls are held together by hook and loop fasteners. When assembled, the unit is a box 31 inches long by 18 inches wide by 24 inches tall. The rear of the base has a power cord and the female connector of a power cable attached. The insides of the wall panels have a heating element composed of black heating film connected to a white, flexible electrical conducting strip. The male connector of the power cable is attached to the conducting strip and protrudes from the rear wall panel. The system is energized when the power cables are joined and the power cord is plugged into an electrical outlet. The words "ThermalStrike" and "Bed Bug Heat Treatment" are on the front of the unit. ThermalStrike is also printed on the heating element on the interior of the unit.

Consumers should immediately stop using and unplug the Expedition and register their unit online to receive an ASC Diagnostic Unit free of charge. The diagnostic unit will immediately turn off the system when it detects a break in the conducting strip. For more information, please visit the firm's website at: www.thermalstrike.com and click on "Important Product Upgrade" at the top of the page.



KYMCO Recalls ATVs Due to Burn & Fire Hazards



The United States Consumer Product Safety Commission in cooperation with KYM USA of Spartanburg, South Carolina has issued a voluntary recall of the All-terrain vehicles. In hot environments or high elevations, the fuel cap can fail to vent properly, causing the fuel to heat up and pressure to build up in the tank. The pressure can cause the fuel tank to rupture or the fuel to boil out of the tank onto the operator or hot engine, resulting in burns to the operator or a fire.



Approximately 540 units were sold at KYMCO dealers nationwide from April 2013 through August 2014 for about \$9,000.



The recall involves model year 2013, 2014 and 2015 KYMCO MXU 700 all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) including standard, LE and Camo versions. The vehicles came in black, camouflage, gold, green, red and silver. The words KYMCO and MXU 700, MXU 700 LE or MXU 700 Camo are on the front of the hood and on each rear fender. The vehicle identification number (VIN) in the format RFBLU45U*xBxxxxxx is located on the frame behind the right front wheel. The 10th digit of the VIN indicates the model year: D = 2013, E = 2014 and F = 2015. ATVs with the last six VIN digits in the following ranges are being recalled:

Model year	VIN RANGE (VINs begin with RFBLU45U*)
2013	DB120111 through DB130158
2014	EB120203 through EB130204
2015	FB120315 through FB320123

*represents a check digit that varies in each VIN

Consumers should immediately stop using the recalled ATVs and contact an authorized KYMCO dealer for a free repair. The original gas caps must be collected by the dealer to confirm the repair. For more information, please visit www.kymcousa.com and click on "Recall Information."



Fluid Handling Recalls Low Water Cut-Off Control Units



The United States Consumer Product Safety Commission in cooperation with Fluid Handling, LLC of Morton Grove, Illinois has voluntarily issued a recall of the McDonnell & Miller Low Water Cut-Off control units for hot water or steam boilers. The ground wire and probe wires could be incorrectly assembled in the units by the manufacturer, posing fire and explosion hazards.

Approximately 1,200 units were sold by wholesale plumbing distributors to plumbing suppliers from July 2014 through August 2014 for between \$80 and \$125. No incidents or injuries have been reported.



This recall involves McDonnell & Miller series 750 Low Water Cut-Off control units, which in connection with a water level sensor, are used as a primary or secondary safety control on hot water or steam boilers to signal the boiler to provide protection in low water conditions. The unit is mounted on the outside of a boiler, generally near the boiler's main electrical panel. They are black and measure about 6 inches high x 5 inches wide x 2 1/2 inches deep.

The units have a green LED "On" light, a red LED "Low Water" light and test and manual reset buttons on the top. "McDonnell & Miller," "Guard Dog," "Low Water Cut-Off" and model numbers 750-MT-120, 751-MT-120, 751P-MT-120 or 752P-MT-24 are printed on a white label on the outside of the unit. Date codes G41 or H41 are inked on the inside back plate.

Contact Fluid Handling/Xylem for a free inspection, repair or free installation of a replacement low water cut-off unit. The firm is contacting purchasers directly. For more information, please visit the firm's website at: <http://unitedstates.xylemappliedwater.com> and click on "Recall Notice".

RECALLS

Shivvers Recalls Country Clipper Riding Lawn Mowers

The United States Consumer Product Safety Commission in cooperation with Shivvers Manufacturing of Corydon, Iowa has voluntarily issued a recall of certain model number riding lawn mowers. The ignition module can fall to the ground, resulting in overheating and melting, posing a fire hazard.

Approximately 1,650 units were sold in the United States and 261 units in Canada at Country Clipper lawn mower dealers nationwide from October 2011 to May 2014 for between \$5300 and \$9500. Shivvers has received reports of four lawn mower ignition modules overheating and melting. No injuries have been reported.



This recall involves model year 2012, 2013 and 2014 Country Clipper riding lawn mowers. The



recalled mowers are equipped with 27-horsepower Kohler Command CV740 or Kohler Courage SV740 twin cylinder engines. The Command engine is dark gray and has the name and model number on a label on the side of the engine near the air filter. The Courage engine has a black engine shroud and has the name and model number on the top of the shroud. The recalled mowers are steered by either a joystick or two steering arms. The recalled mowers were manufactured from October

2011 to May 2014 and include the model names Challenger, Charger, Edge, Jazee, Jazee Pro and Jazee Pro DLX. For a complete list of model numbers involved in this recall, please visit : www.cpsc.gov, and click on "recalls."

Consumers should immediately stop using the recalled lawn mowers and contact a Country Clipper dealer to schedule a free repair. For more information, please visit the firm's website at: www.countryclipper.com and click on "Recall" on the left side of the page.





American Honda Recalls Recreational Off-Highway Vehicles

The United States Consumer Product Safety Commission in cooperation with American Honda Motor Company has voluntarily issued a recall of the Recreational off-highway vehicles. Vegetation and debris can accumulate on the middle skid plate and make contact with the vehicle's exhaust system. Dried debris can ignite, resulting in smoke or fire.



Approximately 15,400 vehicles were sold at authorized Honda powersports dealers nationwide from August 2013 through September 2014. Honda has received reports of 10 incidents involving fires resulting from vegetation and debris accumulating on the middle skid plate and making contact with the vehicle's exhaust system. No injuries have been reported.

This recall involves all models of the 2014 Honda Pioneer 700 recreational off-highway vehicle (ROV). ROVs are motorized off-road vehicles with a steering wheel, gas and brake pedals, bucket or bench seats, seat belts and an occupant protection structure. The recalled vehicles came in two-seat and four-seat models and were black with camouflage, olive or red hood and trim pieces. "HONDA" is on the front grill and rear tail gate. "Pioneer 700" appears on a tab on the sides of the vehicle just behind the driver's and front passenger's seats. The model and serial numbers are on a certification label affixed to the top rear of the driver's side front wheel well. For a complete list of the model and serial numbers involved in this recall, please visit www.cpsc.gov and click on "recalls."

Owners should immediately stop using the recalled vehicle and take it to an authorized Honda dealer to have the original middle skid plate removed and an updated skid plate installed free of charge.

For more information, please visit the firm's website at: www.powersports.honda.com and click on "Recall Information" at the bottom of the page.



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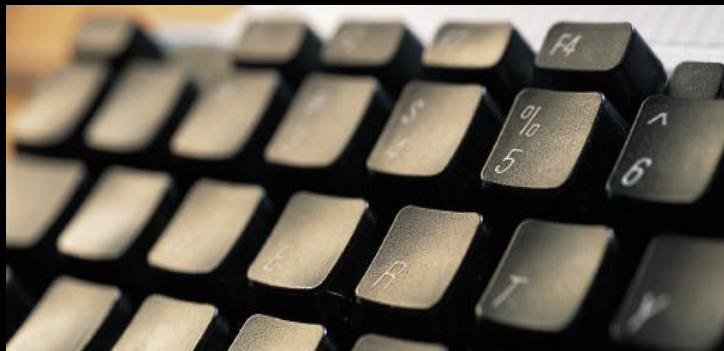


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www.whitemorefire.com

Click on "registration", complete the form and press "submit". It's easy and you won't miss a thing!



Submit Your Loss Online

Easy go to the **Whitemore Fire Consultant's** Website:

www.whitemorefire.com

Click on "Submit a Loss" tab

Complete the online form and press "submit" and you will receive an electronic confirmation of our receipt of your loss request. You will also receive a response from our on-call representative as well as a follow-up all during the next business day.