



Patrick Andler

Certified Fire Investigator

By Dan Baldwin

“There are a lot of fire investigators out there, but are they going to be able to take the stand and teach? My first career is a fire investigator. My second career for 30-plus years is a teacher. The majority of my time is spent teaching the fire sciences to my clients. If you do not have an individual who can teach the fire sciences to a jury, you are not going to win,” says Patrick Andler of Patrick Andler and Associates, Inc. Certified Fire Investigators.

Andler is a certified fire investigator, certified fire and explosion investigator, certified vehicle fire investigator and a certified fire instructor. He has investigated more than 4,000 fires and is recognized as one of the leading fire experts in the country. Andler also has more than 650 hours of classroom and practical instruction in fire and arson and is the author of *Fire Investigation*, a textbook published by Flame Publications.

He has testified for plaintiffs and defendants in municipal, state and federal courts and has participated in numerous arbitrations and mediations. Andler and Associates clients include attorneys, insurance companies, government agencies, utility companies and product manufacturers.

Andler says that there are few hands-on training opportunities available to fire investigators and that generally fewer law enforcement resources are allocated to arson cases. “Arson is a class 2 felony up

there with kidnapping and bank robbery. If a Bank of America in downtown Phoenix is robbed, they’re going to have about 40 FBI agents around. If someone breaks into a business and burns it to the ground, how many investigators do you think will be involved? Maybe one or two. If you’re lucky.”

This oversight and the application of inexact science in the past has led to some wrongful convictions. Working pro bono, Andler spent a year reviewing over 13,000 pages of evidence from a 1970 case. He was able to determine that the unfortunate death of 29 people was accidental, not arson. On April 2, 2013, 59-year-old Louis Taylor was released from prison after serving 42 years.

In an effort to both educate the public and study arson cases, Andler built two burn cells in a five-acre test laboratory outside of Phoenix. Andler and his team use this one-of-a-kind facility to recreate fire scenarios and study them.

Since 2002, Andler has hosted a one-day fire investigation seminar. He invites law enforcement officials, insurance investigators, attorneys and other fire investigators to learn about fire science from industry experts and watch various fire scenarios.

This ability to recreate fires led to one of the largest jury awards in Arizona history – \$42 million. Two boys coming home from school were injured in the explosion of a defective kitchen stove. The defense team accused the boys of causing

the fire with accelerants. Andler recreated the plaintiffs’ kitchen in the courtroom, demonstrated every pattern of the fire for the jury and proved that it could only have occurred by the failure of the stove.

Outside of his work on fire cases, Andler represents the Arizona Burn Foundation. He is passionate about using his expertise to help people and has spent many years volunteering with the foundation. He currently serves as their chairman. The foundation is essential to the treatment of patients in the Maricopa County Burn Unit, which is the second busiest hospital for burn victims in the United States.

“Statistically, every person will have at least one fire story to tell in his or her lifetime,” Andler says. He has devoted his career to elevating his profession by improving techniques for determining the causes of fire and arson and advocating for strict practice guidelines and standards of scientific methodology. He hopes that his legacy will help prevent fire, protect the innocent and help hold the guilty accountable.

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