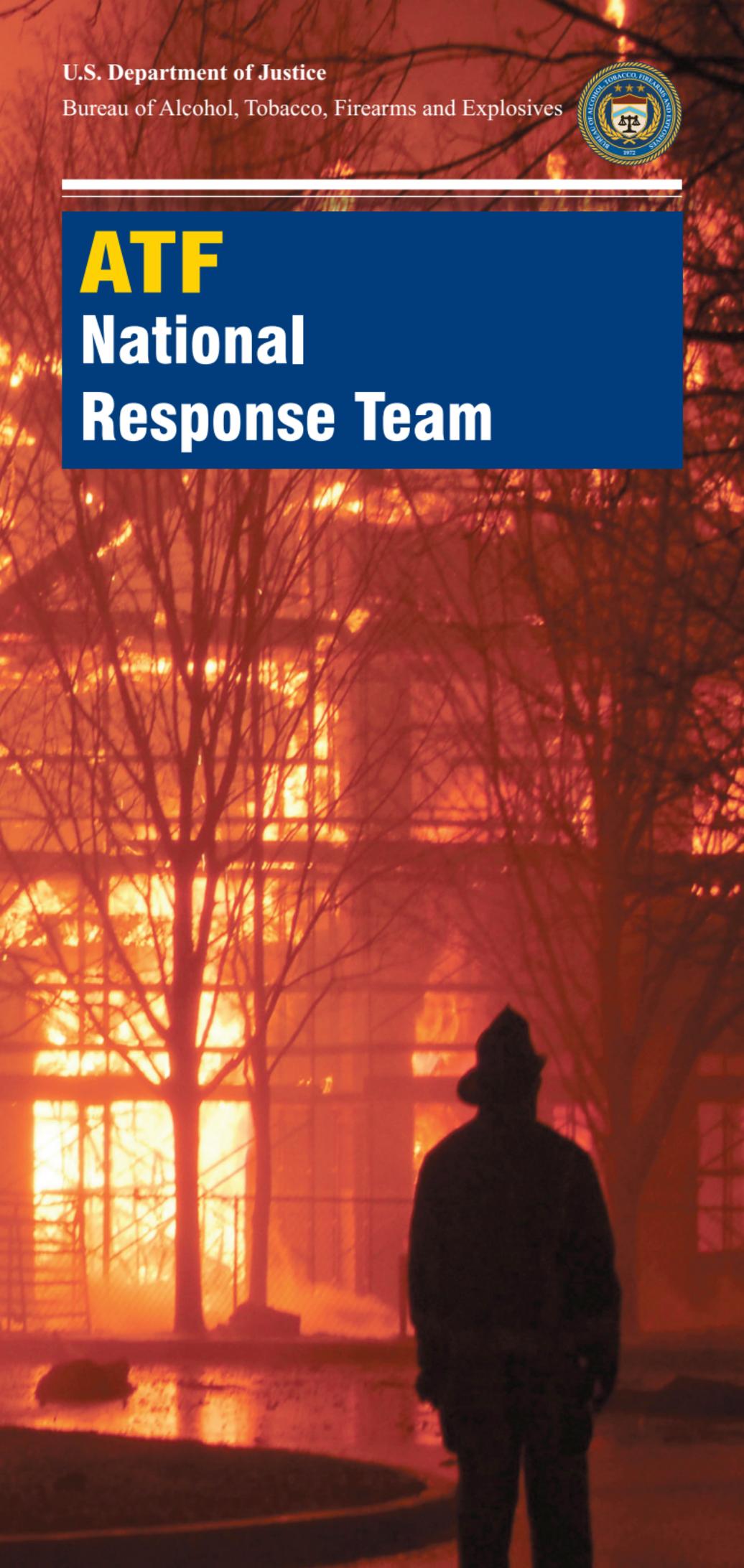


U.S. Department of Justice

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives



ATF National Response Team

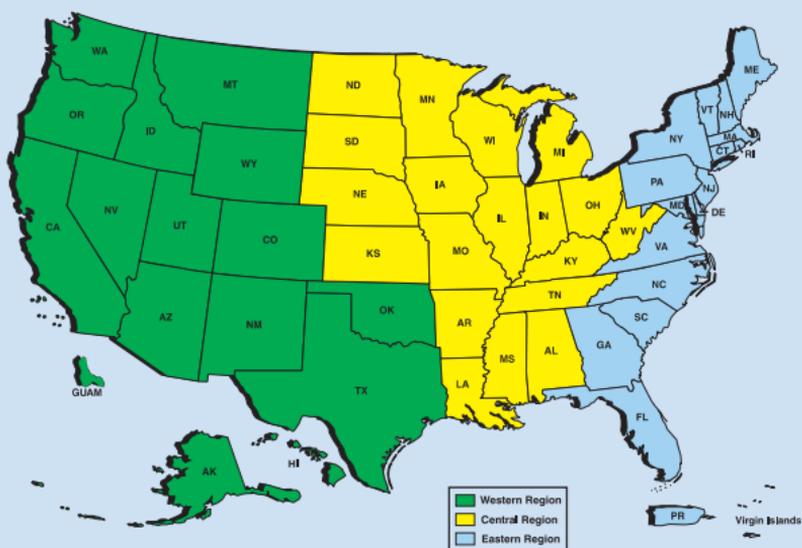




National Response Team

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) brings definitive expertise and an array of state-of-the-art equipment to the investigation of major fire and explosives incidents. In 1978, ATF developed a national response capability to meet the challenges faced at the scenes of major fires and explosions. This capability, the National Response Team (NRT), is composed of ATF's most experienced investigators and forensic experts. It is dispersed across three geographic regions to provide coverage throughout the United States.

ATF National Response Team Regions



The NRT typically works as part of a multi-agency team with other Federal, State, and local investigators to reconstruct the scene, identify the origin of the fire or seat of the blast, and determine the cause of the incident. In the case of arsons and bombings, NRT members gather evidence to support criminal prosecutions. A deployed team is generally broken down into two components: a group that processes the scene and a group that follows up on investigative leads. Both groups work together as a single “Team Concept.”



ATF's partnership with Federal, State, and local officers is vital to the most effective fire and explosion investigation efforts, and ATF strives to maintain a strong relationship with members of these other agencies.

The NRT consists of...

- Special agents who are trained as certified fire investigators, certified explosives specialists, and forensic mapping specialists. All special agents are experienced fire and explosives investigators who have worked numerous fire/explosives scenes and have extensive training.
- Special agents and State or local investigators who serve as canine handlers with an accelerant or explosives detection canine.
- Other specialized positions, such as explosives enforcement officers (bomb technicians), forensic chemists, fire protection engineers, and electrical engineers.



Equipment

The NRT has a fleet of fully equipped response vehicles that are strategically located throughout the United States, allowing the Team to be self-contained for the forensic examination of fire and explosion scenes. These trucks contain computer, recording, and communication equipment; an extensive selection of tools and equipment for scene processing and evidence collection; and personal protective equipment.



The NRT is also equipped with self-contained breathing apparatus and chemical protective suits, which allow the team to operate in Level A and B Hazardous Materials (HAZMAT) or Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) environments.

Professions/Specializations

Special Agent Certified Fire Investigators

- Trained in fire origin and cause, computer fire modeling, and technical interpretation of fire-related information.
- Conduct fire investigations and render expert testimony in court.



Special Agent Certified Explosives Specialists

- Trained in explosion origin and cause.
- Trained to identify, handle, and destroy explosives.
- Provide explosives technical support and assistance in explosives-related matters in the field.
- Conduct explosives investigations and render expert testimony in court.

Explosives Enforcement Officers (Bomb Technicians)

- Make explosive device technical classifications and reconstructions, and render expert testimony in court.
- Perform underwater explosives recoveries.
- Render safe improvised explosive devices.

Fire Protection Engineers

- Apply analytical tools in the areas of fire growth and dynamics and conduct engineering analyses to better understand fire behavior in structures.

- Provide insight into building and fire codes, fire test methods, fire performance of materials, computer modeling of fires, and failure analysis.

Electrical Engineers

- Provide information and perform forensic examinations on building power supplies, distribution systems, devices, and appliances to determine any role in fire or explosion causation.
- May also assist in the understanding of fire migration through a building, using tools such as arc fault mapping.



Accelerant and Explosives Detection Canines

- ATF's unique training methodology enables accelerant detection canines to find a variety of ignitable liquids that could be used to initiate a fire. It also trains explosives detection canines to locate improvised explosive devices, explosive residues, post-blast debris, firearms, ammunition, and spent shell casings.



Forensic Chemists

- Examine evidence collected at fire and explosives scenes to identify the explosives used, bomb or incendiary device components, and flammable or combustible liquids that may have been used to accelerate the spread of the fire.

- Serve as liaisons to other forensic laboratory services that may be needed. Forensic chemists have access to a wide variety of chemical and instrumental techniques to identify explosives and potential accelerants, as well as databases of components.
- Each ATF laboratory has a mobile lab that can arrive on-scene to begin processing forensic evidence.

ATF also has other key investigative assets that often respond as part of the NRT...

- *Arson and Explosives Criminal Investigative Analysts (Profilers)*
- *Special Agent Polygraph Examiners*
- *Forensic Auditors*
- *United States Bomb Data Center*
- *Intelligence Research Specialists*



NRT Activations

NRT activations include such incidents as the World Trade Center bombing in 1993, the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995, the Atlanta Olympic bombing in 1996, the terrorist attack on the Pentagon in 2001, the Charleston, S.C., furniture store fire in 2007 that killed nine firefighters, and the spree of 10 church arsons in Eastern Texas in 2010. Since its inception in 1978, the NRT has been activated more than 700 times.



NRT Activation Procedures

There is no fee for NRT services. A Federal, State, or local law enforcement or fire service official can request the services of the NRT by contacting the nearest ATF field office for an initial assessment. This assessment takes into consideration the target or victims, property damage, deaths and injuries, local ATF resources, and other factors.



International Response Team (IRT)

The deployment of ATF's resources is not limited to within U.S. boundaries. Through an agreement with the U.S. Department of State Diplomatic Security Service (DSS), ATF provides investigative, advisory, and technical/forensic assistance and oversight at select fire and/or postblast scene investigations occurring on United States property on foreign soil where DSS has investigative responsibility, and those affecting foreign governments on foreign territory.

The IRT has responded to requests from foreign countries, including Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Dominican Republic, St. Kitts and Nevis, Albania, Lithuania, Macedonia, Swaziland, Zambia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, South Korea, and Micronesia.



For information about the NRT Program, contact the Chief, Fire Programs and Training Branch, at (800) 800-3855.



The ATF National Response Team and Local Police/Fire Officials

*“Joining forces to
protect the public
and investigate fires
and explosions.”*