



HOUSE BILL 22: Fire Investigation Law Revisions.

2025-2026 General Assembly

Committee:	House State and Local Government. If favorable, re-refer to Insurance. If favorable, re-refer to Judiciary 1. If favorable, re-refer to Rules, Calendar, and Operations of the House	Date:	March 11, 2025
Introduced by:	Reps. Miller, Pyrtle	Prepared by:	Karyl Smith
Analysis of:	PCS to First Edition H22-CSCJ-1		Committee Co-Counsel

OVERVIEW: *House Bill 22 would permit the State Fire Marshal, through the Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM), to investigate fires under Article 79 of Chapter 58 of the General Statutes. The PCS clarifies that both the Director of the State Bureau of Investigation (SBI) and the State Fire Marshal have the right to supervise and direct a fire investigation, and makes technical corrections.*

CURRENT LAW: Article 79 of Chapter 58 of the General Statutes authorizes the Director of the SBI to do the following:

- Investigate every fire occurring in a municipality or county where property has been damaged or destroyed. G.S. 58-79-1.
- Examine the circumstances and origins of all fires related to G.S. 58-79-1, deciding whether the fire was due to carelessness or caused by an incendiary; take testimony from all persons with knowledge related to the fire; and to make an arrest or cause an arrest to be made when the SBI is of the opinion there is evidence of arson. G.S. 58-79-5.
- Summon and compel the attendance of any witnesses to testify in relation to a fire investigation and enter and examine any premises where a fire has occurred. G.S. 58-79-10.
- Bring those persons who fail to comply with a summons or subpoena before a court to be punished for contempt. G.S. 58-79-15.
- Request that an insurance company investigating the loss of real or personal property due to fire release all information pertaining to the fire. Where an insurance company suspects the property loss was caused by incendiary means, the insurance company shall furnish all relevant materials to the SBI and cooperate with law enforcement. G.S. 58-79-40.

BILL ANALYSIS: House Bill 22 would amend Article 79 of Chapter 58 to do the following:

- Grant OSFM the authority currently granted to the SBI as outlined above, except the power to arrest.
- Specify that the SBI has exclusive right to supervise and direct fire investigations involving:
 - Death or serious bodily injury.
 - First- or second-degree arson.
 - Buildings owned or occupied by State or local government.

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- Buildings owned or leased by educational institutions, churches, or religious buildings.
- Remove the requirement that any officer conducting a preliminary fire investigation notify the SBI and furnish a written statement of all facts related to the fire within one week.

EFFECTIVE DATE: The bill would become effective October 1, 2025.