To require the United States Fire Administration to conduct on-site investigations of major fires, and for other purposes.

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Empowering the U.S. Fire Administration Act”.

SEC. 2. FIRE INVESTIGATIONS.

The Federal Fire Prevention and Control Act of 1974 (15 U.S.C. 2201 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following:
“SEC. 38. INVESTIGATION AUTHORITIES.

“(a) In General.—In the case of any major fire, the Administrator may send incident investigators, which may include safety specialists, fire protection engineers, codes and standards experts, researchers, and fire training specialists, to the site of the fire to conduct an investigation as described in subsection (b).

“(b) Investigation Required.—A fire investigation conducted under this section—

“(1) shall be conducted in coordination with appropriate Federal, State, and local authorities, including Federal agencies that are authorized to investigate a major fire or an incident of which the major fire is a part; and

“(2) shall examine the determined cause and origin of the fire and assess broader systematic matters to include use of codes and standards, demographics, structural characteristics, smoke and fire dynamics (movement) during the event, and costs of associated injuries and deaths.

“(c) Report.—Upon concluding any fire investigation under this section, the Administrator shall issue a public report to local, State, and Federal authorities on the findings of such investigation, or collaborate with another investigating Federal agency on that agency’s report, including recommendations on—
“(1) any other buildings with similar characteristics that may bear similar fire risks;

“(2) improving tactical response to similar fires;

“(3) improving civilian safety practices;

“(4) assessing the costs and benefits to the community of adding fire safety features; and

“(5) how to mitigate the causes of such fire.

“(d) DISCRETIONARY AUTHORITY.—In addition to investigations conducted pursuant to subsection (a), the Administrator may send fire investigators to conduct investigations at the site of any fire with unusual or remarkable context that results in losses less severe than those occurring as a result of a major fire, in coordination with appropriate Federal, State, and local authorities, including Federal agencies that are authorized to investigate a major fire or an incident of which the major fire is a part.

“(e) MAJOR FIRE DEFINED.—For purposes of this section, the term ‘major fire’ shall have the meaning given such term under regulations to be issued by the Administrator.”.