



ATF News

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ATF NATIONAL RESPONSE TEAM ACTIVATED TO \$3 MILLION FIRE IN PALO ALTO

PALO ALTO, Calif. -- The National Response Team from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) along with ATF special agents from the San Francisco Field Division have entered the investigation of a fire that occurred Sunday night at a commercial building that housed a Walgreens drugstore and a Subway sandwich shop in Palo Alto.

Firefighters from Palo Alto, Mountain View and Santa Clara County responded and were involved in the fire suppression for more than five hours. Preliminary damages were estimated at nearly \$3 million and the building, at 310 University Avenue, one of the busiest streets in the Palo Alto area, appears to be a total loss. There were no injuries reported.

“The Palo Alto Fire Department and the Palo Alto Police Department have made a joint request for ATF’s National Response Team to assist us in the origin and cause of this fire,” Palo Alto Fire Chief Nicholas Marinaro said. National Response Team (NRT) members were due to arrive Tuesday to initiate the scene investigation.

The NRT has brought definitive expertise and an array of state-of-the-art equipment to the investigation of major fire and explosives incidents since 1978. Four regional components, organized geographically to cover the United States, comprise the NRT. Once requested, the team can respond within 24 hours to assist state and local law enforcement or fire service personnel in onsite investigations.

The responding NRT component normally has 13-18 members, including veteran special agents who have post-blast and fire origin-and-cause expertise; forensic chemists; explosives enforcement officers; fire protection engineers; accelerant detection canines; explosives detection canines; and intelligence, computer forensic and audit support. A fleet of fully equipped response vehicles strategically located throughout the United States provides logistical support.

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ATF's partnership with federal, state and local officers is vital to the most effective processing efforts at an explosives or fire scene. The NRT capitalizes on that by working alongside its partners in reconstructing the scene, identifying the seat of the blast or the origin of the fire, conducting interviews and sifting through debris to obtain evidence related to the explosion or fire.

In addition to investigating hundreds of large fire and explosives scenes, the NRT trucks were deployed for the 2001 terrorist attack on the Pentagon, the Olympics and other major sporting events in the United States, presidential inaugurations and the national political conventions, and major international conferences.

This is the 17th activation of the NRT in fiscal year 2007 and the 635th since the program began in 1978.

ATF is the federal law enforcement agency with jurisdiction for investigating major fires and crimes of arson. More information on ATF and its programs is at www.atf.gov.

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