



ATF News

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For Immediate Release
September 19, 2007

ATF NATIONAL RESPONSE TEAM ACTIVATED TO NEW CANEY HOTEL FIRE

NEW CANEY, Texas – The National Response Team (NRT) of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) along with ATF special agents from the Houston Field Office have been activated to assist the Montgomery County Fire Marshal's Office in the investigation of a Sept. 18 fire at a Best Western Inn located in New Caney, Texas.

Robert Elder, Team Special Agent in Charge of the Western NRT, estimates that damage costs to the three-story building, located at 22033 US Highway 59 North, exceed \$3.2 million.

“ATF is assisting the Montgomery County Fire Marshal's Office in the joint investigation. We will work together to determine the origin and cause of this fire,” Elder said.

It is expected that the complete team will be on scene late this afternoon. Presently, agents and officers from ATF's Arson and Explosives Task Force in Houston are assisting in the initial assessments of the fire scene.

In 1978, ATF developed the NRT to assist federal, state and local investigators in meeting the challenges faced at the scenes of significant arson and explosives incidents. The NRT consists of four teams organized geographically to cover the United States. Each team can respond within 24 hours to assist state and local law enforcement/fire service personnel in onsite investigations.

In addition to investigating hundreds of large fire scenes, the NRT has also been activated to scenes such as the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, the Oklahoma City Federal Building bombing and the 9/11 Pentagon crash site, as well as explosions at explosives and ammunition manufacturing plants, legal fireworks factories and illegal explosive device manufacturing operations.

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The teams are each composed of 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; intelligence support, computer forensic support and audit support. The teams work alongside state and local officers in reconstructing the scene, identifying the seat of the blast or origin of the fire, conducting interviews, and sifting through debris to obtain evidence related to the bombing/arson.

Further complementing the team's efforts are technical, legal and intelligence advisors. Moreover, a fleet of fully equipped response vehicles strategically located throughout the United States is available to provide logistical support.

This will be the NRT's 21st activation this fiscal year and the 639th activation since the inception of the NRT in 1978.

ATF is the federal agency with jurisdiction for investigating fires and crimes of arson. More information on ATF can be found at www.atf.gov.

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