

NEWS RELEASE

**The Ohio
Department of Commerce**

**Ted Strickland, Governor
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OHIO DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Grocery Store Fire Ruled Arson; Reward Offered For Public's Assistance

Investigators with the Division of State Fire Marshal's (SFM) Fire & Explosion Investigation Bureau, along with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), the Franklin County Sheriff's Office and the Franklin Township Fire Department, today announced that the January 26, 2009 fire at Food Max grocery store has been ruled arson. Investigators are seeking assistance from the public and a reward for information has been offered.

Investigators say the fire at Food Max on Frank Road in Columbus was intentionally set. All accidental causes have been eliminated and crucial evidence supporting the arson ruling has been recovered. Because the fire has been determined to be a criminal act, specific details about the evidence will not be released at this time.

The fire occurred at 1200 Frank Road on January 26, 2009. The 2-alarm blaze completely destroyed the building. No injuries were reported.

"Investigators have solid leads but believe the public may be able to provide additional details about this fire," said State Fire Marshal Michael P. Bell. "We know someone in the community has more information about this fire and we want to hear from them." Bell said it does not matter how insignificant the information may seem to the individual. It could be exactly the tip that investigators are seeking.

State Fire Marshal investigators posted Blue Ribbon Arson reward signs at the store today. The Blue Ribbon Arson Committee is offering up to a \$5,000 reward for information leading to the identification of the person or persons responsible for the fires. Anyone with information is asked to call the State Fire Marshal's Fire & Explosion Investigation Bureau at **1-800-589-2728** or the Franklin County Sheriff's Office at **614-462-6731**.

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