



ATF News

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ATF'S NATIONAL RESPONSE TEAM ACTIVATED TO LUMBER COMPANY FIRE IN HOUSTON

HOUSTON – 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 Harris County Fire Marshal in the investigation of the March 1 fire at the McCauley Lumber Co. in Houston.

Dewey Webb, Special Agent in Charge of ATF in Houston, said damage estimates to the 27,500-square foot building at 626 Aldine Bender Road exceed \$2 million. "ATF is assisting the Harris County Fire Marshal in this joint investigation," he added.

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.

The NRT will be on the scene of the fire beginning tomorrow morning. This will be the NRT's 11th activation this fiscal year and the 628th 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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