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**June 10, 2004
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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HOME DEPOT SERIAL ARSONIST SENTENCED

BALTIMORE, Maryland - Thomas M. DiBiagio, United States Attorney for the District of Maryland, announced that today United States District Court Judge William D. Quarles, Jr. sentenced Derek Wesley Hall, Sr., age 33, of Elkton, Maryland, to 60 months in prison followed by 2 years of supervised release for setting fires at a Home Depot store in Edgewood, Maryland on August 14, 2003 and a Home Depot store in Bel Air, Maryland on August 17 2003.

According to a statement of facts presented to the court on March 29, 2004 as part of his guilty plea, Hall was a former employee of Home Depot who had been terminated in March for creating a hostile work environment. Hall was observed on security cameras in each of the stores shortly before the fires occurred. The fires occurred while the stores were open, forcing the evacuation of customers and employees.

Fire investigators determined that the Edgewood store fire was started on top of wooden pallets inside of the Garden Center of the store, and the Bel Air store fire was started in the lumber department. A punctured container of acetone, a pack of matches, and a burnt pamphlet were recovered at the Bel Air fire scene. Acetone is a special purpose thinner, cleaner and paint remover and is extremely flammable.

Hall was also observed at the site of another fire at a Home Depot store in Newark, Delaware which was started by igniting a combustible liquid in the lumber aisle. A can of acetone with Hall's fingerprint was recovered from the Delaware fire scene. Hours after the Delaware fire occurred, the fire was set in the Bel Air Home Depot lumber aisle and an identical can of acetone was recovered. Hall has also plead guilty to state arson charges in Delaware in connection with that fire and is awaiting sentencing.

In addition to imposing the 60 month sentences which will run concurrently, Judge Quarles also ordered Hall to make restitution to Home Depot in the amount of \$630.92, and imposed special assessments totaling \$200.

The case was investigated by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and the Maryland State Fire Marshal's Office. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Angela R. White and Christopher J. Romano.
