



# ATF News

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives  
Charlotte Field Division

Contact: ATF PIO Earl Woodham  
Cell: 704-591-5005

For Immediate Release  
Aug. 7, 2007

## **ATF NATIONAL RESPONSE TEAM ACTIVATED TO SPRUCE PINE**

SPRUCE PINE, N.C. – The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) National Response Team, along with ATF special agents from the Charlotte Field Division, have entered the investigation of a large commercial fire that occurred Saturday, Aug. 4, in the downtown area of Spruce Pine. The NRT responded at the request of the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation.

Carl Vasilko, special agent in charge of the NRT response, said that at least two of the downtown businesses located in the Spruce Pine center city area were destroyed and early estimates of damages are in excess of \$ 1 million.

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. 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.

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

-more-

Page 2

other major sporting events in the United States; presidential inaugurations and the national political conventions; and major international conferences.

This is the 19<sup>th</sup> NRT activation in fiscal 2007 and the 637<sup>th</sup> since the program began in 1978. Other agencies involved in the investigation are the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation, and the Spruce Pine Police and Fire Departments

###