



ATF News

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ATF NATIONAL RESPONSE TEAM ACTIVATED TO ORANGE COUNTY, CALIF., WILDFIRE AT SANTIAGO CANYON

LOS ANGELES – The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) National Response Team (NRT), along with ATF special agents from the Los Angeles Field Division, have entered the investigation of the Santiago Canyon fire that began Oct. 21, 2007, in Orange County, Calif., at the request of the Orange County Fire Authority.

Special Agent in Charge John Torres of ATF's Los Angeles Field Division said that the approximately 23,000 acres of land have been destroyed and early estimates of damages are in excess of \$2 million.

ATF's 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 certified fire investigators who are veteran special agents with 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 other major sporting events in the United States, presidential inaugurations and the national political conventions, and major international conferences.

This is the 1st NRT activation in fiscal year 2008 and the 640th since the program began in 1978. Other agencies involved in the investigation are the Orange County Sheriffs Office, California Department of Forestry, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and U.S. Forest Service.

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