



The Violent Crime Bureau

News Release



St. Paul Field Division

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ATF National Response Team Activated to Motel Fire in Steele, ND

Landmark Hotel, Lounge and Restaurant Guttled by Fire

ST. PAUL, Minn — The National Response Team (NRT) of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), along with ATF special agents from the St. Paul Field Division, at the request of the North Dakota Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI), have entered the investigation into a fire at the Lone Steer Motel, Highway 31, Steele, N.D. The fire was reported shortly before 9 a.m., Sunday and was heavily involved upon the arrival of the Steele Fire Department. The team of two dozen agents and specialists will arrive today and begin the scene investigation.

“ATF is investigating this fire scene jointly with the BCI and the North Dakota Fire Marshals Office,” said Bernard J. Zapor, ATF Special Agent in Charge of the St. Paul Field Division. “We will work together as one unit to determine the origin and cause of this tragic incident.”

The Steele Fire Department, Steele Police Department and the Kidder County Sheriff’s Office are also investigative partners. The total loss of the Lone Steer Motel is approximately \$1.5 million. This is the 13th activation of the NRT in fiscal year 2012, and the 734th activation since the inception of the team in 1978.

In 1978, ATF developed the NRT to investigate in partnership with federal, state and local investigators in meeting the challenges faced at the scenes of significant arson and explosives incidents. The NRT consists of three teams organized geographically to cover the United States. Each team can respond within 24 hours to work jointly with 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 Murrah 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.

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 forensic 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.

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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.

ATF is the federal agency with jurisdiction for investigating fires and crimes of arson. More information on ATF can be found at <http://www.atf.gov/>.

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