



ATF News

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives
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ATF, AMARILLO FIRE DEPARTMENT COMPLETE ON-SCENE INVESTIGATION INTO CHURCH FIRE; CAUSE UNDETERMINED

AMARILLO, Texas -- Jeffery Fulton, Special Agent in Charge of the National Response Team, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), and Steve Ross, Fire Chief for the City of Amarillo, announced today that they have completed their on scene investigation and classified as undetermined the cause of the Feb. 26 fire that severely damaged the sanctuary and surrounding offices of St. Mary's Catholic Church.

The ATF National Response Team and the Amarillo Fire Department completed their scene work earlier today. "The investigators conducted in excess of 50 interviews and fully processed the scene," Ross said. "The information developed was reviewed and analyzed to assist in determining the cause of the fire."

Based on the fire scene examination and witness statements known to the investigators at the time of their report, the investigators believe the fire began in mezzanine area near the top of the stairs in the northeast section of the church. Based on the extensive damage in the mezzanine area, all possible accidental ignition sources could not be eliminated as the cause of the fire, which caused in excess of \$5 million in damage. The investigators uncovered no indication of criminal activity during either the scene examination or investigation, and classified the official cause of the fire as undetermined pending further investigation.

Fulton and Ross said they were "impressed with the cooperation exhibited by all agencies involved in the case and wanted to express their appreciation to the following agencies for their tremendous support: Potter County Sheriffs Office, Potter County Fire Department, Randall County Sheriffs Office, Amarillo Police Department, City of Canyon Police Department, Texas State Fire Marshal's Office, Bedford Texas Fire Department." They also thanked the citizens of Amarillo, and especially the St. Mary's congregation for their help and cooperation.

ATF is the federal agency with jurisdiction for investigating major fires and crimes of arson. More information on ATF and its programs is available at www.atf.gov.

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