



# ATF News

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives  
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For immediate release  
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## **ATF AND PRINCE WILLIAM FIRE MARSHALS SEEKING PUBLIC'S ASSISTANCE IN FINDING ARSONIST**

WASHINGTON — The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), along with the Prince William Fire Marshal's Office is seeking the public's help in identifying the person(s) responsible for the fire at the Abundant Life Baptist Church in Dumfries, Va. The fire occurred at approximately 1 a.m. on April 28, 2005, and completely destroyed the church, which was located at 17950 Curtis Drive in Dumfries. Fire damage to the church was over \$1 million. Two firefighters also received minor injuries while fighting the fire.

Arson investigations are very complex, often taking several months or years to complete. Once again, we are asking for assistance from the public in helping to identify this fire setter. An ATF behavioral profiler has provided investigators with a list of traits and characteristics that might assist someone who may know the individual responsible for this fire. People from all walks of life have been convicted of arson, including professional people, public safety officials, and others. Oftentimes members of the public have information of value, but don't come forward with the information because of concerns that it may not be important, or may be a waste of time. Members of the public should contact ATF or the Prince William Fire Marshal's office no matter how insignificant they might think their information is.

The following analysis is not considered all inclusive, and the public should not discount an individual they suspect if he does not fit perfectly with this analysis. The use of the profiler is just one of many investigative tools available to investigators and is not the end all to a case.

- This fire was intentionally set; it is possible, however, that the fire setter did not intend for the blaze to get so out of hand, resulting in the total destruction of the church. An assessment of this type of offender would suggest that at the time of the fire, he was stressed by some emotional issue and may have been experiencing feelings of hurt, anger or jealousy. Although starting the fire may have given him some temporary relief, it is unlikely that its results provided him any comfort. He may have resorted to substance abuse to deal with the original problems, which may now be escalated by feelings of remorse for his actions.

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- This anniversary time will remind him of the night of the fire and bring forth feelings of anxiety associated with it. This anxiety cannot ever be totally relieved since this investigation will not be closed until the offender is identified. He probably has not been able to move on at all with his life, and he will not be able to do so, until this matter is resolved. Others around him may note he is particularly withdrawn or anxious at this time. Again, he may turn to alcohol and drug use to attempt to ease his pain.
- Investigators would like to help him. It's possible that things may have gotten out of hand that night and we'd like to hear his side of the story. What may have started as a simple act of vandalism grew into a much greater than intended destruction of property. Fortunately, he did not set fire to an occupied dwelling. Again, investigators are confident he will be identified. If he chooses to contact us, and begin the process of putting this incident behind him, it will weigh heavily in his favor in how he is viewed and treated by our legal system.
- Investigators have considered the possibility that the person responsible for this fire did not act alone and that the fire may have been motivated by kicks or excitement. It is unlikely that they intended for the entire church to be destroyed. Our experience shows that in incidents involving more than one fire setter, eventually at least one of the parties' talks or is identified through investigation. Obviously, it would be in their best interests to come forward together. Relationships and loyalties change over time. Priorities to associations may change as individuals mature and develop new values. At least one of these individuals is considering coming forward and is encouraged to do so. Investigators understand that the events of that night could have been the result of a prank gone badly.
- Investigators are reaching out to the public at large, especially to those persons who may be potential witnesses or have crucial information. It may be that someone close to the fire setter suspects or knows of his involvement. There is a great likelihood that at least one family member — a parent, sibling, or older relative — has knowledge or strong suspicions about the fire setter. It truly is in the best interest of the person or persons responsible to be identified. Individuals close to the fire setter are not doing him any favors by preventing his accountability for the act.

Anyone with information on the fire should contact investigators at:

1-888-ATF-FIRE

PRINCE WILLIAM FIRE MARSHALS

1-703-792-6360

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