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FIRE MARSHAL

OFFICE OF THE KANSAS STATE FIRE MARSHAL

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GOVERNOR

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **KSFMO AND ATF JOINTLY ANNOUNCE PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATIVE FINDINGS IN FATAL EXPLOSION**

CRESTLINE, Kan. -- The Kansas State Fire Marshal's Office (KSFMO), the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), and the Cherokee County Sheriff's Office (CKSO) today announced preliminary results into the ongoing investigation of the fatal explosion and fire at the Fireworks Spectacular storage facility in Crestline.

The investigation indicates that six employees were in the process of loading aerial display fireworks from a storage magazine into a portable trailer for transportation to St. Louis, Mo. for several planned fireworks displays. The shells were "pre-squibed" and loaded into boxes. "Pre-squibed" means that the initiator (electric match) is attached to the fuse of the shell. This is a common practice in the fireworks industry so that the process can be done in a controlled and safer environment instead of at the scene of the display.

According to witness accounts, during the process of loading the boxes, one of the boxes made a sound and then exploded. The explosion of that box caused the other fireworks to ignite, causing the detonation of most of the remaining shells and the subsequent fire in both of the trailers. The exact cause of detonation of the first box is the focus of the ongoing investigation.

Autopsies were scheduled in Topeka, Kan., for the victims, Faron Trey Robinson, 29, and Daniel Lee Groves, 29 both of Scammon, Kan. Both Cody Soper, 21, and Craig Banke, 32, still remain at St. John's Hospital in Springfield, Mo. Ryan Holding, 24, was released from the hospital late yesterday evening and Michael Lee Dalton Jr., 34, is recovering at home from minor injuries.

"This tragedy comes to us after an uneventful Fourth of July, when our communities are most familiar with the spectacular firework displays symbolizing the birth of our country. Our sympathy goes out to families of those involved in the incident," said Rose Rozmiarek, Chief of Investigations, Kansas State Fire Marshal's Office.

Paul Marquardt, spokesman for ATF's Kansas City Field Division, said, "ATF is assisting the Kansas State Fire Marshal's Office and the Cherokee County Sheriff's Office in the investigation of this tragic accident. We want to reassure the community that the remaining explosives at the site currently pose no danger to their homes or roadways in the area."

"Our county is a small county made up of small communities. Everyone knew these young men and therefore we are all sympathetic to our friends and neighbors who have experienced a tragic loss. I am extremely grateful to all the agencies who have professionally helped us try and find out what happened," Sheriff Norman stated.

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