



Los Angeles Fire Department
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Fire Chief Ralph M. Terrazas



NEWS RELEASE

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ATF National Response Team Joins LAFD Fire Investigation at Venice Storage Facility

LOS ANGELES – In the wake of a Major Emergency structure fire in Venice on Saturday, October 25, the Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) Arson/Counter-Terrorism Section requested the assistance of the Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) National Response Team (NRT) to aid in the cause investigation.

Shortly after more than 365 LAFD firefighters extinguished the Major Emergency fire at Extra Space Storage, 658 Venice Blvd., on Sunday morning, LAFD Arson units began their investigation. Due to the extensive damage to storage items inside the building and the potential for significant monetary losses, the LAFD asked the ATF to activate the NRT. As a result, approximately 20 ATF agents and specialists arrived in Los Angeles to join LAFD Arson investigators and local ATF special agents at the scene on Tuesday morning.

“The LAFD is committed to using all of the resources available to help determine the cause of this fire,” said Battalion Chief Robert Nelson, head of the LAFD Arson/Counter-Terrorism Section. “We thank the ATF for activating their National Response Team and look forward to conducting this investigation together.”

Carlos A. Canino, ATF Special Agent in Charge of the Los Angeles Field Division said, “We will work together in partnership and provide our expertise as a force multiplier to determine the origin and cause of this fire.”

The intense and exhausting blaze inside the two-story, 81,000 square-foot storage facility took more than 14 hours to fully extinguish after firefighters first arrived on scene around 7:30 p.m. Saturday. Eight LAFD firefighters were treated at the scene for injuries ranging from heat

exhaustion to minor burns. Five firefighters were transported to local hospitals for evaluation. All five have subsequently been released from the hospital.

The estimated total monetary loss of the fire is still pending. This is the second activation of the NRT in Fiscal Year 2015 and the 762nd 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 four 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 bombing/arson incidents.

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 www.atf.gov

More information about the LAFD can be found at www.lafd.org and specific information about this fire can be found at www.lafd.org/news.

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