

HB

350

Alaska State Legislature

House of Representatives



Official Business

State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Representative Carl Gatto

Representative Max Gruenberg

Date: January 29, 2004
To: Representative Lesil McGuire
Chair, Judiciary Committee
From: Representative Carl Gatto
Representative Max Gruenberg
Re: Hearing request for HB 350

We would respectfully request the committee schedule a hearing for House Bill 350, Compensation for Victims of Arson, at your earliest convenience. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Teri at x4940 or Colleen at x3743.

Thank you for your consideration.

Alaska State Legislature

House of Representatives



Official Business

State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Representative Carl Gatto

Representative Max Gruenberg

SPONSOR STATEMENT

CSHB 350 (State Affairs) Compensation for Victims of Arson

Late last summer a home in Anchorage was severely damaged by a fire deliberately set by an unknown perpetrator while the family was asleep. Fortunately the family survived without injury. However many other arson victims have not been so fortunate. Deliberately setting a fire that endangers someone else is first-degree arson, a class A felony. Current Alaska law does not include first-degree arson on the list of crimes for which victims may receive compensation from the Violent Crimes Compensation Board (VCCB). CSHB 350 (State Affairs) simply adds arson to the list of crimes for which victims may receive compensation.

FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA
2004 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Fiscal Note Number: _____
 Bill Version: HB 350
 () Publish Date: _____

Revision Date/Time (Note if correction): _____ Dept. Affected: Administration
 Title An act relating to adding personal Inju RDL: Violent Crimes Compensation Board
and property damage from arson. Component Violent Crimes Compensation Board
 Sponsor Representatives Gatto, Gruenberg
 Requester House State Affairs Committee Component No. 2694

Expenditures/Revenues (Thousands of Dollars)

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below.

OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY 2005	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010
Personal Services						
Travel						
Contractual						
Supplies						
Equipment						
Land & Structures						
Grants & Claims						
Miscellaneous						
TOTAL OPERATING	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

CAPITAL EXPENDITURES						
-----------------------------	--	--	--	--	--	--

CHANGE IN REVENUES ()						
-------------------------------	--	--	--	--	--	--

FUND SOURCE (Thousands of Dollars)

1002 Federal Receipts						
1003 GF Match						
1004 GF						
1005 GF/Program Receipts						
1037 GF/Mental Health						
Other PFD Criminal Fund						
TOTAL	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Estimate of any current year (FY2004) cost: 0.0
 Mark this box (X) if funding for this bill is included in the Governor's FY 2005 budget proposal:

POSITIONS

Full-time						
Part-time						
Temporary						

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary)
 HB 350 would add arson as a compensable crime and property damage as a compensable loss under AS 18.67. Only the most serious of arson cases (first degree) would be eligible for consideration by the Violent Crimes Compensation Board. These cases would compete with other eligible applicants for available grant payments.

Prepared by: Susan L. Browne, Administrator Phone 465-3040
 Division: Violent Crimes Compensation Board Date/Time 1/16/04 4:03 PM
 Approved by: Commissioner Mike Miller Date 1/16/2004
 Agency: Department of Administration

VICTIMS



1057 W. Fireweed Lane, Suite • Anchorage, AK 99503
(907) 278-0977 1-888-835-1213 • Fax: (907)258-0740 • e-mail: vfj@alaskalife.net

A United Way Agency

January 20, 2004

To Whom It May Concern:

Regarding: letter in support of CSHB 350 (State Affairs)

Arson is a serious crime and not at all uncommon in the State of Alaska. Victims of arson can be left with many scars, both physical and mental. The trauma can be devastating as with any serious crime. The financial demands can be overwhelming. Too often these victims are without any support or resources. Victims for Justice would like to offer our support for CSHB 350 (State Affairs). If you have any further question please do not hesitate to give me a call at 907-278-0986.

Donna Garner,
Executive Director
Victims for Justice, Inc.

* RECEIVED VIA EMAIL

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION

VIOLENT CRIMES COMPENSATION BOARD

FRANK H. MURKOWSKI, GOVERNOR

P.O. BOX 110230
JUNEAU, ALASKA 99811-0230
PHONE: (907) 465-3040
TOLL FREE: 1-800-764-3040
FAX: (907) 465-2379

January 21, 2004

Representative Bruce Weyhrauch, Chair, House State Affairs
Representative Jim Holm, Vice-Chair, House State Affairs
Representative John Coghill, House State Affairs
Representative Bob Lynn, House State Affairs
Representative Paul Seaton, House State Affairs
Representative Ethan Berkowitz, House State Affairs
Representative Max Gruenberg, House State Affairs - Co-sponsor HB350
Representative Carl Gatto - Co-sponsor HB350
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska

RE: HB350
Adding arson to AS 18.67

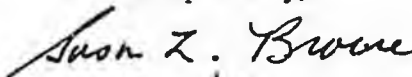
Dear Honorable Chair Weyhrauch, Honorable Vice-Chair Holm, Honorable Members of the House State Affairs Committee, and Honorable Representative Gatto:

The Violent Crimes Compensation Board (Board) appreciates the opportunity to lend its support for HB350. The toll violent crime takes on innocent victims in Alaska is immense. HB350 would add arson as a compensable crime by the Board. Only the most serious arson cases would be eligible for consideration.

While these cases would compete with other eligible applicants for awards out of the Board's limited funds, there is little doubt arson victims suffer extreme losses. I urge you to support this bill and applaud your efforts on behalf of Alaskan crime victims.

I am available to discuss this with you and will do my best to be available to you while this bill is in your committee. I can be reached at work in Valdez at 907-834-6480 and at home in Valdez at 907-835-2329.

Respectfully,



for
Gerard Godfrey
Chair

victim compensation in each state by crime category for FFY2002; Table 4, on page 16, shows the number of claims paid by crime category and by state.

SPENDING FOR GRANTS IN ALASKA

According to the report on the Victim Assistance Program submitted by the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Abuse for 2002, Alaska spent \$5.9 million for assistance projects and served more than 5,000 victims.¹⁷ Almost 93 percent of those persons were victims of child abuse, domestic violence, and sexual abuse.

During that same time period, according to the Violent Crimes Compensation Board's report on the Victim Compensation Program, Alaska provided almost \$1.3 million in compensation to about 500 victims of crimes.¹⁸ Of that amount, about 60 percent went to victims of assault, sexual assault, and child abuse. Approximately 12 percent went to victims of drunk drivers and other vehicular crimes. The remaining amount (approximately 30 percent) compensated victims of all other crimes, including robbery and homicide.

A report from the Office for Victims of Crime shows that Alaska was allocated just over \$1.2 million for victim assistance grants and about \$500,000 for victim compensation by the Department of Justice for FFY2003.¹⁹

CRIME STATISTICS IN ALASKA

Although it may seem as if a serious bias exists in the granting of funds for victim assistance, it may also be helpful to look at crime statistics in Alaska. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, Alaska ranked first in the nation for forcible rape in 2001 (per 100,000 population).²⁰ In 2001, the rate for forcible rape nationwide was 31.8 rapes per 100,000 population—Alaska's rate was 78.9. In comparison, Alaska ranked eighth for aggravated assault, 18th for murder and nonnegligent manslaughter, 34th for robbery, and 18th for all violent crimes.

¹⁷ "2002 Alaska State Wide Assistance Report," Victims of Crime Act Victim Compensation Grant Program, U.S. Department of Justice, <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/fund/sbsmap/ovcplak1.htm> (accessed December 2, 2003).

¹⁸ "2002 Alaska Statewide Compensation Report," Victims of Crime Act Victim Compensation Grant Program, U.S. Department of Justice, <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/fund/sbsmap/ovccpak1.htm> (accessed December 2, 2003).

¹⁹ "2003 Crime Victims Fund Allocations," Office for Victims of Crime, U.S. Department of Justice, March 3, 2003, <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc> (accessed December 3, 2003).

²⁰ "Table 3.113: Rank order of States according to rates (per 100,000 population) of violent crime, murder and nonnegligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault, 2001," *SOURCEBOOK of Criminal Justice Statistics Online*, Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice, <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/sourcebook.htm> (accessed December 15, 2003). Statistics for 2001 are the most recent numbers available.

Table 3: Victim Compensation Grant--Amounts Spent by State in FFY 2002, by Crime Category

State	Assault	Homicide	Sexual Assault	Child Abuse	DWI/DUI	Other Vehicular Crimes	Stalking	Robbery	Terrorism	Kid-napping,	Arson	Other	Total
Alabama	\$3,095.1	\$1,680.6	\$360.1	\$191.1	\$54.3	\$282.1	\$1.9	\$154.8	\$0.0	\$5.0	\$0.0	\$177.8	\$6,002.8
Alaska	\$669.0	\$183.4	\$34.8	\$42.0	\$94.6	\$60.5	\$13.6	\$64.8	\$0.0	\$4.4	\$10.6	\$88.9	\$1,266.6
Arizona	\$1,123.7	\$937.9	\$110.4	\$154.6	\$168.4	\$123.6	\$2.6	\$27.3	\$2.2	\$7.0	\$0.4	\$71.6	\$2,729.7
Arkansas	\$1,284.1	\$483.3	\$55.2	\$180.6	\$158.0	\$39.7	\$0.0	\$20.6	\$25.0	\$0.0	\$0.3	\$0.0	\$2,246.8
California	\$67,761.5	\$22,059.9	\$5,876.6	\$27,746.7	\$4,911.3	\$6,574.3	\$586.0	\$5,483.5	\$1,689.4	\$465.9	\$24.5	\$2,495.2	\$145,674.8
Colorado	\$5,126.8	\$852.7	\$483.3	\$1,633.3	\$597.3	\$1,099.7	\$45.2	\$89.7	\$0.7	\$44.9	\$9.0	\$490.5	\$10,473.1
Connecticut	\$981.2	\$903.0	\$66.7	\$95.9	\$53.6	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$1.1	\$0.0	\$2,101.5
Delaware	\$785.4	\$213.7	\$55.6	\$46.0	\$133.9	\$68.9	\$0.0	\$21.5	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$5.8	\$536.8	\$1,867.6
District of Columbia	\$2,734.0	\$1,172.1	\$41.5	\$382.7	\$0.0	\$221.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$2.2	\$0.0	\$3.6	\$0.0	\$4,557.1
Florida	\$10,993.0	\$3,415.2	\$678.4	\$386.1	\$1,667.3	\$1,263.4	\$37.6	\$1,002.1	\$0.0	\$12.4	\$1.5	\$373.8	\$19,830.8
Georgia	\$2,866.0	\$747.7	\$106.7	\$166.1	\$175.0	\$87.9	\$0.0	\$4.2	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$4,153.6
Hawaii	\$704.1	\$54.6	\$90.3	\$205.4	\$0.0	\$19.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$19.7	\$0.0	\$27.2	\$1,120.3
Idaho	\$1,091.6	\$148.7	\$90.2	\$262.4	\$308.8	\$111.3	\$3.2	\$13.5	\$0.0	\$22.2	\$0.0	\$15.1	\$2,067.0
Illinois	\$15,383.1	\$5,001.1	\$308.8	\$340.8	\$308.9	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$17.1	\$4.7	\$2,019.1	\$23,383.6
Indiana	\$598.9	\$263.1	\$437.1	\$435.5	\$21.5	\$17.0	\$0.0	\$16.8	\$0.0	\$0.5	\$3.4	\$127.4	\$1,921.2
Iowa	\$2,104.7	\$522.7	\$107.1	\$252.3	\$153.6	\$227.5	\$3.3	\$73.4	\$0.0	\$13.1	\$1.3	\$112.7	\$3,571.7
Kansas	\$1,992.0	\$324.2	\$84.6	\$204.6	\$100.5	\$43.3	\$0.0	\$61.2	\$0.0	\$5.1	\$6.4	\$1.9	\$2,823.8
Kentucky	\$766.1	\$259.0	\$8.7	\$14.6	\$17.4	\$0.0	\$0.9	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$1,066.7
Louisiana	\$724.0	\$555.2	\$46.3	\$29.1	\$100.7	\$20.3	\$1.0	\$93.1	\$0.0	\$5.2	\$0.0	\$3.1	\$1,578.0
Maine	\$114.1	\$50.6	\$22.8	\$47.6	\$29.3	\$0.0	\$2.0	\$5.1	\$0.0	\$1.2	\$0.0	\$5.0	\$277.7
Maryland	\$3,457.0	\$677.6	\$23.4	\$9.6	\$14.5	\$18.5	\$0.0	\$23.7	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$27.7	\$0.0	\$4,252.0
Massachusetts	\$1,524.5	\$767.0	\$227.2	\$166.1	\$254.0	\$37.1	\$8.8	\$12.7	\$520.4	\$11.6	\$0.0	\$25.3	\$3,554.7
Michigan	\$1,219.8	\$298.7	\$47.0	\$6.2	\$10.2	\$2.8	\$0.0	\$267.1	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$1.2	\$0.0	\$1,853.0
Minnesota	\$1,575.4	\$840.2	\$81.0	\$232.5	\$406.6	\$0.0	\$1.6	\$117.5	\$0.0	\$38.3	\$7.4	\$3.9	\$3,304.4
Mississippi	\$916.7	\$548.2	\$18.1	\$20.7	\$88.0	\$24.8	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.9	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$1,617.4
Missouri	\$4,293.2	\$1,551.3	\$122.2	\$149.0	\$180.3	\$319.8	\$1.5	\$563.9	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$5.5	\$63.3	\$7,250.0
Montana	\$655.0	\$79.7	\$31.6	\$91.5	\$80.2	\$12.5	\$6.4	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$1.5	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$958.4
Nebraska	\$153.6	\$46.8	\$4.4	\$7.5	\$5.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$11.4	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$228.7
Nevada	\$295.0	\$31.0	\$22.7	\$0.0	\$11.7	\$15.0	\$0.0	\$18.4	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$36.3	\$430.1
New Hampshire	\$143.0	\$61.4	\$74.7	\$32.5	\$9.1	\$17.2	\$12.2	\$4.7	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$10.0	\$2.9	\$367.7
New Jersey	\$3,054.6	\$1,045.9	\$325.7	\$265.2	\$136.7	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$96.2	\$7,311.8	\$0.7	\$4.0	\$10.9	\$12,251.6
New Mexico	\$767.9	\$276.1	\$79.5	\$164.7	\$109.4	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$19.5	\$0.0	\$30.7	\$1,447.8
New York	\$10,873.4	\$3,431.7	\$597.6	\$974.7	\$675.7	\$332.1	\$36.1	\$622.6	\$29,889.7	\$21.7	\$16.1	\$3,559.4	\$51,030.8
North Carolina	\$6,121.3	\$1,403.3	\$177.9	\$213.5	\$298.9	\$78.7	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$8,293.6
North Dakota	\$187.7	\$5.7	\$6.5	\$20.3	\$6.9	\$25.6	\$1.1	\$0.0	\$0.7	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$13.4	\$267.9

Table 4: Victim Compensation Grant--Number of Claims Paid by State in FFY 2002, by Crime Category

State	Assault	Homicide	Sexual Assault	Child Abuse	DWI/ DUI	Other Vehicular Crimes	Stalking	Robbery	Terrorism	Kidnapping	Arson	Other	Total
Alabama	920	374	620	167	13	104	6	63	0	6	0	0	2,273
Alaska	259	68	30	76	21	4	2	20	0	9	5	19	513
Arizona	458	229	69	174	57	20	5	22	0	10	1	52	1,097
Arkansas	580	134	59	274	36	20	0	6	1	0	1	0	1,111
California	20,490	5,358	3,324	17,463	916	1,093	294	1,692	200	237	15	1,289	52,371
Colorado	4,233	480	745	3,357	273	416	98	198	1	61	12	725	10,599
Connecticut	389	127	30	67	27	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	641
Delaware	185	36	9	42	18	8	0	8	0	0	7	71	384
District of Columbia	939	356	49	313	0	32	0	0	1	0	3	0	1,693
Florida	5,677	633	903	625	287	339	40	687	0	10	3	200	9,404
Georgia	880	258	80	164	41	22	0	3	0	0	0	0	1,448
Hawaii	487	16	47	123	0	2	0	0	0	4	0	14	693
Idaho	492	41	119	495	57	19	3	8	0	9	0	13	1,256
Illinois	1,965	730	92	4	38	0	0	0	0	6	5	396	3,236
Indiana	510	116	595	1,014	21	18	0	7	0	1	6	41	2,329
Iowa	1,189	171	171	406	37	69	9	34	0	16	5	92	2,199
Kansas	490	101	70	218	30	10	0	17	0	2	6	2	946
Kentucky	196	84	11	21	6	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	319
Louisiana	289	161	59	59	21	8	1	30	0	7	0	4	639
Maine	104	18	24	58	9	0	2	6	0	1	0	5	227
Maryland	440	151	6	6	3	2	0	9	0	0	6	0	623
Massachusetts	267	126	38	9	4	2	0	3	0	0	1	0	450
Michigan	425	221	30	55	37	9	0	0	0	6	0	0	783
Minnesota	901	200	69	220	83	0	2	54	0	14	11	6	1,560
Mississippi	425	221	30	55	37	9	0	0	0	6	0	0	783
Missouri	703	279	130	119	31	57	1	68	0	0	2	12	1,402
Montana	246	41	12	135	11	1	7	0	0	3	0	0	456
Nebraska	36	12	2	5	1	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	60
Nevada	809	112	421	32	63	54	0	149	0	0	0	31	1,671

Arson injury stats

Subject: Arson injury stats

Date: Wed, 21 Jan 2004 14:41:40 -0900

From: Jodie Hettrick <jodie_hettrick@dps.state.ak.us>

To: kelly_nicolello <kelly_nicolello@dps.state.ak.us>

Kelly,

We found the following stats -

2001 - 4 injuries - 2 incidents

2002 - 7 injuries - 3 incidents

2003 - 7 injuries - 1 incident (2003 stats are incomplete so far)

Jodie

Community	Full Name	Sex	Race	D.O.B	Age	Date of Fire	Date of Death	Loss Cause	Multi-Victim	Fire Cause	Smoke Detector Installed	Drugs or Alcohol	Occupancy
Upper Kalmi	Kameroff, M	M	Native American		24	4/19/1975	4/19/1975	Asphyxial	No	Arson	Not Installed	No	Residential, home
Anchorage	Whitelhorn, M	M	Caucasian		23	2/5/1976	2/5/1976	Hemother	No	Arson	Not Installed	No	Structural, Business
Anchorage	Hiratuska, F	F	Other		8	12/7/1978	12/7/1978	Carbon M	No	Arson	Not Installed	No	Residential, home
Anchorage	Smith, My F	F	Other		20	1/25/1981	1/25/1981	Asphyx. &	No	Arson	Not Installed	Yes	Structural, Business
Northway	Ervin, Leo M	M	Native Am	11/5/1959	22	4/10/1984	4/10/1984	Burns	No	Arson	Undetermined	Unknown	Residential, home
Nome	Pootogoc F	F	Native Am	1/12/1963	21	9/22/1984	9/22/1984	Asphyxial	Yes	Arson	Not Installed	Yes	Residential, home
Nome	Olanna, D M	M	Native Am	8/24/1974	10	9/22/1984	9/22/1984	Asphyxial	Yes	Arson	Not Installed	Yes	Residential, home
Fairbanks	Silas, Sus F	F	Native Am	7/15/1955	29	9/23/1984	10/12/1984	Burns	No	Arson	Not Installed	No	Residential, home
Fairbanks	Hansen, A M	M	Caucasian	9/23/1925	59	2/4/1985	2/5/1985	Burns	No	Arson	Not Installed	Yes	Residential, home
Akiak	Jackson, M	M	Native Am	6/28/1970	17	6/28/1987	6/28/1987	Burns	No	Arson	Undetermined	Yes	Other
Anchorage	Smith, Jeff M	M	Caucasian	5/4/1953	37	1/11/1991	1/11/1991	Asphyxial	Yes	Arson	Undetermined	Yes	Residential, trailer
Anchorage	Dohman, F	F	Caucasian	5/9/1956	34	1/11/1991	1/11/1991	Asphyxial	Yes	Arson	Undetermined	Yes	Residential, trailer
Knik Area	DeBeaulie M	M	Native American		6	4/1/1996	4/1/1996	Asphyxial	No	Arson	Not Installed	No	Residential, trailer
Anchorage	Alex, Aled M	M	Native Am	4/9/1941	55	4/24/1996	4/24/1996	Asphyx. &	No	Arson	Not Installed	Yes	Residential, home
Bear Cree	Ferguson, M	M	Caucasian	9/19/1952	46	11/16/1998	11/16/1998	Asphyxial	No	Arson	Not Installed	Undetermined	Residential, home
Anchorage	Dubose, J M	M	Black	3/22/1953	45	12/3/1998	12/3/1998	Burns	No	Arson	Did not operate	Yes	Multi-dwelling structure
Anchorage	Robinson, F	F	Black	1/14/1968	29	12/3/1998	12/7/1998	Burns	No	Arson	Did not operate	Yes	Multi-dwelling structure
Delta Junction	Roll, Walt M	M	Caucasian	1/7/1920	79	3/21/1999	3/21/1999	Asphyxial	No	Arson/Homicide	Undetermined	Yes	Residential, home
Soldotna	Richel, Dc F	F	Caucasian	1/1/1948	51	9/10/1999	9/10/1999	Asphyx. &	No	Arson	Undetermined	Undetermined	Residential, home
Kenai	Adams, D M	M	Caucasian	10/11/1957	41	9/17/1999	9/17/1999	Burns	No	Arson/Suicide	Operated	Yes	Residential, home
Klawock	Williams, M	M		2/1/1997	3	6/10/2000	6/10/2000	Burns	No	Arson - Juvenile	Not Installed	Undetermined	Residential, trailer
Wasilla	Wellon, S M	M	Caucasian	11/12/1985	15	9/15/2000	9/15/2000	Asphyxial	No	Arson	Did not operate	No	Multi-dwelling structure
North Pole	Rainer, Vic F	F	Caucasian	7/16/1944	57	10/23/2000	10/23/2000	Asphyxial	No	Arson	Did not operate	Undetermined	Residential, home

Deaths resulting from arson
(in Alaska)

**JAY HAMMOND**

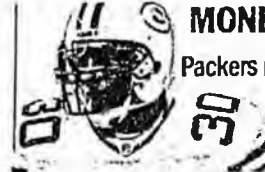
Endowment plan must meet certain conditions

OP-ED

**SPECIAL KIDS**

Screening program catches disease early

LIFE

**MONDAY NIGHT**

Packers run past Bears, spoil new den

SPORTS

WEATHERSeptember drips out
High 58; low 48

50 cents

Final Edit

Anchorage Daily News

Tuesday, September 30, 2003

ALASKA'S NEWSPAPER

www.adn.com

ARSONS HIT NORTHEAST ANCHORAGE

PHOTO BY BILL WUHL / ANCHORAGE DAILY NEWS

Myles Vallejo, 15, a freshman at East High, salvaged smoke-damaged family photographs from his home Monday. Vallejo was awake when someone set fire to the house. He woke the other occupants in the house, and everyone escaped serious injury.

Home damaged, but no one hurt

Several fire stations also respond to string of vehicle blazes

By TATABOLINE BRANT
Anchorage Daily News

A house and at least four vehicles were set ablaze in a string of arsons Monday in northeast Anchorage.

The fires occurred between 6:15 and 7:15 a.m. in the Mountain View and Russian Jack neighborhoods. Firefighters came from as far away as 80th Avenue, Tudor Road and Spenard to fight the back-to-back blazes.

A 15-year-old boy cut his thumb while trying to extinguish a fire that had been set at his house while his family slept, but other than that, there were no injuries. The boy roused his family and everyone got out safely, but they lost a cat named Precious and their house was badly damaged.

Hattie Nichols, 71, said her great-grandson, Myles Vallejo, is a hero.

"Had it not been for him, we all would have died in the fire," she said.

In all, fires at about half a dozen locations were called in Monday morning, and there were other reports of two attempted arsons and an accidental carpet fire, Anchorage Police Department spokesman Ron McGee said.

Police and fire officials were still trying to piece together the details Monday night. They did not yet know how many of the fires were related or what the motive for setting them might have been. Total damages are estimated to be \$265,000, Anchorage Fire Department spokesman Tom Kempton said.

McGee and Kempton said a witness saw a woman in the vicinity of one fire who was said to be holding a cylindrical object that might have been a torch. Police want to talk to the woman, who had dark hair, was about 5 feet 5 inches tall and weighed about 120 pounds. Anyone

See Back Page, FIRES



Tricia Estores, in white, embraces her grandmother Hattie Nichols outside the home in the Russian Jack neighborhood where they escaped an early-morning fire Monday. Two other people also escaped.

FIRES: String of suspicious blazes

Continued from A-1

with information is asked to call police. The first fire occurred at a green ranch-style house at 4211 E. Third Ave.

Miles, an East High freshman, was getting ready for school around 6 a.m. when he heard a crash near the front of his home. He thought it might be the cats at first, said his great-grandmother, Nichols, but when he opened the front door, he found flames covering the doorway and a partially burned plastic fuel can with kerosene in it sitting on the porch.

Miles rushed to wake his family and then climbed out a window with his aunt's fiance and turned a hose on the fire. They found the garage engulfed in flames.

Nichols said her family has lived in the house for more than 30 years. They used the garage for storage. There was little they could do Monday but watch as the family's Hawaiian cultural items, photographs, golf clubs, tools, clothes, luggage and other items burned.

All four people in the house

— three adults and Miles — got out safely. Firefighters were dispatched at 6:18 a.m. and were able to contain the blaze to the garage and attic, but there was smoke damage in the house, the family said.

Miles' father, Trevis Kordus, picked through the charred, soggy mess Monday afternoon. A plumber and golf pro, he wasn't home at the time of the fire; he had spent the night in Wasilla after a golf tournament Sunday in Palmer.

"It's amazing that everyone got out OK," he said.

Miles said he doesn't consider himself a hero.

"I just consider myself in the right place at the right time to save my family — especially my grandmother," he said. "She was sleeping right next to the garage."

Kordus said the family will probably stay with relatives for the immediate future. After that, he's not sure what they'll do. The family had insurance, but not enough to cover damage that Kempton estimated at \$145,000.

Kordus said he had numerous photo albums and his son's memorabilia from as far back as kindergarten stored in the garage.

"Pretty much half my life is gone now," he said. "Stuff that you can't replace with money."

Minutes after firefighters were dispatched to the house fire, a flurry of other calls started coming in from Mountain View.

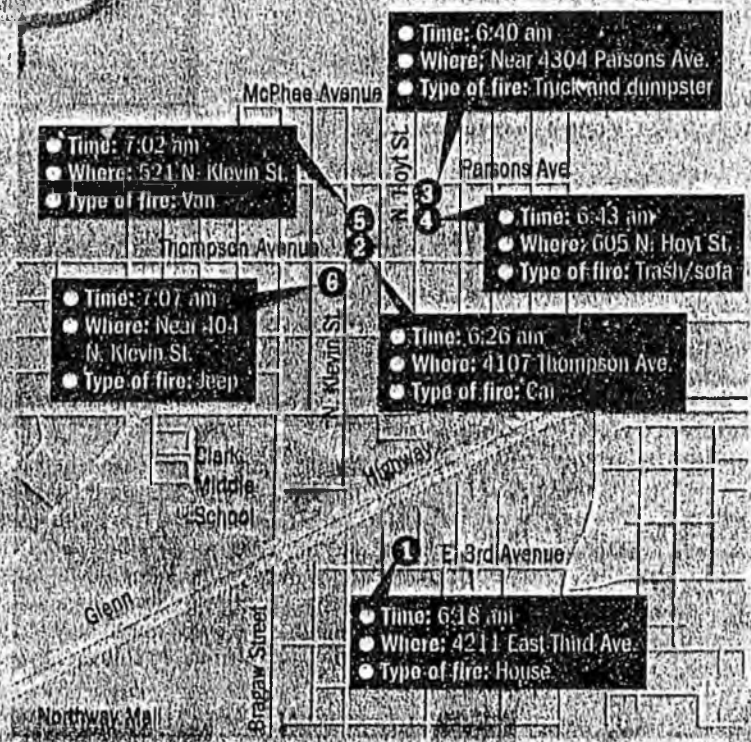
Outside a ranch-style house at 4107 Thompson Ave., a Chevrolet Celebrity was torched down to its metal frame. Down an alley a few houses away, a Dodge caravan behind 521 N. Klevin St. met the same fate. All the van's windows were gone, and copper wires hung in a tangled mess where the dash used to be.

About a block away, a fire in a red Jeep Cherokee parked on the street near 402 N. Klevin St. burned into a seat cushion. The rest of the Jeep did not catch fire, but burn marks were visible around the gas tank.

Near 4304 Parsons Ave., a trash bin and a Chevrolet S-10 pickup were torched. The fire melted the camper shell on the truck.

Mountain View area fires

Police are seeking a 5-foot-5, 120-pound, female who was seen in the area.



Source: Anchorage Fire and Police Department reports. BY ROWEN BOSTROM / Anchorage Daily News

A sofa sitting outside an apartment building at 605 N. Hoyt St. also was set on fire, \$120,000, Kempton said. Damage to the vehicles and their contents is estimated at \$120,000, Kempton said.

Anchorage Daily News

(1986-Current)

[Edit Search](#)[Help](#)[Home](#)

Record 1 of -1

[E-Mail](#)[Text Only Display](#)[List](#)**Anchorage Daily News (AK)**

November 17, 1999

ARSON SUSPECTED IN WASILLA BLAZE

Author: Karen Aho
Daily News Reporter
Staff

Edition: Final
Section: Metro
Page: B2

Estimated printed pages: 2

Article Text:

Alaska State Troopers are investigating an arson that gutted a teacher's house in Wasilla early Tuesday.

William Sterns, 49, woke about 3:45 a.m. to a thud on the porch, firefighters said. He found the lower level of his Willow Road home illuminated by flames through the front windows.

"I did what anybody would do at that time, grabbed a few essentials and bolted," Sterns said.

He dialed 911 on his portable phone as he ran out the back door and around the front of his house to move the truck, which was about 10 feet from the flames.

Troopers arrived minutes later and put out much of the fire with portable extinguishers, but the flames spread through the wall and up into the eaves of the two-story frame house, Central Mat-Su Fire Department Battalion Chief Michael Keenan said.

Troopers called the fire an arson but would not say what was used to start it, pending an investigation.

Sterns, who has taught government and politics at Wasilla High School for 15 years, said he has no reason to believe he was the target of a personal attack.

"There hasn't been any agitated interaction, adverse relations with kids," he said. "There's nothing like that."

Damage was estimated at \$50,000.

"It could be a mistaken location," trooper Sgt. Dennis Ponder said. "Obviously someone intended someone harm."

Reporter Karen Aho can be reached at kaho@adn.com.

Copyright (c) 1999, Anchorage Daily News
Record Number: 55302

Article Bookmark(OpenURL Compliant):[Anchorage Daily News \(AK\) : ARSON SUSPECTED IN WASILLA BLAZE](http://docs.newsbank.com/openurl?ctx_ver=z39.88-2004&rft_id=info:sid/iw.newsbank.com:ADNB&rft_val_format=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:ctx&rft_dat=0F7947B5D57C315B&svc_dat=InfoWeb:current&req_dat=0FC00EA2EBA62E28)
http://docs.newsbank.com/openurl?ctx_ver=z39.88-2004&rft_id=info:sid/iw.newsbank.com:ADNB&rft_val_format=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:ctx&rft_dat=0F7947B5D57C315B&svc_dat=InfoWeb:current&req_dat=0FC00EA2EBA62E28

[E-Mail](#)[Text Only Display](#)[List](#)

Anchorage Daily News

(1986-Current)

Edit Search

Help

Home

Record 1 of -1

E-Mail

Text Only Display

List

Anchorage Daily News (AK)

December 9, 1998

**GASOLINE IGNITED FATAL BLAZE
BEACHFRONT ARSON CLAIMS 2ND VICTIM**

Author: Don Hunter
Daily News Reporter
Staff

Edition: Final
Section: Nation
Page: A1

Estimated printed pages: 2

Article Text:

A second victim burned in the Beachfront Apartments arson has died in a Seattle hospital. Records of the medical examiner there say the fire started when someone broke a window, dumped gasoline inside and lit it.

Jacqueline M. Robinson, 30, died at 11:34 p.m. Monday at Harborview Medical Center in Seattle, a hospital spokesman said. Coroner's records say she had suffered burns over 80 percent of her body in the Thursday morning fire and died of complications from her injuries.

The fire's first victim was identified Tuesday by Anchorage investigators as 45-year-old Julius DuBose. Authorities had declined to name DuBose until dental records could confirm his identity.

The arson at the East Anchorage complex displaced six families, some 30 people in all. Several residents said after the fire that investigators told them they suspected an apartment was firebombed. One described hearing glass break and seeing a flash of light outside his upstairs window before an explosion shook the building.

Witnesses said Robinson ran from Apartment 2 in flames about 4:45 a.m. Thursday. DuBose, screaming, fell inside the living room. Residents of another ground-floor unit threw water on him and tried to pull him to safety, but intense heat forced them back.

Fire department spokeswoman Kayle Foster said Tuesday the fire was ignited in a bedroom. Several other people who were in the apartment at the time were able to escape.

Anchorage police and arson investigators have refused to discuss how the fire was set. But Foster, after hearing the King County, Wash., medical examiner's account of the fire's origin, said she could confirm it.

The police and fire departments are collaborating on the investigation, and have asked anyone with information about the crimes to call Crime Stoppers or the arson hotline. The number for Crime Stoppers is 561-7867. The arson hotline is 267-5060.

The fire was the second arson at the Beachfront in the last six weeks. On Oct. 25, two boys, ages 10 and 11, set fire to a car in a carport and the blaze spread to two other buildings in the complex, leaving 18 families homeless. The children were charged with arson and taken to McLaughlin Youth Center.

Reporter Don Hunter can be reached at dhunter@adn.com.

Barbara, to call 911.

While she was on the phone with police dispatchers, Clarence Copeland saw the man grab a can of gasoline off Durling's front deck. He sloshed the liquid on the deck and lighted it on fire.

Copeland yelled to his wife, who relayed the news to dispatchers.

"I said, 'Oh my god, he lit the house on fire,' " she said.

The man then ran back to the street and starting running up and down the gravel road, she said.

"He was yelling, 'I didn't set it. I didn't set it,' " she said.

Meanwhile, flames were shooting up the front of the cedar-sided home, Barbara Copeland said.

Then Samel started walking up the Copeland's driveway.

Copeland told his wife to get his gun. She grabbed the biggest one she could find -- a .243 caliber rifle with a scope.

What she didn't know was that it was unloaded. Her husband realized that soon after she handed it to him, but pretended it was loaded anyway.

He pointed the rifle at Samel and told him to leave. Samel slowly started backing up.

About the time he got to the end of the driveway, two troopers rolled up in patrol cars, Clarence Copeland said. They tried to wrestle Samel to the ground, but he fought back, and they hit him with the Tazer, Copeland said.

That was enough to get him into handcuffs, but even then he kept fighting, Cox said. They were still wrestling with him when fire crews showed up, said Central Mat-Su Fire Chief Jack Krill.

Finally the officers got Samel into a patrol car, where he proceeded to kick out the back passenger side window, Cox said. Broken glass from the window lay in the ditch next to the road Wednesday evening.

Durling, who was at work when a neighbor called to tell her that her house was on fire, said she arrived shortly after Samel was arrested.

Officers asked her to look at him to see if she recognized him. She didn't. But what she did see scared her.

"He just looked at me," she said. "It was really creepy. Just his eyes. You could tell he was on something."

Durling, who has lived in the neighborhood for past nine years, had no explanation for the attack on her home. She doesn't even own cats, she said, only a small "mutt" named Fritz.

Officers were at a loss as well, although Cox noted troopers had responded to numerous strange calls Wednesday.

"It's a full moon," he said. "I checked."

Reporter S.J. Komarnitsky can be reached at skomarnitsky@adn.com or 352-6711.

Copyright (c) 2001, Anchorage Daily News
Record Number: 27155

Article Bookmark(OpenURL Compliant): [Anchorage Daily News \(AK\) : Man attacks neighborhood, sets house ablaze](http://docs.newsbank.com/openurl?ctx_ver=z39.88-2004&rft_id=info:sid/iw.newsbank.com:ADNB&rft_val_format=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:txt&rft_dat=0F7ADB215DD7575D&svc_dat=InfoWeb:current&req_dat=0FC00EA2EBA62E28)
http://docs.newsbank.com/openurl?ctx_ver=z39.88-2004&rft_id=info:sid/iw.newsbank.com:ADNB&rft_val_format=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:txt&rft_dat=0F7ADB215DD7575D&svc_dat=InfoWeb:current&req_dat=0FC00EA2EBA62E28

Anchorage Daily News

(1986-Current)

[Edit Search](#) [Help](#) [Home](#)

Record 1 of -1

[E-Mail](#) [Text Only Display](#) [List](#)**Anchorage Daily News (AK)**

June 7, 2001

**Man attacks neighborhood, sets house ablaze
Neighbor holds suspect at gunpoint until troopers arrive**

Author: S.J. Komarnitsky
Anchorage Daily News
Staff

Edition: Final
Section: Nation
Page: A1

Estimated printed pages: 3

Article Text:

A man wearing a single shoe and shouting about his plans to kill cats terrorized a Wasilla area neighborhood Wednesday, throwing rocks at houses, tipping over garbage cans and setting a home on fire.

The spree ended only after a neighbor pointed a rifle at the man.

Even so, it took two officers to get Gordon E. Samel, 39, of Wasilla into custody, Alaska State Troopers said. They hit him with a Tazer, a device that shoots a nonlethal jolt of electricity, and had to wrestle him to the ground, said Sgt. Robert Cox.

Samel, who has been arrested several times over the past 20 years, was being held Wednesday at Mat-Su Pre-Trial Facility in Palmer. He was first taken to Valley Hospital in part because he told officers he had taken drugs, Cox said. He likely will face charges of arson and resisting arrest, Cox said.

Fire officials estimated damage to a two story A-frame on Caribou Loop near the intersection of Seldon and Wasilla-Fishhook roads at about \$60,000.

Shirley Durling, who lives at the home with her two young sons, said Wednesday evening she was still in shock. The deck and front of her home were scorched black, and her roof was pocked with holes where firefighters had punched through to get to the flames.

"It's been a really good neighborhood," Durling said. "I've never worried about my kids going out to play, or anything. It's just really weird."

The problems for the neighborhood -- a wooded residential area about three miles north of Wasilla -- started about 3 p.m. when Samel popped out of the trees, residents said.

He was wearing a T-shirt, sweats and a single sandal, said Clarence Copeland, 55, an ex-Marine and truck driver who was raking his yard at the time.

"He was mumbling to himself and he said that he was going to kill my cats," Copeland said. "I told him, 'I don't have any cats.'"

He then started walking down the road, but not before tipping Copeland's trash cans over.

He then went next door to Durling's home and started throwing rocks at it. Copeland told his wife,