



Riverside County District Attorney

NEWS RELEASE

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SERIAL ARSONIST INDICTED BY CRIMINAL GRAND JURY FOR NINE INLAND EMPIRE FIRES

With this indictment, the defendant now will move forward to trial

RIVERSIDE – Today, Feb. 11, 2014, a criminal grand jury indictment was unsealed and a Banning man arraigned on 13 felony counts connected to nine arson fires in Riverside and San Bernardino counties.

Steven Taylor Rutherford, DOB: 7-12-65, has been charged with 13 felony counts of arson with enhancements including use of a delayed ignition device and having a prior arson conviction. That prior conviction was in 1989 for a Riverside County arson fire. Rutherford's arrest on June 28, 2013, was the culmination of a lengthy investigation by CAL FIRE arson investigators. He was connected to the series of arsons through law enforcement and commercial business surveillance cameras as well as lawfully placed GPS trackers on his vehicles.

Rutherford was arraigned with the unsealing of the indictment today in Dept. 41 at the Hall of Justice in Riverside. He entered not guilty pleas to all 13 counts and denied all the enhancements. He is now scheduled for a trial readiness conference on March 11, 2014, and a trial is scheduled for April 9, 2014. If convicted as currently charged, Rutherford faces about 80 years in prison.

One of the nine fires Rutherford is charged with intentionally starting was the "Mills Fire" in San Bernardino County. Riverside County District Attorney Paul Zellerbach and San Bernardino County DA Mike Ramos have agreed to that the Riverside County DA's Office will prosecute the San Bernardino County case along with the other eight arson fires which occurred in Riverside County.

Rutherford is charged with intentionally starting the following arson fires, listed chronologically:

- Sept. 6, 2011: "Twin Fire", Highway 243 at Twin Pines Road which burned about five acres
- Sept. 7, 2011: "Banning Fire", Highway 243, north of Mt. Edna Road, burning about 55 acres
- Sept. 11, 2011: "Summit Fire", Highway 74 at Mile Marker 55, burning about two acres
- Sept. 11, 2011: "Lambs Fire", Gilman Springs Road, east of Sanderson, burning about 35 acres
- Oct. 22, 2011: "Water Fire", Whitewater Canyon, north of Interstate 15, burning about 20 acres
- Oct. 22, 2011: "Free Fire", Mt. Edna Road, west of Highway 243, burning about 10 acres
- Sept. 9, 2012: "Edna Fire", Highway 243, south of Wesley Street, burning about four acres
- June 28, 2013: "Smith Fire", Highway 243, south of Banning near Mile Post 28, burning about five acres
- June 28, 2013: "Mills Fire", (San Bernardino County) Mill Creek Road at Newport Road in Mentone, burning about 534 acres and causing damage to four properties, including two homes

The grand jury proceedings – which are confidential until the unsealing of an indictment -- were held in this case over four days earlier this month during which 28 witnesses testified.

The case number has now changed with this grand jury indictment. The new case number is RIF1400429. The previous case number, RIF1305791, will be closed and the previously scheduled preliminary hearing will be vacated.

The case is being prosecuted by Deputy District Attorney Amy Zeta of the DA's Special Prosecutions Section.

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