

Rhode Island Division of State Fire Marshal
Incident Report



Incident #: 08-409-OF

REDACTED COPY

Date/Time Reported: 10/03/2008 1500
 Report Date/Time: 10/06/2008 0853
 Occurred Between: 10/03/2008 1443-10/03/2008 1800
 Status: Incident Closed
 Reporting Officer: Fire Investigator DAVID SCOTT
 Assisting Officer: Senior Fire Investigator KEVIN MURPHY
 Approving Officer: Chief of Investigations Michael Sweeney

Signature: *Michael Sweeney*

| # | SUSPECT(S) | SEX | RACE | AGE | SSN | PHONE |
|---|--|-----|-----------------|------------|-----|-------|
| 1 | PAUL, JAY D [REDACTED] LINCOLN RI [REDACTED] | M | | 34 | | |
| | DOB: | | PLACE OF BIRTH: | NOT AVAIL. | | |
| | LICENSE NUMBER: | | ETHNICITY: | | | |

| # | OFFENSE(S) | ATTEMPTED | TYPE |
|---|---|-----------|-------------------------|
| | LOCATION TYPE: School/College/University LINCOLN HIGH SCHOOL 135 OLD RIVER RD LINCOLN RI 02865 | | Zone: PROVIDENCE COUNTY |
| 1 | Arson -1st Degree 11-4-2 OCCURRED: 10/03/2008 1443 | N | Felony |
| 2 | Arson-4th Degree 11-4-5 OCCURRED: 10/03/2008 1443 | N | Felony |
| 3 | Fatal Fire FF1 OCCURRED: 10/03/2008 1443 | N | Not Applicable |

| # | VICTIM(S) | SEX | RACE | AGE | SSN | PHONE |
|---|---|-----|------|-----|-----|-------|
| 1 | LINCOLN SCHOOL DEPARTMENT 1624 LONSDALE AVE LINCOLN RI 02865 VICTIM CONNECTED TO OFFENSE NUMBER(S): 1 2 | | | | | |
| 2 | PAUL, JAY D [REDACTED] LINCOLN RI [REDACTED] DOB: EMPLOYER: [REDACTED] ETHNICITY: RESIDENT STATUS: Resident TAKEN TO: Morgue TAKEN BY: Medical Examiner TREATED BY: Dr. Thomas Gilson TREATED DATE: 10/03/2008 @ 1700 VICTIM CONNECTED TO OFFENSE NUMBER(S): 3 | | | 34 | | |

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| # | VEHICLE(S) | YEAR | MAKE | STYLE | COLOR1 | COLOR2 | REG | VALUE | |
|---|----------------------|------|------|-------|--------|--------|-----|------------------|--|
| 1 | ESCORT SE 4 DOOR WAG | 1998 | FORD | SW | GRN | | | \$500.00 | |
| | STATUS: Burned | | | | | | | DATE: 10/07/2008 | |
| | OWNER: PAUL, JAY D | | | | | | | | |
| | VIN: [REDACTED] | | | | | | | | |

| # | OTHER PROPERTIES | PROPERTY # | STATUS |
|---|--|---------------|--------|
| 1 | VICTIMS CLOTHING | 08-196-PR | Burned |
| | QUANTITY: 1 | VALUE: \$0.00 | |
| | SERIAL #: NOT AVAIL | | |
| | DATE: 10/06/2008 | | |
| | OWNER: PAUL, JAY D | | |
| 2 | GAS GRILL TYPE LIGHTER | 08-197-PR | Burned |
| | QUANTITY: 1 | VALUE: \$0.00 | |
| | SERIAL #: NOT AVAIL | | |
| | DATE: 10/06/2008 | | |
| | OWNER: PAUL, JAY D | | |
| 3 | LIQUID FROM PLASTIC GAS TYPE CONTAINER | 08-198-PR | Burned |
| | QUANTITY: 1 | VALUE: \$0.00 | |
| | SERIAL #: NOT AVAIL | | |
| | DATE: 10/06/2008 | | |
| | OWNER: PAUL, JAY D | | |
| 4 | MELTED PLASTIC GAS TYPE CONTAINER | 08-199-PR | Burned |
| | QUANTITY: 1 | VALUE: \$0.00 | |
| | SERIAL #: NOT AVAIL | | |
| | DATE: 10/06/2008 | | |
| | OWNER: PAUL, JAY D | | |

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Entered: 10/06/2008 @ 1323 Entry ID: 5665
Modified: 11/25/2008 @ 1626 Modified ID: 0667
Approved: 11/25/2008 @ 1626 Approval ID: 0667

Notification & Response

On 3 Oct 08 at approx. 15:00 hrs. dispatcher Adam Pontbriant of the Lincoln Police notified me that the Lincoln Fire and Police Departments requested an investigator to respond to an auto fire that extended to the building at Lincoln High School at 135 Old River Rd. in their town. The dispatcher stated that there was an injury that was probably a fatality. I gathered the pertinent information and then notified the Chief of Investigations Michael Sweeney. I then responded to the scene arriving at approx. 15:30 hrs.

Once on scene I met with Chief Sweeney, Incident Commander Albion Fire Department Chief Richard Andrews, Lincoln Police Department Detective Bill Strain, Det. Dana Packer and Ptlm. Kevin Murphy and Senior Medical Scene Investigator David DeTora from the Rhode Island Medical Examiners Office, they gave me the particulars of this fire.

Shortly after my arrival on scene Rhode Island State Fire Marshal John Chartier, Senior Investigator Kevin Murphy and Lincoln Building Official Roger Pierce arrived on scene to assist in the investigation.

Initial Scene Assessment

Upon my arrival on the scene Chief Andrews informed me that there was one (1) fatality in this fire.

There were no other injuries reported.

An auto had crashed into a door in the front of the building. The front of the building was the Old River Rd. side (Side A). The victim's body was inside the auto.

The fatality was believed to be Jay D. Paul [REDACTED]. The body was inside the car a 1998 Ford Escort SE, 4 door wagon [REDACTED], Color: Green. The auto was crashed into an entrance door that led into a corridor that separated the gym from two (2) small classrooms.

The building was a one (1) story brick building that housed the Lincoln High School. Type II (000).

I entered the building through the front doorway (Side A) where the auto struck the building.

The first fire fighters on the scene Limerock Engine 31 with Deputy Chief Stephen Tucker stated that upon their arrival they found the auto fully involved in fire and the fire was extending to the building. The victim's body was inside the auto.

The fire departments immediate safety concern was for any students and teachers that might still be in the building. Fortunately this incident occurred after the students had been dismissed for the day.

Lincoln Building Official Pierce examined the structure of the building and declared it safe for us to proceed with our investigation.

Weather was clear, cool with temperatures in the low sixties, wind calm.

Preliminary Fire Spread Hypothesis

The most probable fire spread hypothesis based on the information available this far in the investigation was that an auto crashed into the school and that the auto ignited and burned with the driver still inside. The fire then extended to the school building.

In-Depth Exterior Examination

The exterior of the building was brick with a tar and gravel roof.

The exterior of the building appeared to be in good condition.

The auto struck the steel exterior doors that led to a corridor that separated two small classrooms and the gym. Fortunately the concrete and steel structure of the door frame prevented the vehicle from penetrating deeper into the building. The exterior of the building received collision damage to the exterior doors and scraping and scorching of the bricks in a small area. Damage to the exterior was moderate.

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The exterior of the auto was damaged in the front where the auto struck the building. There was collision damage to the bumper, hood and front fenders. The paint was burned off the hood, front fenders, doors and roof. The heaviest fire damage was to the passenger compartment.

In-Depth Interior Examination

The schools interior corridor and classrooms that were damaged in the fire had cement block walls and drop ceilings. The floor had vinyl floor covering over a cement slab floor.

The gym had cement block walls, hardwood floor and a drop ceiling. The interior of the school appeared to be in good condition before the fire. House keeping appeared to be good.

The interior of the auto received very heavy fire damage to the seats, dash board, headliner and door panels. The fire appeared to have started in the passenger compartment of the car. This was indicated by the heaviest char in that area and the statement of witness [REDACTED]

According to [REDACTED] Witness Statement the owner of the auto Jay D. Paul poured a liquid from a plastic gasoline type container on himself and on the interior of the auto after he crashed the car into the building. He then ignited himself inside the auto.

The fire consumed the combustible parts of the auto's interior. The fire also consumed most of Mr. Pauls clothing. The fire then extended to the exterior of the auto scorching the paint off the hood, front fenders, doors and roof. Fire and collision damage to the auto was heavy.

The fire then extended from the burning auto to the school building damaging the walls, ceiling, floors and contents of the hall way and the two (2) small classrooms. The fire scorched the paint on the walls and ignited the contents of the classrooms which included paper and books. The gym also received smoke and water damage.

The fire did not extend further.

Fire, water, smoke, collision and overhaul damage to the school hallway and two (2) small classrooms was heavy. The gym received moderate water and smoke damage.

Fire Scene Reconstruction

The fire scene was reconstructed as needed with the help of Chief Sweeney, Sr. Invest. Murphy and Lincoln Police Detectives Strain and Packer.

Final Fire Spread Scenario

The most probable fire spread scenario was the fire originating inside the auto extending to the exterior of the auto, then extending to the school.

Source and Form of Heat of Ignition

The most probable source and form of heat and of ignition was a gas grill type butane lighter.

First Material Ignited

The most probable first material ignited is not known.

Possible first materials ignited include the victims clothing, the vehicles interior and ignitable liquids vapor.

Ignition Sequence

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The most probable ignition sequence was Mr. Paul igniting a fire inside the auto using a gas grill type butane lighter, available combustibles and an ignitable liquid.

Follow -up

On 4 Oct 08 at approx. 08:15 hrs. I responded to the State Medical Examiners Office where I met with Dr. Alex Chirkov, Medical Agent Dominique Seneraro, Lincoln Police Det. Bill Strain and BCI Det. Kevin Harty.

At approx. 08:30 hrs. Dr. Chirkov preformed the autopsy on fire victim Jay D. Paul. Dr. Chirkov gave a preliminary cause of death as "Thermal injury with soot and smoke inhalation". Mr. Pauls body was positively identified by dental records.

On 6 Oct 08 at approx. 13:30 hrs. I responded to the Lincoln Police Department and met with Chief Sweeney, Det. Packer, Det. Strain and Det. Harty.

At approx. 14:30 I responded to the Lincoln Police impound yard with Chief Sweeney and Det. Strain to re-examine the auto. No new evidence was found.

On 16 Oct 08 at approx. 09:30 hrs. I received the official Cause of Death letter from Dr. Alex Chirkov for the autopsy performed on Jay D. Paul. The official Cause of Death is listed as "Thermal injuries with smoke inhalation and burns" and the manor of death is listed as "Suicide". The date and time of death was listed as 3 Oct 08 at 14:40 hrs.

Insurance

The insurance company for the Lincoln School Department was the:

Rhode Island Interlocal Risk Management Trust
501 Wampanoag Tr. Suit 301
East Providence R.I. 02915
Policy # 08-09
Phone # 438-6511

Reference

Reference with Lincoln Fire Department report # I-08-00820 and Lincoln Police Department report # 08-1898-OF.

Cause of the Fire

The most probable cause of this fire was fire victim Jay D. Paul lighting a fire inside his vehicle that he had just crashed into Lincoln High School, using a gas grill type lighter, available combustibles and an ignitable liquid.

Classification of the Cause.

The most probable cause of this fire is classified as **Incendiary**.

David W. Scott CFI, CFEI
Deputy State Fire Marshal

**** Portions of this report have been redacted ****

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