



Saint Paul Fire Department  
645 Randolph Avenue  
Saint Paul, MN 55102  
(651) 224-7811

## Investigation Report

### Case

#### Case Details

SPFD221114052408	Schenck, Benjamin	Open	22-211-836
Case Number	Lead Investigator	Status	Name
Confidential	Incendiary	Intentionally Started	
Confidentiality	Disposition	Fire Cause	
11/14/2022	10:00		
Start Date	Start Time	End Date	End Time
Saint Paul Fire Department		Saint Paul Police Department	
Primary Fire Department	Secondary Fire Department	Law Enforcement	

#### Case Narrative

The fire department was called to the report of a basement fire with flames coming out of the basement windows. Firefighters arrived and found fire from the basement window on the bravo side. Police were inside trying to rescue one victim. Engine 9 pulled an attack line and had a knock on the basement fire. Firefighters evacuated the structure, extinguished the fire and conducted overhaul.

Firefighters state fire was noted mostly on the furniture in the basement. Firefighters state that the basement had not flashed over, not much heat. Police have witness statements from the mail carrier and other neighbors stating they believe an adult son had left the home after starting the fire. Adult son states he was in the park for a walk and purchased items from a gas station and was unaware of the fire. Neighbor's ring doorbell captured the adult son outside the home in a manic state at 0947. Adult son then left the scene and two minutes later, black smoke is seen coming from the home. The two geriatric homeowners state they were unaware of a fire today, even though the male was covered in soot.

Investigation revealed a small, one story, single family dwelling. Fire started in the basement, in the living room. Multiple potential ignition sources were noted in the area, however ruled out as sources of ignition. Adult son's are indoor smokers. Adult son, who is a suspect, had set two fires at this same location on 6-16-22 and 9-11-22.

After speaking with the victims in the hospital, they both appear to be vulnerable adults. While questioning the male, he was covered in soot and completely unaware that he was involved in a fire today. Neither one was able to answer simple questions. It is recommended they be placed in a memory care facility.

After questioning the suspect on camera in the back of a police car, his answers do not align with a neighbors ring door bell, which captured the events of the morning from across the street. The suspect states he was not around during the potential timeframe, however the video evidence showed him exiting the structure, then moments later smoke coming from the building.

It is also important to note that letters from the government state the home is delinquent in paying taxes.

A second son is potentially a patient in Regions Hospital and has been admitted several days ago. The sister of the suspect is deceased.

#### Case Background

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#### Case Synopsis

This report is based on presently known and available facts, data, and information.

#### Investigation Comments

# Property Summary (1 of 1)

## Property

N/A

Name

1621 Birmingham St

Address

Apt/Suite/Room

Saint Paul

Ramsey County

Minnesota

55106

City

County

State

Postal Code

\$119,300.00

\$12,500.00

\$125,000.00

Pre Fire Value

Content Loss Value

Structure Loss Value

Property Description

## Structure

1 or 2 family dwelling

Occupied

Property Use

Structure Occupancy

Yes

Operating Properly

Alarm Type

Smoke Detector Present

Smoke Detector Performance

None

Sprinkler Standpipes

Sprinkler Standpipes Performance

First floor living room, bed rooms and bath room have no fire damage. Kitchen has no fire damage. Minor smoke damage to the kitchen. Kitchen appliances are in good working order and show no sign of fire damage or the source of our fire. Dining room has more smoke damage, however no fire damage.

Basement has heavy content. At the base of the stairs, to the left is a storage room with two refrigerators. This room has heavy content, stacked to the ceiling. A mattress is located on the floor in this room. The suspect states he sleeps in this room. Power cords are located along the floor. They do not appear to be damaged.

Going past the living room in the basement, there is a bed room. This room does not appear to be used any longer. Less items are located in this room. A box spring was leaning against the wall. A TV entertainment system is empty and in this room. A few different dressers are located in this room. A weight bench is located in this room. Smoke damage is noted in this room as the door was open at the time of the fire. Fire did not spread into this room. This room is not the fire origin.

Outside this bedroom, is a desk with filing cabinet and piles of other other debris. Smoke and heat damage is noted in this area, however not the source of the fire.

In the furnace and utility room, this is also a heavy content area. The furnace, nor the water heater are the areas of fire origin. The fuse box panel has one breaker in the off position. The main buss bar had been pulled. One fuse is missing. This is not the source of the fire.

In the living room, there is heavy smoke, heat and fire damage. There is a white fire pattern (clean burn) over the table in the corner, indicating heavy fire in this area. The fire was self venting in this area out the small windows on the B and C side of the home. There is minimal fire damage below the level of the wooden table in the corner. There are no outlets in the area. There are multiple heat sources in the area, which were quickly ruled out as the cause and origin of the fire as they were not plugged into anything. No used cigarette butts were found in the area. Multiple igniters were located in the area of origin. Drug paraphernalia was found in the area of origin. A candle was located in the area of origin. This red candles has a wick, which is below the outside radius of the wax. It is less likely that a flame would catch material on fire with out aid. I did not find any potential source of ignition in the area that was plugged into a wall outlet or extension cord. The wooden table showed that the greatest amount of fire was attacking it from towards the center of the room.

In the center of the room was furniture and other debris. The recliner at the base of the stairs has heat damage coming from the ceiling and to the right, towards the wooden table in the corner. Behind the recliner is a sofa with more mass loss on the right side and none on the left. The walls have crumbled in a V pattern over the arm of the couch with mass loss. There were a few chairs that had the most fire damage, a brown rocking chair and ottoman. This chair had significant fire loss on the backside of the chair. The remains of a glider chair had significant fire damage and mass loss. I believe the glider chair was behind the brown chair and in front of the wooden table.

With a high scientific probability, this fire most likely started on furniture in the basement. It is undetermined which chair started first, however a glider chair has the most mass loss. With fire flow and other fire patterns, this fire did not start on the floor and did not quickly spread, ruling out potential accelerants. It does not appear that any electrical equipment was being used in this area. The suspect was detained with a lighter in his pocket and possible soot on his hands. Previous fires started by the suspect were started with paper.

## Interior Exam

Small, one story, single family dwelling with detached garage on side C. Side A has no smoke or fire damage.

Side B has no smoke or fire damage on the first floor or soffit. There are three basement windows on side B. The basement window closest to side A is a 1'x3'. Window is boarded up from the inside. Window's glass has been broken. There are also burn marks from a fire on the wooden window sill and metal window well. The middle window in the basement is an egress window. No smoke or fire damage to this window and is closed. The third window is closest to side C. This window is a 1'x3' window. This window was venting fire on the arrival of fire crews.

Side C has no fire or smoke damage to the first floor windows or soffit. The basement has two windows. The window closest to side B has smoke and fire damage above the window. The second window, closest to side D has no fire damage. Electrical utilities on side C have no fire damage noted.

Side D has a side door leading into the kitchen area as well as the stairs to the basement. No smoke or fire damage to side D. Gas utilities are noted on this side, no fire damage to this unit.

## Exterior Exam