



## News Release

St. Paul Field Division



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### **ATF NRT activated to investigate Wilderness Resort Dorm Fire**

**VILLAGE OF LAKE DELTON, Wisconsin** — The National Response Team of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives arrived on-scene today, Jan. 26, joining local agents from the ATF Wisconsin Field Offices to assist in the investigation of the fire at the employee dormitory construction site of the Wilderness Resort located at 511 East Adams Street, Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin.

The Delton Fire Department responded to the site in the early morning hours Thursday, Jan. 25, working to protect the neighboring structures. According to the Delton Fire Department, the structure is a complete loss and preliminary damage estimates are expected to exceed \$5 million. ATF's NRT will assist the Delton Fire Department, the Lake Delton Police Department and Wisconsin Department of Justice, State Fire Marshal's Office/Division of Criminal Investigations, in investigating the origin and cause of the blaze.

"We received a call from Wisconsin DCI requesting assistance for the incident," said Assistant Special Agent in Charge Joel Lee of the ATF Milwaukee Field Office. "Typically we work jointly with the state and local authorities by providing additional resources. Together we are conducting a thorough and open-ended investigation.

"Our presence here does not necessarily indicate criminal activity," he continued. "With a large structure fire like this, the local authorities often need help to conduct interviews with witnesses and to sift through the debris of the structure remnants."

"We are grateful to have the ATF National Response Team here to assist," said Delton Fire Chief Darren Jorgenson. "This is a significant fire and we are treating this seriously. Given the size of the blaze, we need the investigative assistance that ATF and DCI are able to provide. This investigation could take several days and will not impact daily operations of the resort."

In 1978, ATF developed the NRT to bring its expertise to federal, state and local investigators in meeting the challenges faced at the scenes of significant explosions and arson incidents. The NRT consists of four teams organized geographically to cover the United States. Each team can respond within 24 hours to assist state and local law enforcement/fire

service personnel in on-site investigations. The NRT was last in Wisconsin to investigate the 2016 Sherman Park Arsons in Milwaukee.

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 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 the bombing/arson. This is the third NRT activation this fiscal year and the 815<sup>th</sup> activation since the inception of the NRT in 1978.

In addition to investigating hundreds of scenes, the NRT has been activated to scenes such as the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, the Oklahoma City federal building bombing and the Sept. 11, 2001, Pentagon crash site, West Texas explosion, as well as blasts at explosives and ammunition manufacturing plants, legal fireworks factories and illegal explosive device manufacturing operations.

ATF is the federal agency with jurisdiction for investigating fires and crimes of arson. For more information about ATF, go to [www.atf.gov](http://www.atf.gov) and follow @ATFHQ on Twitter.

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