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Firefighter Charged With Setting, Responding To Blaze

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Pennsylvania - Dupont volunteer firefighter David C. Donnora was the first to respond to a fire last week that engulfed a Main Street home, fire officials and police say. That's because he's the one who set the blaze, state police charged Thursday. Police say the 23-year-old set a fire on a rear porch of 251 Main St. about 6:50 a.m. Dec. 10, returned home and then rushed to the fire station to put on his firefighting gear when someone called 911 to report a fast-moving fire with a person possibly trapped. He then helped fight the fire he lit, police say.

Arrest papers say a state police fire marshal became suspicious of Donnora while investigating the fire because Donnora "was following him, taking interest in what he was doing."

Fire Marshal Ron Jarocha, who eventually ruled the fire arson, asked firefighters what they thought occurred and Donnora offered "evasive" answers, arrest papers say.

Jarocha interviewed other firefighters, who live closer to the fire station than Donnora, and they said Donnora was the first fireman to arrive for the fire call and was almost done suiting up before they arrived.

Arrest papers say initial responders were told a person might still be inside the home when the fire broke out and firefighters conducted an interior search before learning the resident had already left for work. While Jarocha was investigating, he noted Donnora said, "I didn't know anyone lived there," which added to the suspicions, arrest papers say.

Fire crews limited damaged to a rear porch and two rooms, fire officials said.

In an initial interview, Donnora told police he responded so quickly because he was on his way to the gym when the fire call came out. During a follow-up interview, Donnora admitted to setting the fire when investigators told him they suspected him, state police say.

Donnora told police he used a lighter to ignite a couch, returned home and then responded to the fire when 911 dispatched his department.

Donnora, of 433 Highway 315, Pittston, is charged with arson, reckless burning and criminal mischief. He was arraigned Wednesday by on-duty Magisterial District Judge David Barilla, who released Donnora on $25,000 unsecured bail. Donnora will appear for a preliminary hearing at 1 p.m. Dec. 26 in front of Senior Magisterial District Judge Andrew Barilla in Pittston.

Donnora joined the Dupont Volunteer Fire Department just three months ago after completing a background check, Dupont Fire Chief Donald Hudzinski said.

Hudzinski said Donnora was immediately terminated when state police determined he was the suspect in the arson blaze.

"The Dupont Fire Department takes a firm stand against this type of behavior and will continue to cooperate with the Pennsylvania State Police to ensure justice is served," Hudzinski said.

Written by The Citizens' Voice

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