FireFightingNews.com

# Victoria Fire Marshal Arrests, Charges Man With Arson

December 11, 2013

**Texas** - A resident of a Victoria home that caught fire Monday night was charged with arson. Jerry Garner, the stepson of the homeowner, Artie Haynes, was arrested about 8:45 p.m. Monday and taken to the Victoria County Jail, City Fire Marshal Tom Legler said Tuesday.

"We believe the fire was not accidental," he said, declining to release more information about the case.

The investigation is ongoing, he said.

Garner, 19, flagged Legler and a Victoria police officer down in the area of Hanselman and Sertuche roads, according to a complaint filed with Justice of the Peace Precinct 3 Robert Whitaker.

Garner told Legler he was at the home that burned in the 1100 block of Sertuche Road and was upset because he was recently in jail, according to the court document.

Garner told Legler he used an electric stove in the kitchen to ignite a newspaper. He then set the newspaper on his mother's bed. It caught the blankets on fire, and Garner fled the scene, according to the court document.

Arson may be a first-degree felony if it is shown at trial that what caught fire was a habitation, according to the Texas Penal Code.

Whitaker set Garner's bond at $50,000, and Garner requested a court-appointed attorney.

Artie Haynes, meanwhile, fished his cellphone out of his pocket multiple times Tuesday morning answering calls from people offering to help him.

A little after 10 a.m., a man wanted to meet up to give him some clothes.

"They (the Red Cross) ain't going to put you in a motel forever," he said to the person on the end of the line, "but it does help."

His wife, Glenda, was at work.

Haynes said the couple was shocked when police told them Garner may have caused the fire. They were first told that investigators thought the fire was caused by an electrical shortage in a TV cord in their bedroom, he said.

Garner was not at home when Haynes left for a job interview at Wal-Mart. His mother, Glenda, was also working, Haynes said.

"She (Glenda) doesn't believe it in a way," Haynes said. "She loves her kids, but there's only so much you can do. Right now is not a great time because we don't have any money."

Garner has been in trouble with law enforcement before. He was also diagnosed with a mental illness, for which he is taking medication, Haynes said.

Garner was arrested by deputies Nov. 25 on a warrant charging him with violation of probation in a unauthorized use of a vehicle case, according to a Victoria County Sheriff's Office report.

Garner has also been convicted in Victoria of theft of property between $50 and $500, unauthorized use of a vehicle and possession of a controlled substance less than 1 gram, according to court records.

Haynes said he appreciates all the help he has received from the community so far.

He went inside the home after firefighters left and found the wall board had melted, making many items unsalvageable.

"We could use everything. We could use money, but everybody can use that, too. ... I just want to get some help with a place to move into so I can start over," Haynes said.

Written by Victoria Advocate

**FireFightingNews.com - FireFighter Owned and Operated**
©2014 e-Firefighter, LLC - All Rights Reserved.