



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF THE STATE'S ATTORNEY FOR HOWARD COUNTY

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For Immediate Release:

Ellicott City Resident David Crawford Found Guilty of Attempted 1st-Degree Murder and Other Charges in Serial Arson Case

Howard County, MD (March 9, 2023) – David Crawford, age 71, was found guilty of eight counts of attempted 1st-degree murder, three counts of 1st-degree arson and one count of 1st-degree malicious burning by a Howard County jury today in a serial arson investigation spanning multiple counties in Maryland. Crawford was arrested in March of 2021 in connection to 12 arsons that occurred in Howard, Frederick, Charles, Montgomery, Anne Arundel, and Prince George's County from 2011 to 2020.

Investigators had surveillance video in many cases where Crawford displayed a similar pattern of starting the fires with gasoline. Investigators linked multiple cases following a 2020 fire when they discovered Crawford had previous disagreements with multiple victims. In January 2021, a search of Crawford's residence found several pieces of evidence, including a list of targets that were known victims.

Here's a chronological list of the Howard County fires (date/location/time):

March 5, 2017 – 2900 block of Country Lane, Ellicott City, MD

At approximately 3:05am, fire and police responded to a report of a vehicle fire. Fire was contained to the vehicle itself. Vehicle was unoccupied.

June 23, 2017 – 6000 block of Avalon Drive, Elkridge, MD

At approximately 4:19am, units responded for a reported house fire. On scene, units located a single-family dwelling with a fire located in the attached garage. The family, three adults and two juveniles, were inside the home sleeping at the time of the fire and escaped. Fire was determined to be arson.

December 9, 2017 – 4000 block of Spring Meadow Drive, Ellicott City, MD

At approximately 3:17 am, units responded for a reported house fire. Once on scene, crews found a single-family home with fire showing. The family, two adults and one juvenile, were home at the time of the fire and escaped. Fire was determined to be arson.

September 22, 2018 – 4000 block of Spring Meadow Drive, Ellicott City, MD (same address as previous two fires on the same block)

At approximately 3:45am, units responded for a reported house fire. The home was unoccupied as renovations had just been completed from the previous fire. Investigators determined the fire originated along the front of the house to include the garage and spread to most of the rest of the house.

Victims include a former City of Laurel official, three former law enforcement officials, including a former City of Laurel Police Chief, two relatives, two of Crawford's chiropractors, and a resident in his neighborhood.

Crawford is a former Police Chief for the City of Laurel, where he last served from 2006 until his resignation in 2010. Prior to that, Crawford was Chief of the District Heights Police Department and served as a Major for the Prince George's County Police Department. Investigators say none of the civilian victims of the fires were connected to Crawford through his law enforcement career.

"This was a very challenging case that spanned nearly 10 years and involved a dozen fires in multiple jurisdictions, said State's Attorney Rich Gibson. "We are incredibly grateful to the prosecutors who expertly tried this case and to the jury who carefully reviewed the evidence and the law enforcement officials and fire agencies that helped provide the crucial evidence needed to reach today's result. Our heart goes out to the victims; and we hope this verdict and the sentence we are seeking will provide them with some sense of justice. Furthermore, Crawford, who had a long career in law enforcement, should have had a greater degree of respect for the rule of law and today's verdict is a reminder that no one is above the law."

Crawford will be sentenced on June 27th, 2023. The Howard County State's Attorney's Office is seeking the maximum sentence allowed which is 8 life sentences plus 95 years.

Senior Assistant State's Attorneys' Tricia L. Cecil and Scott A. Hammond prosecuted this case.

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