



NEWS RELEASE

**OFFICE OF THE STATE'S ATTORNEY FOR
HOWARD COUNTY**

**Contact: Yolanda Vazquez
410-313-2108**

yvazquez@howardcountymd.gov

For Immediate Release:

Ellicott City Resident David Crawford Sentenced to Multiple Life Sentences Plus 75 Years in Serial Arson Case

Howard County, MD (June 27, 2023) – David Crawford, age 71, was sentenced today by Howard County Circuit Court Judge Richard S. Bernhardt to eight life sentences plus 75 years in a serial arson case that spanned throughout multiple counties in Maryland. Crawford's actual executable prison sentence is two life sentences plus 75 years due to some of the sentences running concurrently.

Crawford 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 on March 9th of this year. He 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, police responded for a reported house fire. On scene, police and fire 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 on display. 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 included 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 was the 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.

"After careful consideration of the state's recommendation, arguments and victim impact statements, Judge Bernhardt delivered a sentence today that we believe is wholly appropriate for the defendant's crimes. The horror and nature of arson is so deeply powerful in its impact and complete in its destruction in the victim's peace of mind that it is only fitting the defendant spend the rest of his natural life behind bars," said State's Attorney Richard Gibson. "These families have waited several years for justice and we are grateful to play some part in delivering that for them. It is particularly egregious that someone who dedicated their life to law enforcement and was the chief of police at some point in their career would take it upon themselves to engage in conduct that was evil and terrifying in its nature. This sentence should send a message that prosecutors are capable of holding law enforcement accountable if they violate our laws."

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

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