

## NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
July 27, 2021

CONTACT: Ron Smith  
Fire Chief

Re: Arson Fire, 825 South Bishop Avenue

On July 16, 2021 at approximately 6:06 p.m., the City of Rolla Fire & Rescue responded to a report of a structure fire at 825 South Bishop Avenue. Upon arrival, fire crews found a two-story apartment complex with moderate fire and smoke coming from an apartment on the second floor of the structure. Fire personnel quickly searched the building and assisted numerous residents from the building. At the same time, fire personnel were able to quickly extinguish the fire, limit the fire damage to original apartment with water and smoke damage to two additional apartments.

An initial investigation was opened and fire investigators determined the fire to be suspicious in nature. Due to these findings, the City of Rolla Fire & Rescue Investigation Team, Missouri Division of Fire Safety Investigator, and the Rolla Police Department began an investigation of the incident.

Throughout the evening, fire investigators were able to pinpoint the location of the fire's origin and eliminate all possible accidental causes. In addition, through evidence gathered and witness statements, fire investigators were able to establish a witness list and identify a person of interest. During the week of July 19<sup>th</sup> – July 23<sup>rd</sup>, fire investigators were able to conduct over two dozen interviews in order to gather additional evidence.

As a result of the investigation, contact was made with Phillip Doba of Rolla. Mr. Doba was placed under arrest and transported to the Phelps County Jail. He was interviewed by investigators with the Missouri Division of Fire Safety and City of Rolla Fire & Rescue.

Mr. Doba is charged with - First Degree Arson and First Degree Burglary. He was held on a \$75,000 bond and incarcerated in the Phelps County Jail.

In the last few months, the number of fires in the City of Rolla has doubled. Many of these fires have been accidental with no intent by the occupant to cause harm to others or to damage their home. Sadly, there have been four fires that were started as a result of human hands (incendiary) with the intent to damage property and endanger citizens lives. Two of the four fires have resulted in arson charges with investigations continuing for the remaining incidents. The City of Rolla Fire & Rescue's mission will be to aggressively investigate and fully prosecute individuals that commit these types of felony crimes.

As the Fire Chief for the City of Rolla, I am grateful for the work of the City of Rolla Fire Investigation Team, Missouri Division of Fire Safety investigator, and Rolla Police Department. This investigation has required hundreds of man-hours and a strong determination to follow all the leads and make an arrest.

This fire investigative team has worked diligently under the leadership of Jeff Breen, Assistant Fire Chief, to provide a consistent and thorough review of each fire within the City of Rolla. We are thankful after a quick review of the evidence, following leads presented, and making an arrest, our citizens are better protected.

The charges for which Mr. Phillip Doba was arrested are merely accusations and are not evidence of guilt. Evidence in support of the charges must be presented before a court of a competent jurisdiction whose duty is to determine guilt or innocence.

If you have additional information pertaining to this case, please contact the City of Rolla confidential tip line at (573) 364-0111.

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