



LANCASTER CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT

NEWS RELEASE

City of Lancaster
Bureau of Police, 39 West Chestnut Street, Lancaster, Pa. 17603
www.lancasterpolice.com

Author: Det. Toby Hickey

Contact Number: (717) 735-3300

Date: May 9, 2011

Arrest of Serial Arsonist

Between July & Oct of 2009, a series of suspicious fires occurred in the Cabbage Hill area of Lancaster City.

The dates, times and locations are listed below:

6th of July 2009 at approx. 2348hrs a fire was started on the rear covered porch of a home in the 600 block of Poplar St. causing \$120.00 damage. This fire was ruled intentional by the Lancaster City Fire Marshal.

7th of July 2009 at approx. 0029hrs a fire was started to a 2000 Kawasaki Ninja valued at \$2,000. The fire then spread to a 99 Chevrolet Blazer; valued at \$4,550.00 and a 04 Dodge Dakota ;valued at \$8,450.00. Located in the 600 block of Union St. This fire was ruled intentional by Pa State Police Fire Marshal.

21st of Sept 09 at approx. 2321hrs. a fire was started under the front left engine compartment and wheel well area of a 97 Ford Explorer that was parked at the intersection of Laurel and Poplar St.. This caused a loss of \$1,500.00. This fire was investigated by Pa State Police Fire Marshal, and was ruled Arson.

22nd of Sept at approx. 0030hrs. a fire was started in a 2001 green in color Hyundai Accent parked in an alleyway in the 600 block of Poplar St. Pa State Police Fire Marshal ruled this fire Arson. This caused a loss of \$3,500.00 to the victim.

28th of Sept 2009 at approx. 0216hrs a fire was started to a 1994 Mazda Pro\tege in the 600 block of Poplar St. Pa State Police Fire Marshal ruled this fire arson. This incident caused a loss to the victim of \$500.00

30th of Sept 2009 a fire was started in the exterior of a black in color Saturn SC2 in the 600 block of Poplar St. A Pa State Police Fire Marshal ruled this fire arson. This fire caused a loss of \$4,050.00.

Between the 5th and 7th of Oct 2009 an attempted house fire occurred in the 600 block of Fremont St. Attempts were made to catch the window sills, door frames, electrical, telephone, and cable wires on fire by utilizing wooden (barn burner) style matches. This fire was ruled attempted Arson by a Fire Marshal, from the Lancaster City Bureau of Fire. This attempt caused a loss to the victim of approx.\$200.00



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8th of Oct 2009 at approx. 2331hrs a fire was started to a detached shed to the rear of a residence in the 300 block of Fairview Ave. This fire reached and melted a second detached shed to the rear of a residence in the 800 block of Union St. Pa State Police Fire Marshal ruled this fire to be arson. This fire caused \$6,000.00 damage to the shed.

13th of Oct 2009 at approx. 2326hrs a fire was started to a 1999 Ford F-150 pickup truck parked in a parking lot in the 700 block of W. Vine St. Pa State Police Fire Marshall, ruled this fire could not be conclusively determined at the time, but indicated that the fire started in the engine area. This caused a loss to the victim of \$6,380.00

13th of Oct 2009 at approx. 2353hrs a fire was started to a residence located in the 700 block of St. Joseph St. A hose and hose caddy outside the back porch of the home was caught on fire. This also scorched the asbestos shingles of the home. The home was occupied by 2-elderly people at the time of the fire. The one occupant of the home was alerted by the smell of smoke and extinguished the fire. The fire consumed the mentioned items and did scorch the asbestos shingles in the direct vicinity as well as the underlayment. This caused approx. \$500.00 in damage. This fire was ruled arson by Pa State Police Fire Marshal.

The Lancaster City Police Dept: Criminal Investigation Division (Det. Toby Hickey and Det Michael Gerace) and the Patrol Division conducted an extensive investigation; to include surveillance, evidence collection and search warrants.

At the same time as this investigation was proceeding in Lancaster City, Det. Michelle Velez of the East Lampeter Twp. Police Dept., was conducting a parallel investigation in regards to several suspicious fires that had occurred in the early part of 2009.

They are as follows:

January 14, 2009, at approximately 2255 hours, a white GEO Tracker automobile and a 2000 Coachman trailer were set on fire at the Conestoga Trucking, 40 Pitney Road, Lancaster, PA, East Lampeter Twp. Both fires were determined to be incendiary in nature by the PA State Police Fire Marshal. Damage was estimated at \$3,000 for



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the GEO Tracker and \$1,000 for the Coachman Trailer.

January 15, 2009, at approximately 0039 hours, a 1995 Dodge Ram 1500 Van and a 1986 Dodge Ram Gran Ville were set on fire at Spot Check Auto, 1519 Lincoln Hwy East, Lancaster, PA, East Lampeter Twp. Both fires were determined to be incendiary in nature by the PA State Police Fire Marshall. Damage was estimated at \$500.00.

January 15, 2009, at approximately 0037 hours, a dwelling fire occurred at 1800 block of Lincoln Hwy East, Lancaster, PA, East Lampeter Twp. Upon investigation by the PA State Police Fire Marshal, it was determined that the fire was started intentionally by the use of open flame and available materials. The fire was therefore ruled to be that of an arson fire. At the time of this fire, the home was occupied by an elderly female. The elderly female escaped, but family pets were lost. Damage was estimated at \$140,000.

On January 29, 2009, at approximately 0154 hours, Actor did set fire to a multiple bay garage at 52 B Pitney Road, Lancaster, PA., East Lampeter Twp. The fire was investigated by PA State Police Fire Marshal and the examination revealed no accidental causes for this fire to have occurred. The cause of the fire was determined to be that of an arson fire. Damage was estimated at \$80,000.

As a result of the investigation; which spanned 2yrs:

Anthony M. Harnisch w/m/31: formerly of Lancaster City and East Lampeter Twp., was established/linked as a suspect by evidence located at the scene and by evidence collected (to include DNA evidence) as a result of search warrants.

During the series of arsons in East Lampeter, Harnisch was living in the 1st block of Crest Ave. (East Lampeter Twp.) During the fires in Lancaster City, he was residing in the Cabbage Hill area.

Det. Hickey charged Harnisch with 10-counts of (felony) Arson and Related Offenses, 10-counts of Criminal Mischief, and 1-count of Loitering and Prowling at Night. Det. Michelle Velez charged him with, 4-counts of (felony) Arson and Related Offenses and 4-counts of Criminal Mischief. All charges were brought before MDJ Cheryl Hartman. An arrest warrant was issued for Harnisch, on April 4th 2011.



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On May 5th 2011, Harnisch; who is homeless, was taken into custody in Painesville Ohio, by the Painesville City Police Dept., without incident. Upon learning of his arrest, Detective's Hickey and Velez went to Ohio to conduct an interview with Harnisch.

Harnisch is currently being housed at the Lake County Sheriff's Office awaiting an extradition.

As always, all people charged with a crime are presumed innocent, until found guilty in a court of law.

(end of release)