

Mendocino County Sheriff's Office Press Release

(Title of Crime/Incident) 451(B) PC [Arson of inhabited structure or property]

Report Number: 2015-29995
Coroner Number:
Crime/Incident: 451(B) PC [Arson of inhabited structure or property]
Location: 100 block of Sherwood Hill Drive Willits, CA
When: Date: 11-24-2015 **Time:** 9:31 PM

Victim Info :

Name	Age	Street Address	City, State
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Suspect Info:

Name	Age	Street Address	City, State
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Suspect #1: Gerald Simpson 45 Willits, CA

Written by: Sergeant James Schnitzius

Synopsis:

On 11-24-2015 at approximately 9:30 PM, Mendocino County Deputies responded to a structure fire in the 100 block of Sherwood Hill Drive in Willits, California.

Fire personnel were already on scene and the fire was reportedly suspected to be arson.

Deputies arrived on scene and discovered a large pile of burnt garbage and other unrecognizable debris outside the resident just below a bedroom window.

Neighbors stated they observed the pile on fire and it was beginning to burn the side of the residence, when they used a portable fire extinguisher to put out the flames.

While they were putting out the flames Gerald Simpson, who resides at the location, came walking up to them with burning embers in his beard and hair.

Neighbors advised they had also used the fire extinguisher on Simpson to put out the burning embers. Simpson then left the scene prior to any other emergency personnel arriving.

Deputies entered the residence and spoke with the owner (73 year-old adult female) who stated she had been inside the residence with her son and granddaughter at the time of the fire.

The owner and granddaughter could smell something burning about the same time Simpson had exited his bedroom inside the residence. When Simpson exited the residence, she could hear the neighbors screaming about the presence of the fire.

Deputies entered Simpson's bedroom and notice several fresh burn marks on a dresser that was located just below the window that contained the pile of garbage and debris outside.

A preliminary investigation was conducted and arson was suspected as the cause of the fire.

Deputies searched the area for Gerald, which were unsuccessful. Gerald was subsequently located the next morning and was arrested for arson.

Gerald was booked into the Mendocino County Jail to be held in lieu of \$30,000.00 bail.

Approved By: Captain Greg Van Patten

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