St. Petersburg Police Department
News Release

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For Immediate Release
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Detectives Investigate Sixth Arson in St. Petersburg Neighborhood

At approximately 8:00 p.m. last night (02/07/13), the St. Petersburg Fire Department responded to the vacant residence at 181 79th Street South regarding a structure fire.

Upon arrival a fire was discovered inside the house and was quickly extinguished. Damage to the interior of the home is estimated to be approximately $5000.

Investigators have determined that this fire, as in five previous cases in this neighborhood since October 2011, is an act of arson.

Two prior arsons have taken place at this same vacant residence, one on January 2nd 2013 and the other on September 4th, 2012.

As in the last case in January, forced entry was made into the residence and interior furnishings were set on fire. Again no one was seen going to or leaving the residence and investigators are still seeking information which may lead to the apprehension of the suspect(s) involved in these cases.

Anyone with information regarding the arsons should call the non-emergency number at 727-893-7780, Text-A-Tip to 727-420-8911 or leave a confidential tip at 727-892-5000.

Previous release Wed Jan 02, 2013 **************

Detectives Investigate Fifth Arson in St. Petersburg Neighborhood

Location: 181 79th Street South

Owner/ Victim: Christopher Ryan Jones, 34, of 2400 Feather Sound Dr, #825, Clearwater FL

On November 26th, 2012, we released information regarding a series of four arsons which took place in the Causeway Isle neighborhood.

Last night (01/02/2012) a fifth arson attempt was discovered at the vacant residence at 181 79th Street South. At about 7:00 p.m. officers were called to that address by a neighbor who observed evidence of a break in via a rear door to the house.
Upon checking the house, officers found entry had been forced via the rear door and that once inside the suspect(s) had attempted to set the house on fire. Damage was confined to the interior of the house and the fire apparently self extinguished before it could do any significant damage. What damage was found was confined to the rugs, drapes and interior walls.

The home had been recently sold and the new owner, Christopher Jones, reported that he had last been to the house on December 30th at about 3:00 p.m. Everything appeared fine at that time; however he did note that on one visit to the house on December 11th, 2012 he found evidence of another break in, but since nothing was found missing or damaged he did not call police.

This is the second attempted arson at this address. On September 4th 2012 a relative of the previous owner who had died was inspecting the property when he discovered that someone had attempted to set fire to an exterior area of the home, near an air conditioning unit. Evidence of arson was found, but it appeared the fire self-extinguished and the damage to the home was relatively minor.

So far no suspects have been identified in these cases and arson investigators plan to canvass the neighborhood again this afternoon and speak with neighbors about this situation.

Information released by Mike Puettz, 727-893-7550, michael.puetz@stpete.org

Detectives Seek Public’ Help in Identifying Suspect in Arson Cases

Arson detectives are seeking the public’s help in four arsons in the Causeway Isles neighborhood in west St. Petersburg.

The first incident took place on October 25th, 2011 to an unoccupied residence located at 7909 2nd Avenue South. The home’s occupants were out of town at the time of the fire, which investigators later determined was the result of arson started from inside the home. The home was later determined to be a total loss.

The second incident was discovered on September 4th 2012 at 181 79th Street South. This residence was also unoccupied as the home owner had recently died. A relative inspecting the property discovered that someone had attempted to set fire to an exterior area of the home, near an air conditioning unit. Evidence of arson was found, but it appeared the fire self-extinguished and the damage to the home was relatively minor.

The third case took place on October 16th, 2012 at the vacant residence located at 199 79th Street South. In that instance, the fire was set inside a screen porch attached to the house. Damage was confined to the porch and again the fire appeared to self-extinguish, and was not reported until it was discovered by a lawn maintenance worker.

The last and most recent case took place yesterday, November 25th at 7949 2nd Avenue South just before 6:00 a.m. The home owners were out of town for the holidays, but their two dogs, left inside the residence, were being cared for by a neighbor. Damage to the home was extensive and one of the dogs was found deceased inside. Detectives have determined the fire was started from inside the home with evidence of arson being present.
Due to the close geographical area these fires have occurred in and the similar circumstance in which each incident has taken place, detectives do believe the four cases are related.

At approximately 5:00 p.m. this afternoon, detectives will be canvassing the immediate neighborhood, distributing flyers and seeking the assistance of the public in hopes of identifying any potential suspects.

Anyone with information regarding the arsons should call the non-emergency number at 727-893-7780, Text-A-Tip to 727-420-8911 or leave a confidential tip at 727-892-5000.

Information released by Mike Puetz, 727-893-7550, michael.puetz@stpete.org

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