



City of Ridgecrest Police Department

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MICHAEL D. AVERY, Chief of Police

Press Release

DATE and TIME OF INCIDENT: April 14, 2007 - May 12, 2007, 0210 hrs

TYPE OF INCIDENT: 451(d) PC Arson/Property

LOCATION OCCURRED: S. Lumill and E. California Ave.

SUSPECT: Michael Thomas Smith, WMA 35

Between 4/14/07 and 5/12/07, the City of Ridgecrest had suffered several Arson fires that occurred at the corner of E. California Ave. and S. Lumill St. These fires were started during night time hours usually on weekends. Each time, Kern County Fire Department responded to extinguish the fires. On several incidents, Michael Smith was the reporting party.

On 5/12/07 at about 0030 hours, Officer Ballestero was sent to S. Lumill St. and E. California Ave. on a reported Arson fire. Kern County Fire put out the fire and cancelled our response. At about 0130 hours, Officers Dilley and Ballestero were sent to the same location to investigate yet another Arson fire. Officer Ballestero and Officer Dilley made several contacts in the surrounding neighborhood. From those contacts, Officer Ballestero felt Michael Smith was a person of interest.

PACT Volunteers Henry Wilson and Jesus Garcia were strategically placed in the area with night vision and binoculars. Within 15 minutes, Wilson and Garcia witnessed a WMA walk to the desert area and set the third fire of the evening then run back to a residence at the corner of S. Lumill St. and E. California Ave. Officers were notified and converged on the 1294 E. California Ave. address. Officers contacted Michael Smith as he just exited his shower and came to the door nude.

Wilson and Garcia positively identified Michael Smith as the subject who was in the desert and set the fire. Officer Ballestero placed Smith under arrest for Arson. Smith was taken to KCJ for booking and interrogation. Smith admitted to setting all fires in the area. Smith was booked and incarcerated pending \$52,000.00 bail.

MICHAEL D. AVERY Chief of Police

PREPARED BY: Sgt. Tony Brown

Tuesday, May 15, 2007 13:47