



NEWS



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Man admits setting 8 wildfires — including the 670-acre Mart fire — in San Bernardino area, police say

Beatriz E. Valenzuela, Press Enterprise

Posted: August 24, 2017, 9:45 AM



A press conference was held Thursday, Aug. 24, 2017, near the site of the Mart fire announcing the arrest of arson suspect Peter Granados who has been linked to 8 fires including the Mart fire. (Stan Lim, San Bernardino Sun/SCNG)

A 38-year-old San Bernardino man who authorities say admitted to setting eight blazes, including the 670-acre Mart fire, has been arrested.

Peter Joe Granados was arrested on suspicion of arson Wednesday morning at a home in the 2900 block of Park Avenue, according to a San Bernardino police news release.

“Upon questioning, he confessed to arson in all eight fires,” a news statement said.

San Bernardino County has suffered through several arson fires in the past decade and District Attorney Mike Ramos vowed Thursday in a press conference detailing Granados’ arrest to bring arsonists to justice.

The evidence against Granados was collected through witness statements, geographical locations and video surveillance, said **San Bernardino County Fire** Marshal Mike Horton.

“(Granados) used his bicycle to get access to these remote locations and escape quickly” without being seen, Horton said.

Horton said investigators tracked Granados with strategic-placed video cameras, some provided by local businesses.

“Because of the frequency of the fires we were having, we decided to put some surveillance out there,” Horton said. “It was to our advantage in this case.

“We have (video) of him starting one dumpster fire and we have surveillance of him entering and leaving most of the fire areas.”

Granados’ arrest comes only a few weeks after officials announced the arrest of Jarrod Anthony Samra, 23, of Yucaipa, in connection with eight fires that scorched about 930 acres in Mentone, Highland, San Bernardino and Devore and injured three firefighters.

Suspected arson fires

The following is a list of fires that Peter Joe Granados is accused of setting in the San Bernardino area.

A 5-acre blaze sparked about 6:10 p.m. July 3, 2016, in the foothills above Sterling Avenue and Foothill Drive;

An 8-acre blaze that began at 9:30 a.m. July 7, 2016, in the foothills above Sterling Avenue and Foothill Drive;

A 5-acre fire that started at 3:15 p.m. July 26, 2016, in the foothills above Sterling Avenue and Foothill Drive;

A 1-acre blaze that began at 4:45 p.m. Sept. 13, 2016, in the foothills above Sterling Avenue and Foothill Drive;

A 1-acre fire that was sparked at 5:05 p.m. Sept. 25, 2016, in the foothills above Sterling Avenue and Foothill Drive;

A 1-acre blaze that began at 4:05 p.m. June 15, 2017 in the 1400 block of East Highland Avenue in San Bernardino;

The 670-acre Mart fire, which began at 3:20 p.m. June 27 a drainage area at 4210 East Highland Ave. in San Bernardino; and

A 4:10 p.m. July 15, 2017, dumpster fire behind Stater Bros. in the 1500 block of East Highland Avenue.

<http://www.pe.com/2017/08/24/man-who-admits-to-setting-8-wildfires-in-highland-san-bernardino-is-arrested/>

San Bernardino Man Arrested In Arson Spree That Included 670-Acre Mart Fire

CBS 2 News

Posted: August 24, 2017, 10:37 AM

SAN BERNARDINO (CBSLA.com) – A San Bernardino man has been arrested in a string of arsons in the Highland area, including one this summer that threatened dozens of homes on its way to scorching 670 acres.

Peter Granados, 38, was taken into custody Wednesday at his residence in the 2900 block of Park Avenue on arson charges in connection with eight fires that occurred between July 2016 and July 2017, San Bernardino police and the **San Bernardino County Fire Department** said in a joint news release Thursday.

All eight fires were set in trash bins or wooded areas in the vicinity of Highland and Sterling avenues, police said.

The most notable blaze, the Mart Fire — named such because of its proximity to a Walmart store — sparked on June 27 and burned 670 acres near Highway 330 and Highland Avenue. It forced mandatory evacuations and took several hundred firefighters about four days to bring under control. No homes were destroyed in the blaze.

Witnesses helped police and fire investigators identify Granados as the suspect. Evidence was also found at his home, police said.

Following his arrest, Granados reportedly confessed to setting all eight fires, police disclosed. A news conference was scheduled for Thursday afternoon. Granados is being held in the West Valley Detention Center on \$275,000 bail.

<http://losangeles.cbslocal.com/2017/08/24/arson-spree-arrest/>

Second arsonist arrested for Highland area fires

Hector Hernandez JR., Highland News

Posted: August 24, 2017, 4:35 PM



Standing within view of the Mart Fire and the drainage determined as the fire's point of origin, San Bernardino County Fire Chief Mark Hartwig announces arrest of Peter Joe Granados, suspected of starting eight Highland and San Bernardino area fires including the 670-acre Mart fire, Thursday, Aug. 24.

Peter Joe Granados, 38, of San Bernardino, arrested for arson on Wednesday, Aug. 23, has confessed to starting eight fires, including the 670-acre Mart Fire of June 27, **San Bernardino County Fire** Chief Mark Hartwig, District Attorney Mike Ramos and fire investigators from several fire and law enforcement departments announced on Thursday, Aug. 24.

The announcement was made at the determined point of origin for the Mart Fire, a drainage along the eastern edge of the Highland Avenue Walmart, with members of partnering agencies of County Fire, San Bernardino City Police, U.S. Forest Service and the District Attorney's office in attendance.

The fires and resulting arson investigation date back to June 2016 and included multiple fires along Sterling Avenue, Highland Avenue and the foothills north of the city of Highland, said San Bernardino County Fire Marshal Mike Horton.

According to Horton, early in the investigation investigators knew they were looking for more than one arsonist and the identification and arrest of Granados as the "Bicycle Arsonist" depended heavily on information volunteered by public witnesses. (On Aug. 7, Jarrold Samra, 23, of Yuciapa was arrested on nine counts of arson including the Bridge and Bryant fires.)

Due to Granados' use of a bicycle "to make access to remote locations, start fire and escape quickly" investigators did not have the assistance of license plate readers but relied on witness statements and descriptions and security camera footage to identify Granados as the suspect.

Security cameras from local businesses, including the Highland Avenue Walmart, and those strategically placed by fire investigators helped capture evidence of Granados' arrival and departure from several fire areas as well as video of him starting a dumpster fire, Horton said.

According to Ramos, an arrest warrant was obtained on Aug. 18 and the arrest made at Granados' San Bernardino home on Wednesday, Aug. 23. Further evidence was discovered at the home.

One count of Arson of the Property of Another was charged and seven other arson charges will be made shortly, said Ramos, promising to prosecute Granados to the fullest extent of the law. His bail is set at \$275,000 and he could serve six to 15 years if convicted.

Ramos described Granados as a "fire criminal" and a dangerous man who previously served 10 years in prison and has a kidnapping and robbery on his record.

"He should have been serving 25 years to life but Prop 36 changed that," Ramos added. (Prop 36, passed in 2000, requires eligible "non-violent" drug offenders serve their time in a drug treatment program rather than jail or prison.)

San Bernardino City Police Chief Jarrod Burguan pointed out that by starting these fires Granados endangered the lives and homes of thousands of people living in the mountains and thousands more living in the foothills. Hartwig added that the fires also endanger the lives of the men and women who get up everyday sworn to protect the public from the devastation of fires.

"Nationally, 75 percent of wildfires are set by humans and a small portion of those on purpose," Hartwig said. "We [firefighters] look for arsonists. We take arson personally."

"We have suffered through arsonist through the last decade or more but we are so fortunate to benefit from the firefighters we have in County Fire U.S. Forestry, Cal Fire and the amazing work they do," Ramos said. "These criminals will not get away with it. You want to commit arson in San Bernardino County we're going to hold you responsible. Don't ever think you're going to get away with this."

http://www.highlandnews.net/news/public_safety/second-arsonist-arrested-for-highland-area-fires/article_f4e62e3c-8924-11e7-b740-bb8fe1d2d231.html

'Bicycle Arsonist' Arrested on Suspicion of Setting Numerous Fires in San Bernardino

Kristina Bugante and Tony Shin, NBC 4 News

Posted: August 24, 2017, 5:13 PM

Investigators have arrested another man, dubbed the so-called "Bicycle Arsonist," on suspicion of setting numerous fires within the past year in San Bernardino, including a brush fire that burned nearly 700 acres and endangered homes, authorities said Thursday.

Peter Granados, 38, of San Bernardino, was arrested Wednesday after admitting to igniting eight fires, dating as far back as July 3, 2016, according to the **San Bernardino County Fire Department**.

Prosecutors allege that Granados was responsible for the so-called Mart Fire back in June. The wind-driven brush fire quickly spread up the mountainside, endangering nearby homes and burning 670 acres.

Investigators said Granados, named the "Bicycle Arsonist," rode a bicycle around San Bernardino and Highland and used an open flame device to light combustibles on fire.

"The bike was an important piece of evidence," said Mike Horton of the SB County Fire Department. "We even had a chase of the suspect where the bike was left behind. He obtained another bike and continued to use that method of transportation in and out of his areas."

A majority of the fires were started in the foothills above Sterling Avenue and E. Foothill Boulevard, and seven of them burned anywhere from one to eight acres and were quickly extinguished, investigators said.

A year-long investigation that included collecting surveillance video and witness information led investigators to Granados' home on Park Avenue, where they conducted a search warrant on Wednesday. Granados subsequently admitted to setting all eight fires, authorities said.

He was booked into the West Valley Detention Center on arson charges. His bail was set at \$275,000.

"We are going to hold you responsible," said San Bernardino County District Attorney Mike Ramos. "Don't ever think you are going to get away with this."

<http://www.nbclosangeles.com/news/local/arsonist-arrested-Mart-Fire-San-Bernardino-441688463.html>

San Bernardino Man Arrested for Starting At Least 8 San Bernardino Area Fires

24/7 Headline News

Posted: August 25, 2017

SAN BERNARDINO – An arsonist who **San Bernardino County Fire Department** officials say was responsible for setting at least 8 fires was arrested on Wednesday.

Although most of the fires burned somewhere between 1-8 acres, thanks to the prompt response and efforts of the responding firefighters one fire on June 27, 2017, burned 670 acres. Fire officials said that the majority of the fires were ignited in the foothills above Sterling Avenue and East Foothill Boulevard. These fires dated as far back as July 3, 2016. The most damaging of these fires was the Mart Fire, which was ignited in the drainage, East of Walmart at Highland Avenue and Frontage Road. The fire was so damaging due to the winds quickly carrying embers across Highway 330 into the dry vegetation. The fire spread up the mountainside, endangering nearby homes, causing both distress and inconvenience to residents.

Eyewitness tips assisted in the investigation into the fires, leading to Peter Granados, 38, being named as the suspect. Granados was arrested at his home located in the 2900 block of Park Avenue in the City of San Bernardino. During questioning, Granados admitted to setting all 8 fires and was booked into the West Valley Detention Center for arson. His bail was set at \$275,000. Through investigation, it was learned that Granados used an open flame device to light combustibles on fire. No injuries were sustained in any of the eight fires.

“Eyewitnesses are credited for their bravery in coming forward and sharing what they saw with investigators,” San Bernardino County Fire officials said. “It is due to their awareness and diligence that led investigators to Granados.” “See Something, Say Something” saves lives and protects property. You can report suspicious activity to fire and law enforcement or We-Tip at 800-47-ARSON (800-472-7766).

<https://247headline.com/san-bernardino-man-arrested-for-starting-at-least-8-san-bernardino-area-fires/>

Bloomington house fire determined to be a murder/suicide

SBSD via Highland News

Posted: August 24, 2017, 1:58 PM

On Wednesday, August 23, 2017 at 7:35 a.m. **County Fire** and Fontana Station deputies responded to 17923 Santa Ana Ave. following a report of a fire and possibly occupants inside.

Fire personnel arrived and began extinguishing the fire when they located an adult female, unresponsive in the front area of the home. After moving further into the home, they located an adult male and a child deceased in a bedroom.

As the investigation continued, a second child was found deceased in the bedroom.

The adult female, identified as Karina Gonzalez, 35, was transported to Kaiser Hospital where she was pronounced deceased a short time later.

Sheriff's Homicide Detectives and Arson Investigators responded to the scene to conduct the investigation. Detectives believe that Eric Gonzalez, 48, is responsible for shooting his wife and children, before shooting himself. Detectives recovered handguns inside the residence. The children were identified as Priscilla, 8, and Beatrice, Gonzalez, 6.

Arson Investigators believe the fire was intentionally set.

Anyone with information regarding this investigation is urged to contact the Homicide Detail, Detective Nick Clark at (909)387-3589. Callers wishing to remain anonymous are urged to call the We-tip Hotline at 1-800-78-CRIME (27463) or you may leave information on the We-Tip Hotline at www.wetip.com.

http://www.highlandnews.net/news/breaking_news/bloomington-house-fire-determined-to-be-a-murder-suicide/article_02a0a522-890f-11e7-ba93-47e42b65d45c.html