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Fontana man accused of setting 11 fires in Devore hid from deputies in series of drains

Beatriz E. Valenzuela, San Bernardino Sun

Posted: January 16, 2018, 11:06 a.m.

The Fontana man accused of setting nearly a dozen fires in the Devore Monday morning temporarily eluded capture by running through a series of storm drains underneath the 15 and 215 freeways, San Bernardino County sheriff's officials said Tuesday.



Ricky Russell Whipple, 29, of Fontana is accused of setting 11 fires in the Cajon Pass Monday, Jan. 15, 2018. (Courtesy San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department)

Ricky Russell Whipple, 29, was arrested and booked into the Central Detention Center on suspicion of aggravated arson after he was spotted in the brush near Cajon Boulevard and Kenwood Avenue by a helicopter crew Monday morning. He was found near one of the last fires sheriff's officials say Whipple set.

Sheriff's and fire investigators believe Whipple set a total of 11 fires starting around 6 a.m., officials said.

"After each fire was started, Whipple ran through a series a storm drain tunnels underneath the freeways to elude capture from the deputies," according to a sheriff's news release.

Whipple had several items on him that authorities said connected him to the series of spot fires, the release said. Several crews responded to the spot fires including the **San Bernardino County Fire** Department, Cal Fire, and the United States Forest Service as well as the Sheriff's Department and California Highway Patrol.

"All the fires were contained and extinguished," the statement said. "However, fire crews spent several hours cooling down hot spots to prevent additional fire damage."

A motive was not released in the case. Whipple is tentatively scheduled to be in San Bernardino Superior court Wednesday, sheriff's officials said.

Sheriff's officials are investigating the case and ask anyone with information to call the Central Station at 909-387-3545. Callers wishing to remain anonymous can call We-Tip Hotline at 1-800-78-CRIME (27463), or can leave information on the website at www.wetip.com.

<https://www.dailybulletin.com/2018/01/16/fontana-man-accused-of-setting-11-fires-in-devore-hid-from-deputies-in-series-of-drains/>

Authorities: Fontana man arrested for setting 11 fires in Glen Helen/Devore area

Kevin Trudgeon, Daily Press

Posted: January 16, 2018, 11:05 a.m.

DEVORE — A 29-year-old Fontana man was arrested in connection to a string of fires near the Interstate 15 and Interstate 215 interchange Monday morning.

Ricky Russel Whipple was arrested on suspicion of aggravated arson after he reportedly set 11 fires in the area of Glen Helen Regional park and Devore, according to authorities.

Deputies with the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Central Station originally responded to a fire call at Glen Helen Regional Park at approximately 7:44 a.m. While en route to the call, the deputies learned that additional fires were being reported near the regional park at the 15/215 junction.

“After each fire was started, Whipple ran through a series of storm drain tunnels underneath the freeways to elude capture from the deputies,” sheriff's officials stated. “With the assistance of sheriff's aviation, Whipple was located as he walked through the dense brush near Cajon Boulevard and Kenwood Avenue in close proximity of the last fire.”

Deputies contacted Whipple and found several items that connected him to the fires, authorities said. The fires all burned dry vegetation and prompted a multi-jurisdictional response from fire crews with the **San Bernardino County Fire** Department, Cal Fire and the U.S. Forest Service.

Cal Fire spokeswoman Liz Brown told the Daily Press on Monday that the fires were all small in size, but occurred over a stretch of 3 miles.

Visible smoke was reported to be seen drifting across I-15 by motorists and the Kenwood Avenue on-ramp for southbound I-15 was closed for a period of time as firefighters battled the blazes.

Whipple is being held at the Central Detention Center on \$250,000 bail, according to authorities. He's scheduled to appear in court on Wednesday.

Anyone with information about the fires is urged to contact the Central Sheriff's Station at 909-387-3545. Callers wishing to remain anonymous may call the We-Tip Hotline at 1-800-782-7463 or visit www.wetip.com.

<http://www.vvdailypress.com/news/20180116/authorities-fontana-man-arrested-for-setting-11-fires-in-glen-helendevo-re-area>