

Jerseyville duo charged in area arson

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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CARROLLTON - Two young **Jerseyville** residents are facing arson charges after allegedly starting a fire at an unoccupied home in **Kane**.

Authorities have charged two Jerseyville residents - **Emily E. Engelsdorfer, 20, and Brett T. Russell, 19** - with arson. The fire was allegedly set and local firefighters were called at **4:12 a.m. on Monday, Nov. 28**, to a residence at **Walnut Street and County Road 550 North**.

Carrollton firefighters quickly responded after the call, but by the time they reached the scene, the fire had overtaken the structure. **Greene County Sheriff's Department** also responded and the **Illinois Fire Marshal** was called to investigate.

Greene County Sheriff Rob McMillan said the best answer he can give on why the two allegedly committed the crime, he said, that the incident was not premeditated.

“It wasn’t a planned type of thing where they had the house under surveillance,” he said. “It was a spur-of-the-moment deal and there wasn’t a plan for it. They were in the area and made some stupid decision to do this. They found the house and it looked empty. It wasn’t like they were arsonists and were out to burn a bunch of houses.”

McMillan said the lessons to other younger people who contemplate such a crime is there is huge risk involved, not only the legal consequences of the arson.

“Firefighters have to put themselves in danger to extinguish the fire,” he said. “This house was unoccupied and the firefighters knew that, but there is great risk when firefighters are battling a blaze in darkness of night.

“There are a lot of times unintentional victims who come out of these situations if a firefighter gets too close to the fire, or a ladder or the structure collapses. Then, it becomes a more serious crime and it becomes definitely not a prank or something to be taken lightly,” he said.

McMillan said this particular crime wasn’t like they had a bonfire and got too close to the house.

“This was intentional and why they were charged with arson,” he said of the alleged crime.

The Carrollton Fire District has three stations, one in Kane, Carrollton and Eldred. He said the Kane station members responded first, but the others were alerted and always respond in this types of serious situation.

The home that burned was empty and in foreclosure, owned by **Bank of America**.

“It wasn’t like the house had sat empty for years or was fallen in,” McMillan said. “It was a home where it could have been livable for future residents.”