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INVESTIGATORS IN CAROLINA BEACH FIRES EXPLORING FRESH LEADS

CAROLINA BEACH, NC---A team of investigators working on the Astor Hotel fire said today they are tracking some promising new leads and exploring the possibility of a connection between Monday's hotel fire and a fire last Friday at 204 Florence Avenue. They also said they know the area of origin of the Astor fire, but they will not reveal it at this time because to do so would compromise the investigation. The team made these statements following a three-hour meeting this morning at the Carolina Beach Fire Department located at 9 S. Dow Road.

If the fires are connected, then there is a person or group of people setting fires in Carolina Beach, according to the investigative team, adding they are concerned about the potential arsonist, but there is no need for people to panic at this time. Police and the team of investigators continue to work on this case and are taking extra security measures around town to prevent further incidents. Chief Roberts said they are hoping to make an arrest and get a conviction soon.

"We are securing the areas of concern and our extensive investigation into this situation continues. This is not a situation that can be resolved quickly," said Chief Roberts, acting as the spokesman for the group which includes fire officials from Carolina Beach, the State Bureau of Investigation Arson Unit (SBI), Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF), the City of Wilmington and New Hanover County Fire Departments.

Chief Roberts said there are various types of arsonists who burn for different reasons. Some burn for a profit motive; some like to see the lights and sirens of a major fire incident and some are what can be termed pyromaniacs. He said he would not speculate at this time what the motive of a possible arsonist in this case might be.

The community can help by reporting anything they know about these fires and reporting suspicious activities. Anyone with any information about the fires should call the SBI at 1-800-334-3000. There is a \$100-\$1000 reward for information that leads to the arrest or conviction of anyone associated these incidents.

More information about this investigation will be released as soon as it becomes available. There is no further information at this time.

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