



# OFFICE OF THE STATE FIRE MARSHAL

Larry Hogan  
Governor  
Brian S. Geraci  
State Fire Marshal

--- MEDIA RELEASE ---  
For Immediate Release

## DELAWARE MAN SENTENCED FOR BEL AIR ARSONS

HARFORD COUNTY, MD (May 27, 2021) - The Office of the State Fire Marshal and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (BATFE) has concluded two separate arson investigations with the conviction and sentencing of Richard Benjamin Lodeski, 44, of Wilmington, Delaware.

Lodeski was initially charged on June 23, 2020, with: (2) counts of Second Degree Arson, (2) counts of First Degree Malicious Burning, (2) counts of Second Degree Malicious Burning, and (2) counts of Malicious Destruction of Property over \$1,000. He was later charged with additional counts of Second Degree Arson, First Degree Malicious Burning, and Malicious Destruction of Property over \$1,000.

The first arson fire occurred around 11:30 p.m. on June 15, 2020, at a Shell gas station located in the 1900 block of Emmorton Road in Bel Air. Bel Air Volunteer Fire Company firefighters arrived and contained a fire to the store's roof within minutes.

The second arson fire occurred on June 20, 2020, just before 3:30 a.m., when Bel Air Volunteer Fire Company and surrounding departments responded to 1226 Bel Air Road for a reported building fire. Firefighters arrived and discovered two separate buildings on fire. The buildings, located behind the former Birroteca restaurant, were two structures housing eight different businesses. Firefighters were able to contain the separate blazes within forty minutes.

In collaboration with BATF agents, Deputy State Fire Marshals investigated both and determined the fires were incendiary (arson) in nature. It is estimated that the fires caused over 1 million dollars in damages to all three businesses.

During the investigation, Lodeski was connected to other crimes, including arson in Baltimore County and burglary in Ocean City. Investigators are working with Delaware law enforcement in connecting him to other arsons in the Dewey Beach area.

On May 26, 2021, Lodeski admitted his guilt in Harford County Circuit Court before the Honorable Kevin J. Mahoney. In exchange for his guilty plea, Judge Mahoney sentenced him to 60 years, suspending all but 10 years to the three counts of arson-second degree. Deputy State's Attorney Gavin Patashnick prosecuted the case.

***"Arson is a callous and senseless crime that endangers the lives of innocent residents and our firefighters who bravely respond to protect life and property,"*** stated State Fire Marshal Brian S. Geraci. ***"I commend my Deputy State Fire Marshals and our federal partners in fire investigation, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, and their outstanding efforts to investigate these incidents and apprehend the suspect."***

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