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Fanwood man charged with murder for fatal fire

On December 10, 2025, a Fanwood man was arrested and charged with setting a fatal house fire that took place on July 25, 2025 in Fanwood, Union County Prosecutor William A. Daniel and Fanwood Chief Law Enforcement Officer Lieutenant Daniel Kranz announced today.

William Ahle, age 70, was charged with first-degree murder, first-degree felony murder, first-degree burglary, and second-degree aggravated arson.

On July 25, 2025, at approximately 1:37 a.m., Fanwood Police and Fire units were dispatched to a residence on Kempshall Terrace in response to a 911 call reporting a house fire. Fire personnel soon after discovered a victim, Virginia Cranwell, age 82, in the residence, who was pronounced deceased.

An investigation led to the identification of Ahle as the suspect. Fire officials later determined the cause of the fire to be an intentional act. The Union County Medical Examiner's Office officially ruled the death a homicide.

On December 10, 2025, Ahle was taken into custody and is currently lodged at Middlesex County Jail pending his next court appearance.

This investigation was a collaborative effort led by the Union County Prosecutor's Office Homicide Task Force and Special Prosecutions Unit/Arson Unit, Fanwood Police Department, Union County Police Department, Union County Sheriff's Department/Crime Scene Unit, Union County Fire Investigation Task Force, New Jersey Division of Fire Safety – Fire Investigations/K-9 Unit, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms and Explosives (ATF), Union County Office of Emergency Management, and Union County Emergency Response Team.

Anyone with information, including those who may have had any discussion or interaction with the suspect in relation to this matter, is urged to contact Union County Prosecutor's Office Homicide Task

Force Detective Darius Singletary at 908-632-0537, Sergeant Nicholas Veltre at 908-347-7330 or Fanwood Police Sergeant Tyler Flowers at 908-591-5457.

These criminal charges are mere accusations. Every defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty in a court of law.