

NEWS

ATF, Mass. State Police join investigation into deadly Gage Street fire killing 4



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WORCESTER — As the investigation at the burned-out apartment building continued Wednesday, authorities released the names of the four people killed in the four-alarm fire at 2 Gage St. over the weekend.

Those who perished in the blaze were identified by the medical examiner and police as:

Joseph Garchali, 47, and Marcel Fontaine, 29, both from Apt. 3L

Christopher Lozeau, 53, Apt. 3R

Vincent Page, 41, with an address of 378 Sunderland Road

Two of the victims were found in the hours after the fire, reported about 3:30 a.m. Saturday. Two others were recovered Monday.

Meantime, investigators have had a steady presence at the scene. Worcester investigators were joined by members of the New Bedford and Easton fire departments, as well as the Massachusetts State Police and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

Men wearing Massachusetts State Police Special Tactical Operations Team shirts were also at the scene Tuesday.

Members from the different groups put on white coveralls and what appeared to be gas masks to enter the structure.

They entered the structure two times, exiting the first time to wait for additional team members to put on gear before reentering. It appeared that nothing had been removed upon their exit from the building.

A third team entered the building, opting out of the coverall and gas masks for hardhats instead including some with "ATF" written on the side.

City Manager Edward M. Augustus Jr. briefly addressed the press Tuesday afternoon, just across the street from the destroyed building, providing small updates on the situation.

No additional bodies in building expected

He said that authorities do not believe they will find any additional bodies inside the building.

During a press conference Monday afternoon, it was revealed that authorities had found and recovered two additional victims inside of the building, bringing the total number to four.

The search had been difficult and slow due to the collapse of the roof structure and the debris it brought with it, as well as the building being unstable, said Acting Fire Chief Martin Dyer at the press conference.

Due to the instability of the structure, it will likely be knocked down once the investigation is completed, Augustus said Tuesday.

He also said that it is standard procedure for ATF to assist in an investigation involving a fatal fire.

Jim Li, the owner of the 2 Gage St. and 5 Eastern Ave., another building damaged by the fire in addition to 4 Gage St., was at the scene again Tuesday.

He could be seen unlocking the door for people to enter 5 Eastern Ave. Tenants were able to retrieve some of their belongings Sunday with an escort from the fire department.

Tom Natoli, one of the tenants of 2 Gage St. who showed up as firefighters were battling the blaze Saturday morning due to getting out of work late, was also present.

He was watching the scene Tuesday from the porch of a friend he is staying with across the street.

He left Tuesday afternoon to meet with the American Red Cross, which has been assisting those displaced by the fire.

Fundraisers for victims

A GoFundMe page for was started to help with the funeral costs for Marcel Fontaine.

The page mentions that Fontaine was "outgoing and had a love for music" and that he "always made a point to be 'unapologetically himself.'" Fontaine once filed a lawsuit against media figure Alex Jones, claiming that he was wrongly identified as the shooting at a 2018 mass shooting in Parkland, Florida.

Another GoFundMe page was also started for Steven Uvanitte, one of the tenants who was injured by the fire.

According to the GoFundMe page, Uvanitte was extubated and is healing in the ICU.

The page said it would be updated with his condition.

Augustus said that the cause of the fire remains under investigation.

Another fire Wednesday morning up the street from 2 Gage St.

A fire broke out in an apartment building on Eastern Avenue, just up the street from 2 Gage St. Wednesday morning.

District Chief Daniel O'Neil, who was on the scene, said that there were no crew or civilian injuries.

A man who uses a wheelchair needed to be carried out of the building by EMS but fire crew members were able to retrieve the wheelchair and the man is fine, O'Neil said.

The fire began on the first floor and made its way up to the second floor but because a crew was nearby on Gage Street the morning of the fire, the crew was able to put out the first-floor fire by the time the rest of the crew arrived to put out the second-floor fire.

O'Neil said a second alarm was rung because of the size of the apartment building and the number of units in the building — about six aboveground and what also appeared to be a basement unit — but the second-alarm crew was not needed.

O'Neil said that the crew who put out the fire Wednesday was the same group, one out of four, who battled the blaze Saturday.

He said he was "proud of them...they responded well" and that he was proud of how they were able to rebound from the fire Saturday.

A member of the Worcester Fire Department said that the cause of the Eastern Avenue fire is under investigation.

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