



BCPO News

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Man Indicted For Homicide In Browns Mills Fire That Killed Two

Burlington County Prosecutor Scott Coffina announced that a 60-year-old man has been indicted for causing a house fire that resulted in the deaths of his elderly mother and her companion in the Browns Mills section of Pemberton Township late last year.

Kurt Smith was indicted on two counts of Aggravated Manslaughter (First Degree), and one count of Arson (Third Degree). The indictment was returned today and signed by Prosecutor Coffina. An arraignment will be scheduled soon in Superior Court.

The investigation revealed that Smith, who lived at the residence in the 500 block of Willow Boulevard, was in the garage with two other people on the evening of October 16 when he ignited flammable material with a cigarette lighter. He unsuccessfully tried to extinguish the blaze, which quickly spread once the garage door was opened.

The fire killed his mother, Lore Smith, and her companion, George Pikunis, both 92 years of age.

Autopsies performed by Burlington County Medical Examiner Dr. Ian Hood concluded the cause of death in each instance was smoke and soot inhalation, along with thermal burns.

Smith is being prosecuted by Assistant Prosecutor Bob VanGilst, supervisor of the BCPO Major Crimes Unit, Violent Crimes Section. The investigation was conducted by the Burlington County Prosecutor's Office, the Pemberton Township Police Department, and the Burlington County Fire Marshal's Office. The lead investigators are BCPO Detective Erica Ridge and Pemberton Township Detective Tom Lucas.

An indictment is an accusation. Defendants are presumed innocent unless or until proven guilty.

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