



CYNTHIA J. ZIMMER
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

**OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
COUNTY OF KERN**

CIVIC CENTER JUSTICE BUILDING
1215 TRUXTUN AVENUE
BAKERSFIELD, CALIFORNIA 93301
(661) 868-2340, FAX: (661) 868-2700

JAMES D. SIMSON
ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY

ANDREA S. KOHLER
ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY

June 11, 2019

MEDIA ADVISORY

CONTACT:

DDA Joseph Cho (661) 868-2727
DDA Joseph Kinzel (661) 868-1131

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Approved by JAK #29

Kern County Jury Finds Damon Franklin Guilty of Twelve Counts of Arson: BF 169853 A

Kern County District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer announced a significant conviction today. On June 10, 2019, in a case prosecuted by Deputy District Attorney Joseph Cho, a Kern County jury found Damon Franklin guilty of twelve felony counts of arson.

In September of 2017, Franklin went on an arson spree in Oildale setting fires at eight separate **locations** that burned seven structures and five items of personal property during a 32-hour period. The series of arsons began just after midnight on September 26th, when Franklin set a vacant house on fire that also burned an inhabited apartment building next door. Franklin set fire to five more buildings that day, including the Seventh Day Adventist Church on Sharon Place.

Franklin left behind a trail of destruction that ultimately led to his arrest. Before the fires at several locations, witnesses observed Franklin gathering brush and vegetation on the targeted properties. Arson investigators determined Franklin was using these and other materials to fuel the fires.

On the morning of September 27th, Franklin set three fires in an alley behind a row of apartment complexes on N. Chester Ave. A witness observed Franklin walking quickly away from the area and alerted law enforcement. Franklin discarded his outer clothing before Kern County Sheriff's deputies responded to his location and arrested him.

Advised of the verdict, District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer stated "The vigilance of witnesses from the community and the hard work of the Kern County Fire Department's Arson Unit were essential to the swift apprehension of this dangerous, repeat offender. Thanks to a full and prompt investigation, this serial arsonist was apprehended and convicted before any injuries resulted from his series of dangerous crimes."

The sentencing date is set for July 9, 2019. Franklin, who has two prior 'strike' convictions, faces a sentence of over 300 years-to-life in prison as a result of the twelve felony arson convictions.