

# New Bedford Arsonist Sentenced to Prison

A 33-year-old New Bedford man who intentionally set fire to two separate occupied multi-family homes in October of 2017 was sentenced to serve up to five years in state prison, Bristol County District Attorney Thomas M. Quinn III announced.

Jose Debrito pleaded guilty last Monday in Fall River Superior Court to indictments charging him with two counts of arson.

The defendant was charged with setting two fires approximately seven hours apart in New Bedford on October 11 and October 12, 2017. Both fires involved occupied multi-family residences and both were lit by igniting gasoline against the outside rear of the houses. No one was injured in either arson incident.

The first fire was set at a home in the 100 block of Myrtle Street and was called in around 8:22 PM on October 11, 2017. The defendant was seen by a neighbor leaving the area of the fire just about that time and surveillance video showed the defendant traveling to and from the area just before that time. The defendant was also seen going to and from the area on a bicycle just after the fire. The same witness later saw him again in the area. The defendant was looking back at the witness multiple times as he walked away from the area as if he was checking to see if he was being followed.

The second fire was set at a multi-family home in the 200 block of State Street and was called in at 3:19 AM on October 12, 2017. Surveillance video obtained by police showed the defendant riding his bicycle towards the home and leaving the area shortly before the fire was called in. It also showed him going back towards the home several times. He had a back pack on and wore a sweatshirt.

A bike, sweatshirt and backpack were found during the execution of a search warrant at his house. These items were consistent with what the video showed. Police also found a butane torch lighter and fabric softener bottles. The fabric softener and backpack tested positive for gasoline. Samples taken from the area of both houses where the fire was started also tested positive for gasoline.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Stephen Nadeau and the three-and-a-half to five year state prison term was imposed by Judge Gregg Pasquale. Upon the defendant's release from prison, he will immediately be placed on supervised probation for an additional two years.

"The defendant engaged in very dangerous conduct that could have led to serious injury or death by igniting fires to two occupied multi-family homes. Fortunately, no one was injured. I am pleased the defendant accepted responsibility for these serious criminal acts," District Attorney Quinn said.