

INCIDENT/INVESTIGATION REPORT

I N C I D E N T D A T A	Agency Name Harris County Fire Marshal's Office				INCIDENT/INVESTIGATION REPORT				Case# 2104-00055						
	ORI TX 1015600								Date / Time Reported 04/17/2021 21:43 Sat						
	Location of Incident 22 HAMMOCK DUNES PL, Spring TX 77389				Gang Relat NO		Premise Type		Beat/ConstDist 4139, 402		Last Known Secure 04/17/2021 21:42 Sat				
									At Found 04/17/2021 21:43 Sat						
D E T A I L	#1	Crime Incident(s) (Com) Fire (accidental) NR-000016				Weapon / Tools				Activity					
		Entry		Exit		Security									
	#2	Crime Incident ()				Weapon / Tools				Activity					
		Entry		Exit		Security									
	#3	Crime Incident ()				Weapon / Tools				Activity					
		Entry		Exit		Security									
MO Premise Type/Street, highway, alley															
V I C T I M	# of Victims 2		Type: INDIVIDUAL				Injury: Deceased								
	V1	Victim/Business Name (Last, First, Middle) VARNER, WILLIAM TERRANCE				Victim of Crime # 1,	DOB Age 59	Race W	Sex M	Relationship To Offender	Resident Status Resident	Military Branch/Status			
		Home Address 2 HAMMOCK DUNES PL, Spring, TX 77389-								Home Phone					
	Employer Name/Address						Business Phone		Mobile Phone						
	YVR 2019	Make TESL	Model S	Style 4H	Color GRY	Li		VIN							
	CODES: V- Victim (Denote V2, V3) O = Owner (if other than victim) R = Reporting Person (if other than victim)														
O T H E R S	Type: INDIVIDUAL				Injury: Deceased										
	V2	Name (Last, First, Middle) TALBOT, EVERETTE L				Victim of Crime # 1,	DOB Age 69	Race W	Sex M	Relationship To Offender	Resident Status Resident	Military Branch/Status			
		Home Address 16602 VICTORIA FALLS LN SPRING, TX 77379								Home Phone					
	Employer Name/Address						Business Phone		Mobile Phone						
	Type: _____ Injury: _____														
	I N V O L V E D	Code	Name (Last, First, Middle)				Victim of Crime #	DOB Age	Race	Sex	Relationship To Offender	Resident Status	Military Branch/Status		
Home Address								Home Phone							
Employer Name/Address						Business Phone		Mobile Phone							
P R O P E R T Y	1 = None 2 = Burned 3 = Counterfeit / Forged 4 = Damaged / Vandalized 5 = Recovered 6 = Seized 7 = Stolen 8 = Unknown ("OJ" = Recovered for Other Jurisdiction)														
	VI #	Code	Status Frm/Tc	Value	OJ	QTY	Property Description			Make/Model		Serial Number			
	1	02	2	\$60,000.00		1	2019 GRY,			TESL S					
Officer/ID# BENAVIDES, J. (FINV, FINV) (F09204)															
Invest ID# BENAVIDES, J. (FINV, FINV) (F09204)						Supervisor SINGLETON, J. (FINV, FINV) (F09130)									
Complainant Signature				Case Status Closed				Case Disposition: 04/17/2021				Page 1			

INCIDENT/INVESTIGATION REPORT

Harris County Fire Marshal's Office

Case # 2104-00055

Status Codes 1 = None 2 = Burned 3 = Counterfeit / Forged 4 = Damaged / Vandalized 5 = Recovered 6 = Seized 7 = Stolen 8 = Unknown

	IBR	Status	Quantity	Type Measure	Suspected Type	Up to 3 types of activity
D R U G S						

Assisting Officers
 CASTIBLANCO, O. (F09231), JOHNSON, C. (F09212), JOHNSON, C. (F09212), SINGLETON, J. (F09130), CASTIBLANCO, O. (C40677)

Suspect Hate / Bias Motivated: *NONE (NO BIAS)*

INCIDENT/INVESTIGATION REPORT

Narr. (cont.) OCA: 2104-00055

Harris County Fire Marshal's Office

NARRATIVE
 Investigators were requested for an origin and cause investigation of a vehicle fire. The fire was determined to be accidental.

REPORTING OFFICER NARRATIVE

Harris County Fire Marshal's Office

Victim <i>VARNER, WILLIAM TERRANCE</i>	Offense <i>FIRE (ACCIDENTAL)</i>	OCA <i>2104-00055</i> Date / Time Reported <i>Sat 04/17/2021 21:43</i>
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THE INFORMATION BELOW IS CONFIDENTIAL - FOR USE BY AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY

ASSIGNMENT:

On Saturday, April 17th, 2021 at approximately 2144 hours I, Investigator J.Benavides, Unit #95F28 of the Harris County Fire Marshal's Office responded to a vehicle fire located at the 22 block of Hammock Dunes Place, Spring TX 77389 in unincorporated Harris County, Texas. I was assigned to this incident by Lieutenant Singleton. While enroute to the scene, The Woodlands Fire Department requested investigators after discovering that the incident resulted in two fatalities. Lieutenant J.Singleton Unit #95F6, Investigator C.Johnson Unit #95F32, Investigator O.Castiblanco Unit #95F27, Safety Officer E.Zugner, and HAZMAT A-Shift also responded and assisted with the investigation.

The Harris County Fire Marshal's Office K9 team was contacted; see K9 supplement for details.

I arrived on scene at 2215 hours and met with Chief Rice of The Woodlands Fire Department. I learned that The Woodlands Fire Department was dispatched to the scene at 2124 hours and arrived on scene at 2136 hours.

SCENE DESCRIPTION:

I observed the scene to be a wooded area and clearing located on the north side of the 22 block of Hammock Dunes Place, within unincorporated Harris County, Texas. The clearing is located south of a small body of water, and spans several hundred feet from the eastern edge of the wooded area to the western edge of the property located at 14 Hammock Dunes Place. According to the Harris County Appraisal District, the lot is owned by Carlton Woods Creekside Association. The involved portion of Hammock Dunes Place is a 2-lane 2-way public roadway which runs northeast to southwest.

Located on the east end of the wooded area, at the western edge of the clearing, was a burned 2019 Tesla Model S. The vehicle was in an upright position facing to the southwest. The vehicle's identification number is which was obtained from the vehicle title.

Weather conditions at the approximate time of the incident are based on information obtained from Weather Underground. At 2153 hours the temperature was 57.0 degrees Fahrenheit, no heat index, dew point of 49.0 degrees Fahrenheit, and 74 % relative humidity, barometric pressure of 29.95 inches, wind direction was north and wind speed was 14 mph, cloudy skies, and no precipitation. Weather report PDF was attached to this report.

Lighting conditions on scene were poor due to night hours but were supplemented with artificial lighting.

SCENE SAFETY:

I carried a ToxiRAE 3 CO detector that is programmed to alert at 35 ppm of carbon monoxide. At no time during the investigation did the device alert. While on scene personal protective equipment was worn, to include boots, dig shirt, gloves, and an N99 particulate filtration mask. Due to the scene involving an electric vehicle, there were high hazards for both electric shock and respiratory injury to responders. The nature of the vehicle's power system presented risk from high voltage exposures, and inhalation exposures from the release of various chemicals contained within the damaged lithium-ion cells. These inhalation exposures include the potential release of hydrogen fluoride and other toxic gases. Personnel from both The Woodlands Fire Department and The Harris County Precinct 4 Constable's Office were notified of the potential risk and advised to stay out of the immediate scene area without proper personal protective equipment. The area immediately surrounding the vehicle was cordoned off and marked with yellow tape. See Lieutenant Singleton's supplement for additional information.

REPORTING OFFICER NARRATIVE

Harris County Fire Marshal's Office

OCA 2104-00055
Date / Time Reported Sat 04/17/2021 21:43

Victim VARNER, WILLIAM TERRANCE	Offense FIRE (ACCIDENTAL)
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VEHICLE DESCRIPTION: EXTERIOR:

Upon initial observation, a series of continuous tire impressions were visible on the grass to the east end of the vehicle which extended across a portion of the nearby grassy clearing. The vehicle was concealed by a green tarp which had been laid atop of the vehicle by members of The Woodlands Fire Department. This tarp was removed for observation of the vehicle.

The vehicle is a four-door 2019 Tesla model S which is grey in color. The vehicle had extensive fire damage across all exterior surfaces. The vehicle's hood, front doors, front body panels, forward support pillars, trunk, and roof were completely destroyed. Melted metallic material was present on the base of the vehicle and some of the ground beneath the front half of the vehicle. The rear doors of the vehicle were partially destroyed, with more progressive damage towards the front of the vehicle. The surviving portions of the rear doors had partially melted paint on their exterior. There were signs of extensive mechanical damage caused by a front-end collision, and the front end of the vehicle was in direct contact with the trunk of a large tree. A large debris field was present within the wooded area to the west of the vehicle which consisted of exterior trim parts and mechanical components. Both a- and c-pillars of the vehicle were destroyed by fire. The b-pillars of the vehicle were still in place and exhibited oxidation across all surfaces. The rear two wheels and tires were still with the vehicle. The front left wheel appeared to have separated from the suspension/steering assembly and folded inward towards the engine compartment. The tire of this wheel was melted due to heat exposure. The front right wheel separated from the vehicle entirely.

INTERIOR:

The interior of the vehicle is consistent to a standard four-door sedan type configuration, consisting of two front seats, and three rear seats. The interior of the vehicle had extensive fire damage. The majority of the combustible materials across the entire space, including trim material, headliner, and upholstery was completely destroyed by fire. The majority of the floor area was covered in melted material. The frames of both the front and rear seats were visible due to extensive fire damage.

Two deceased individuals were located within the interior space of the vehicle. Decedent 1 was located in a seated position, a few inches forward of the front right (passenger) seat. Decedent 1's upper torso was in a forward-leaning position, with both arms rolled forward. Decedent 1's chin was pressed against a metal component of the vehicle near the dashboard area. Decedent 1 had extensive burn injury and tissue damage across all exposed surfaces. Decedent 2 was located in a seated position within the rear left (passenger) seat. Decedent 2's upper torso was in a rear-leaning position, with both arms rolled back and in a pugilistic pose. The base of decedent 2's head was pressed against the metal frame of the seat. Decedent 2 had extensive burn injury and tissue damage across all exposed surfaces.

ENGINE:

The engine area of the vehicle and located extensive fire damage. The majority of the mechanical and electrical components within the engine compartment had been destroyed by a combination of fire damage and damage from front-end collision. Most of the combustible materials within the engine compartment had been destroyed by fire. Melted plastics and synthetic materials covered various components within the space and electrical wiring was visible.

ORIGIN AND CAUSE OF FIRE:

Multiple fire patterns produced by both the movement and intensity of the fire indicate that the fire originated from the vehicle's power distribution system and related components located at the front end of the vehicle. Fire patterns

REPORTING OFFICER NARRATIVE

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OCA 2104-00055
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Victim VARNER, WILLIAM TERRANCE	Offense FIRE (ACCIDENTAL)
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present on the frame of the vehicle indicate that fire developed at the front of the vehicle and spread rearward through the passenger compartment with the availability of fuel sources.

I was able to rule out ignition of the vehicle by intentional means based on reliable witness information and physical evidence indicating that the vehicle was involved in a motor vehicle collision moments prior to the fire. I considered possible accidental ignition sources such as the electrical system and mechanical components associated with the drivetrain of the vehicle. The vehicle is designed as a plug-in electric vehicle (PEV) and is powered solely by means of electrical power stored within a battery pack which is built into the base of the vehicle. This battery pack contains several modules which house several thousand lithium-ion cells. These lithium-ion cells contain a combination of a chemical compound and flammable electrolyte. These cells are capable of undergoing thermal runaway without adequate temperature regulation from onboard vehicle systems. The vehicle also contains several components designed to regulate power delivery and voltage across a variety of vehicle systems used in both accessory power and vehicle movement.

Any extensive damage to the battery, the power distribution systems, or the systems associated with battery cell temperature regulation can result in electrical arcing and/or thermal runaway of the lithium-ion cells, which are both competent sources of ignition. The vehicle sustained a significant front-end collision which damaged one, or many of these systems, leading to the development of fire within the vehicle. I considered several possible ignition scenarios involving specific vehicle component(s) and system(s). I did not determine the specific vehicle component(s) or system(s) that provided the first heat source. I did rule out any scenario not specifically related to the motor vehicle collision causing ignition of the vehicle and immediate or subsequently resulting battery fire.

The fire cause is classified as accidental under the United States National Fire Incident Reporting System.

INJURIES/FATALITIES:

Two fatalities and one injured party were reported at the time of the investigation. The injured party was identified as firefighter Jesse Cox, whose date of birth is . Jesse was transported to Tomball Regional Hospital after sustaining a knee injury due to being struck with a charging hose-line.

The first deceased individual was identified as Everette Talbot, whose date of birth is . Everette Talbot was seated in the front right (passenger) seat. The second individual was identified as William Varner, whose date of birth is . William Varner was seated in the rear left (passenger) seat.

PHOTOGRAPH/VIDEO:

Investigators Johnson and Castiblanco documented the scene utilizing county-issued cameras to capture photographs of the scene. All photographs were later uploaded to the Foray Photo Management system via the terminal within the Harris County Fire Marshal's Office. See Investigator Johnson's and Castiblanco's supplements for additional information.

While on scene, a copy of the file containing scene photographs was furnished to Deputy A.Cappi of the Harris County Precinct 4 Constable's Office. This copy of the file containing the scene photographs was saved onto a 2GB flash drive labeled with the case number. The flash drive was provided to Deputy A.Cappi at 0338 hours.

Body worn camera footage was captured by this investigator and later uploaded to the county server.

EVIDENCE:

REPORTING OFFICER NARRATIVE

Harris County Fire Marshal's Office

		OCA 2104-00055
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I did not collect any physical evidence from this scene.

INTERVIEWS:

I spoke with Chief Rice of The Woodlands Fire Department. Chief Rice provided me with details relating to the initial response to the incident, to include response times and incident number. Chief Rice told me that the crew members of Engine 107 were firefighters Crivelle, Gladish, Tatum and Fryer. The crew members of truck 108 were firefighters Hoppel, Cox, Mitchell, and Delany.

INSURANCE INFORMATION:

Vehicle insurance was checked through a financial responsibility inquiry on my Mobile Data Terminal (MDT). No insurance information was available.

MISCELLANEOUS:

I met with Investigator K.Horton of the Harris County Medical Examiner's Office on scene. Investigator Horton provided case numbers ML21-1741 and ML21-1742 in reference to this incident.

The Harris County Precinct 4 Constable's Office conducted the crash investigation for this case. Their report is documented under case number 2104-02102.

SUMMARY:

Following a scene examination I determined this fire is accidental, caused by the ignition of combustible materials following a motor vehicle collision.

Case closed.

End of Report

Incident Report Related Vehicle List

Harris County Fire Marshal's Office

OCA: 2104-00055

1	VehYr/Make/Model <i>2019 TESL, S</i>		Style <i>4H</i>		Color <i>GRY</i>		Lic/Lis		VIN			
	IBR Status <i>Burned</i>		Date <i>04/17/2021</i>		Location <i>22 HAMMOCK DUNES PL, SPRING TX</i>							
	Condition		Value <i>\$60,000.00</i>		Offense Code <i>99XX</i>		Jurisdiction <i>Locally</i>		State #		NIC #	
	Name (Last, First, Middle) <i>Varner, William Terrance</i>				Also Known As				Home Address <i>2 HAMMOCK DUNES PL SPRING, TX 77389</i>			
	Business Address											
	DOB	Age <i>59</i>	Race <i>W</i>	Sex <i>M</i>	Hgt <i>510</i>	Wgt <i>190</i>	Scars, Marks, Tattoos, or other distinguishing features					

Notes

CASE SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT

Printed: 04/27/2021 08:52

Harris County Fire Marshal's Office

OCA: **210400055**

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Case Status: *CLOSED*

Case Mng Status: *ACTIVE*

Occurred: *04/17/2021*

Offense: *FIRE (ACCIDENTAL)*

Investigator: *CASTIBLANCO, O. (F09231)*

Date / Time: *04/17/2021 21:33:49, Saturday*

Supervisor: *SINGLETON, J. (F09130)*

Supervisor Review Date / Time: *04/18/2021 18:45:21, Sunday*

Contact:

Reference: *Follow-up*

Investigator Oscar Castiblanco
Harris County Fire Marshal's Office

Scene Supplement:

On 04/17/2021 I, Investigator O. Castiblanco, arrived on the scene at 2228 hours in regards to a vehicle fire at 18 Hammock Dunes Place. I was back-up to Investigator John Benavides who took lead on the investigation. I assisted per his request to take crime scene photos.

I used my county issued Canon EOS Rebel digital camera with an internal flash and captured photographs of the scene area. I took a variety of crime scene photos depicting the overall scene and working my way in towards the area of origin.

After scene photos were completed, I removed the SD card from the camera and provided the only copy in hand to Investigator C. Johnson for his report and case.

I remained for scene security and later cleared the scene with no further incident.

Supplement complete

Investigator Signature

Supervisor Signature

CASE SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT

Printed: 04/27/2021 08:52

Harris County Fire Marshal's Office

OCA : 210400055

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Case Status: CLOSED

Case Mng Status: ACTIVE

Occurred: 04/17/2021

Offense: FIRE (ACCIDENTAL)

Investigator: SINGLETON, J. (F09130)

Date / Time: 04/18/2021 04:32:35, Sunday

Supervisor: SINGLETON, J. (F09130)

Supervisor Review Date / Time: 04/19/2021 10:26:00, Monday

Contact:

Reference: Follow-up

On April 17th, 2021, at approximately 9:50 PM, I, Lieutenant Singleton, learned Woodlands Fire Department was responding to a vehicle fire. I made contact with Woodlands FD Battalion Chief who requested a response. I arrived and met with Woodlands FD and HCCO4 Sgt Wolsley. I examined the fire area and found the scene was not properly marked to indicate the hazards. I instructed Investigator Johnson to mark a safe distance from the vehicle. He provided scene tape to remind responders of the need for respiratory protection.

I contacted Safety Officer Zugner. He responded to the scene and made contact with Tesla. He advised me that all personnel within 100 feet should be wearing SCBA. Investigators remained outside of this area. I communicated the hazards to Woodlands FD.

I made contact with Sgt Sterns of Hazmat multiple times. Sgt Sterns also recommended SCBA when working near the vehicle. After discussing the likely need to decontaminate the victims, HazMat responded to the scene.

I advised all agencies on scene of the health hazards and recommended PPE. I reminded units on scene multiple times to wear appropriate PPE.

A copy of this supplement was entered under HCCO4 Case Number 2104-0

End of Supplement

JS

Investigator Signature

Supervisor Signature

CASE SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT

Printed: 04/27/2021 08:52

Harris County Fire Marshal's Office

OCA : **210400055**

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Case Status: *CLOSED*

Case Mng Status: *ACTIVE*

Occurred: *04/17/2021*

Offense: *FIRE (ACCIDENTAL)*

Investigator: *JOHNSON, C. (F09212)*

Date / Time: *04/19/2021 04:48:44, Monday*

Supervisor: *SINGLETON, J. (F09130)*

Supervisor Review Date / Time: *04/19/2021 11:09:34, Monday*

Contact:

Reference: *Follow-up*

Harris County Fire Marshal's Office
Investigator Chris Johnson
95F32/F09212

On April 17th, 2021 I, Investigator C. Johnson, Unit #95F32 of the Harris County Fire Marshal's Office assisted in the initial investigation of this case.

I documented the scene utilizing my county-issued camera and captured photographs of the scene area. All photographs were automatically saved to an 4GB micro SD card which was transferred to the custody of Investigator Benavides prior to clearing the scene.

Body camera footage was not taken by this investigator.

End of supplement

Investigator Signature

Supervisor Signature