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Joint News Release

Investigation Reveals Cause of Tea Fire

Santa Barbara—On Tuesday, November 18, 2008 during a joint news conference Santa Barbara County Sheriff Bill Brown and Santa Barbara County Fire Chief Tom Franklin announced a multi-agency investigation has determined the cause of the Tea Fire.

After the start of the fire a task force was established consisting of:

- US Forest Service
- Cal-Fire
- Santa Barbara County Fire
- Ventura County Fire
- Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Dept.

With the help of a critical lead provided through the SBSO's anonymous tip line investigators were able to identify ten young adults who were at the property know as the "Tea House" in the 700 Block of East Mountain Drive, on Wednesday night and early Thursday morning.

The task force determined that a bonfire started by the young adults was the origin of the Tea Fire. Although the young adults believed they had extinguished the bonfire, it is not uncommon for fires of this type to have an ignition potential for a few days. Due to the weather conditions on Thursday, the fire reignited.

At this time reports are being prepared and submitted to the District Attorney's office which will decide if any criminal charges will be filed.

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