

Ex-Amity firefighter charged with arson

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A volunteer firefighter from Monarch Fire Company in Amity Township was charged with arson Friday after confessing to setting two barn fires in the past two years, township police said.

Michael J. Morrotto, 26, of the 200 block of East Baumstown Road, Exeter Township, was committed to Berks County Prison in lieu of \$200,000 bail after arraignment before District Judge Victor M. Frederick IV on arson and related offenses.

Chief Brian D. Gabel of the Monarch Fire Company said Morrotto was a volunteer firefighter for a couple of years but had been suspended for an unrelated incident before his arrest Friday.

"We are cooperating and assisting with the investigation," Gabel said, declining further comment.

Amity Detective Jeffrey E. Smith said an investigation was continuing and that more arrests may follow. He asked anyone with information to contact Amity police at 610-689-6002.

Smith said the investigation led to Morrotto after he was heard talking in the background as a friend called 9-1-1 to report one of the fires.

Police brought Morrotto in for questioning twice this week, and on Friday he admitted setting fire to a barn at 178 Amity Park Road on Jan. 7, 2010, and another at Main Street and Monocacy Creek Road on Aug. 20, 2009.

Both fires were investigated by state police and determined to be arson, but troopers reached a dead end before Gabel heard Morrotto's voice while reviewing 9-1-1 tapes from the cases.

The 2009 fire was contained by firefighters to one corner of the barn. The second fire destroyed the barn and caused an estimated \$50,000 damage. The barns were about 2 miles apart.

Morrotto told police he used a flare to set one of the fires and a propane torch to set the other. He also helped fight both fires, according to police.

"He said he set the fires to let out his anger," Smith said.

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Michael Morrotto