



Man charged with setting west-end fires

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Accused of setting small blazes near Dufferin St.; alley torchings farther north still being probed

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A suspect has been charged with more than a dozen arson-related offences in connection with a series of small fires in the Queen St. W. area last summer.

Toronto police made the arrest Monday following a 10-month investigation into fires that were set in garages and waste disposal bins in the city's west end between July 30 and Aug. 10.

"The estimated damage is about \$18,000," Det. Marcel Chiasson told a news conference yesterday.

Witness accounts, evidence recovered from the scene and security video surveillance were factors in the investigation, he said.

In all, more than 200 suspicious fires flared across Toronto last summer, a number considered "unusually high," said Const. Wendy Drummond.

The charges laid this week pertain only to fires that occurred south of Bloor St. W., mostly at or near Dufferin St., in 14 Division, which extends down to the lakeshore.

Police are continuing to investigate a cluster of more serious alley fires a month earlier that caused havoc for sleeping residents a short distance to the north, near Christie Pits.

The fires were set in the dead of night on the Canada Day holiday, within easy walking distance of each other and inside a time frame of 55 minutes.

The rear portion of a Shaw St. house was gutted, along with a handful of cars and three wooden garages.

Nearly 200 firefighters were needed to quell the blazes, which knocked out phone service in 150 homes and caused about \$2 million in destruction. The lone casualty was a cat.

Liam Campbell, 40, faces 14 counts of damage to property and one count of disregard for human life.

Campbell now lives in Burlington.