

Fires intentionally set in bathrooms Sunday at Wheaton College Residence Hall

State Fire Marshal Peter J. Ostroskey, Norton Fire Chief Paul J. Schleicher, Wheaton College President Dennis M. Hanno, and Wheaton College Director of Public Safety Christopher Santiago are asking for the school community's help solving two fires set in two bathrooms in a Wheaton College residence hall early Sunday morning.

Around 6 a.m. about 100 sleeping students were safely evacuated from McIntire Residence Hall to nearby buildings. Investigators determined that a fire in the second-floor bathroom and one in a third-floor bathroom were intentionally set.

State Fire Marshal Ostroskey said, "It is fortunate that no one was hurt as early Sunday morning is a time most students are sleeping. Anyone with information about these fires is asked to come forward confidentially, 24 hours a day, and call the Arson Hotline at 1-800-682-9229 or Wheaton College Campus Police at 508-286-8213." The Arson Hotline is part of the Arson Watch Reward Program that provides up to \$5,000 for information that helps to solve the case. It is funded by the property and casualty insurance underwriting companies of Massachusetts.

Norton Fire Chief Paul J. Schleicher said "While heat and smoke damage were not huge, every fire starts small and has the ability to claim a life." He added, "I am proud that the students evacuated so quickly and responded appropriately to the fire alarm."

"Student safety and campus security is our highest priority," said Wheaton College President Dennis M. Hanno. "We have

increased campus patrols as a result of this incident, and we urge all members of the community to be on the lookout and report suspicious activity."

The fires were jointly investigated by the Norton Fire Department and State Police assigned to the Office of the State Fire Marshal.