

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

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May 1, 2016

Steve Seddig
Wylie Deputy Chief / Fire Marshal
Public Safety Building / Fire Administration
2000 N. Hwy. 78
Wylie, TX 75098

Chief Seddig,

I wanted to share with you a recent success story I have from one of my investigations where the knowledge, skills, and abilities I learned through the Forensic Fire Death Class aided in securing a successful conviction of Capital Murder suspect.

On January 12, 2015, Jonathan Anthony Camacho killed his 23-year-old wife, 4-year-old son, 2-year-old daughter, and 2-month-old daughter in a rural area of Calhoun County, near Port Lavaca, Texas. Jonathan Camacho attempted to conceal his actions and destroy the crime scene by setting their residence on fire. After the fire extinguished the victims remains were discovered and I was called into assist the Calhoun County Sheriff's Office and the State Fire Marshal's Office with the criminal investigation.

As you can imagine from fire deaths scenes you have worked in the past, the bodies were severely burnt. State Fire Marshal's Office Canine Handler Captain Tommy Pleasant, State Fire Marshal's Office Investigator Dean Shirley, and myself had the unduly task of processing the crime scene. Upon initial observations, it appeared we only had three victims, and not until our meticulous evidence recovery, utilizing skills learned in the Forensic Fire Death Class you coordinate, did we discover the fourth victim, a 2-month-old little girl. While the State Fire Marshal's Office did a phenomenal job of determining the cause and origin of the fire as they utilize their training and skills; I attributed my ability to process this crime scene, conduct interviews, and present the investigation for prosecution directly to the subject matter I received through the Annual Forensic Fire Death Classes you have coordinated. This was not my first fire death investigating, but the first of this magnitude and the first where every aspect of material learned in your trainings were brought to light and put to use.

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Each year I have attended the Forensic Fire Death Class I pick up new skills and tools which have direct impact on my investigations. The level of expert instructors and advisers, the knowledge which is shared, provide new and diverse methods for improving investigations. The diverse scenarios do not make the class objectives redundant or stale; simply put, every year each class is unique and not a “cookie cutter” program. The distinctive opportunities the Forensic Fire Death Class you coordinate provide investigators like me, the knowledge, skills, and abilities, which are paramount to securing successful convictions of criminal for their felonious actions.

As I stated I wanted to share with you my success story, I have attached a copy of the plea agreement Jonathan Camacho made in the January 12, 2015, Capital Murder of his wife and three children. On November 12, 2015, Jonathan Camacho plead guilty to two life without parole sentences. Not only myself, but also the Calhoun County District Attorney’s Office, attribute this plea agreement to a very thorough investigation conducted by Calhoun County Sheriff’s Office, the State Fire Marshal’s Office, and the Texas Rangers. I attribute many of my investigative actions utilized in this investigation to those learned through the Annual Forensic Fire Death Classes I have attended.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Drew E. Pilkington'.

Drew E. Pilkington, Texas Ranger
Texas Rangers Company “F”; Victoria, Texas
drew.pilkington@dps.texas.gov

Attachment: Jonathan Camacho Judgment No. 2015-04-7490