

PLEASE DELIVER THE FOLLOWING PAGES TO:

NAME: News Editors/ News Directors  
FROM: The Arapahoe County Sheriff's Office  
DATE: March 13, 2009  
TIME: 1:00 P.M.

- MEDIA RELEASE -

## Grass Fire Investigation Completed

On Friday February 20, 2009, at about 3:00 P.M., the Arapahoe County Sheriff's Office reported that a grass fire had been started on the north side of the 36000 block of East Quincy Avenue. Due to high winds in the area, the original grass fire spread to the south/east and quickly crossed East Quincy Avenue. The initial investigation by the Arapahoe County Sheriff's Office determined that the fire was caused by members of the Sheriff's Office Bomb Squad who were participating in a routine training exercise in an area north/west of the 36000 block of East Quincy Avenue. The deputies on scene were not able to contain the grass fire and immediately requested a response from the Bennett Fire Protection District.

Fortunately, the grass fire did not cause injuries or damage to any property other than the burnt grassland and trees. The quick response and extraordinary efforts of the firefighters from Bennett Fire, Byers Fire, Strasburg Fire, Deer Trail Fire, Sable Altura Fire, Rattlesnake Fire, Cunningham Fire and the heavy equipment crews from Arapahoe County Public Works were critical to ensuring that the fire did not result in injuries or significant property damage. One home in the immediate area was evacuated as a precaution measure. Fire authorities declared the grass fire to be fully contained at about 6:10 P.M. on February 20, 2009; although, firefighters were required to deal with isolated hot spots and flare ups for the five days following the start of the fire.

Once the grass fire was contained, the Arapahoe County Sheriff's Office immediately initiated an internal affairs investigation to determine: the cause/origin of the fire; if adequate safety measures were in place; if appropriate precautionary measures were implemented; and if established training protocols were followed. The Sheriff's Office internal investigation has been completed and has resulted in the following findings:

(more)



An Internationally Accredited Agency

Committed to Quality Service with an Emphasis on Integrity, Professionalism and Community Spirit.

- The grass fire was caused by the detonation of expired OC Pepper Spray canisters which were no longer usable. The detonation is an acceptable and standard destruction practice.
- Adequate safety measures were not properly established
- Appropriate precautionary measures were not implemented
- Established training protocols were not properly followed

Members of the Sheriff's Office that were directly involved in the February 20, 2009, training exercise are currently subject to the internal affairs processes of the Arapahoe County Sheriff's Office. Although current personnel law prohibits the disclosure of the specific details and the results of an internal affairs investigation, if found to be in violation of the Policies and Procedures of the Arapahoe County Sheriff's Office, the deputies involved will face significant consequences to be determined by the Sheriff's Office. The information regarding the February 20, 2009, grass fire was presented to the Office of the District Attorney to determine if those responsible should face criminal charges. The Office of the District Attorney has made the decision that criminal charges related to the February 20, 2009, grass fire will not be pursued.

The media release distributed by the Arapahoe County Sheriff's Office on February 20, 2009, at 6:30 P.M., stated that the area burnt by the grass fire was estimated to be about 200 acres. Further examination of the fire scene during the daylight hours of February 21, 2009, clearly demonstrated that the area impacted by the grass fire exceeded the original 200 acre estimate. As a part of the Sheriff's Office internal investigation, the area impacted by the grass fire has been determined to be approximately one-thousand three-hundred thirteen acres (1,313 acres). The acreage burnt as the result of the February 20, 2009, grass fire was determined through the important assistance of well-qualified personnel from the Arapahoe County Assessors Office, who utilized GPS technology to determine the area impacted by the grass fire.

For further information contact Sheriff Grayson Robinson at 720.874.4165.

**END**