

Youths charged in accidental church fire

by UPI

ALTOONA, Pa. -- Two teens have been charged with accidentally causing a fire that destroyed a Pennsylvania church shortly after services ended.

The 13- and 14-year-old juveniles admitted playing with a lighter used to light church candles in a Sunday school room May 6, The Altoona Mirror said Friday.

The pair said they accidentally ignited some cotton balls on a display board, and then "stomped" on the cotton and hid the damaged poster behind a cabinet. Before leaving the area, they opened a window to get rid of the smoke.

The fire, however, reignited, spreading through a closet to the ceiling. Eventually, the fire collapsed the burning roof and caused \$2.7 million in damage, the Mirror said.

The boys came forward a few days after the fire and admitted that they may have caused the inferno; the boys' parents cooperated with authorities.

The boys were charged with arson, endangering property, causing or risking a catastrophe, criminal mischief and recklessly endangering another person. Their case is expected to go to juvenile court before the end of August.

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