

Shallotte Businesses Re-Open Following Fire

BY DOUG RUTTER

Two Shallotte businesses—Convenient Tours & Travel and Allison's Barber Shop—are open for business following a Friday blaze that damaged their downtown building.

Convenient Tours re-opened Tuesday at a room in the neighboring Twilight Motel. The travel agency's offices were damaged in a fire police believe was intentionally set to destroy evidence of a break-in.

Allison's Barber Shop, which shares a building with the travel agency, sustained smoke damage only in the early-morning blaze. By Saturday, the shop was back in the haircut business.

The Bennettsville man suspected of breaking into the travel agency and starting the fire remained in Brunswick County Jail Tuesday in lieu of \$50,000 bond, according to authorities.

Shallotte Police Det. Carey Gaskins charged Joey Wayne Strickland, approximately 33, with burning an uninhabited building, breaking and entering and damaging computers.

Police Chief Rodney Gause said Strickland was arrested Friday afternoon at the Shallotte Homestyle Laundromat, where he was waiting to catch a bus out of town.

"He already had his bus ticket and he was waiting to leave," Gause said. "He was waiting on the Greyhound bus when we picked him up."

Gause said the travel agency sustained extensive damage as a result of the 5 a.m. fire. The business was

expected to operate out of the motel room for several weeks.

"They lost a lot of computers, a lot of paperwork and a lot of files," Gause said. "They lost everything in the store. It looks like it's going to be \$65,000 to \$70,000 in losses. I feel for them."

The police chief said authorities couldn't charge the suspect with arson because the building is not a residence. Shallotte Police investigated the blaze with assistance from the State Bureau of Investigation.

Police believe the suspect entered Convenient Tours & Travel through a window and set fire to a pile of papers in an effort to destroy evidence of the break-in.

Gause said police have evidence that Strickland entered the commercial building through a rear window, located about 40 feet from the room he was renting at the Twilight.

Ironically, Convenient Tours & Travel is temporarily housed in the same motel room that the suspect was renting.

Due to the extent of the fire damage, Gause said the business owner has been unable to determine if anything was stolen.

"That's why we charged him with breaking and entering instead of breaking and entering larceny," Gause said Monday. "We cannot tell if he took anything at this time."

Police found blood on the window and outside the building, and later found blood on sheets in Strickland's motel room. Gause also said the suspect had a cut on his hand when he was arrested.

The police chief said Monday he

was waiting for lab reports from Raleigh to see if the blood at the crime scene matched the blood in Strickland's room. Police also planned to take a blood sample from the suspect.

Gause said Strickland had been staying at the Twilight for approximately two days. A shoe print found inside the burned building matched Strickland's shoe print, he said.

There is no fire wall between the two businesses. Gause credited the Shallotte Volunteer Fire Department for responding quickly and keeping the fire from spreading to the barber

shop. "The fire department got the fire out so it didn't destroy our evidence, and the SBI helped us gather evidence," Gause said. "That was a big factor in this case."



STAFF PHOTO BY ERIC CARLSON

POLICE BELIEVE the man suspected of setting fire to Convenient Tours & Travel Friday entered the business through this window near the back of the building.

Temporary Recycling Sites Switch To Truck

Brunswick County's three temporary recycling sites have switched from large green stationary bins to a mobile recycling truck because of the small volume collected at the sites, according to Mary S. McCarley, county recycling coordinator.

The days of collection and hours of operation will remain unchanged at Waccamaw, Northwest and Town Creek parks.

McCarley is scheduling the following dates to meet with anyone who would like to discuss recycling or for those who would like to learn how to prepare their recyclables:

- Waccamaw Park: Monday, March 15, 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Rain date: Monday, March 29, 11 a.m.-3 p.m.
- Northwest Park: Tuesday, March

16, 11-3. Rain date: Tuesday, March 30, 11-3.

■Town Creek Park: Wednesday, March 17, 11:30-3:30. Rain date: Wednesday, March 31, 11:30-3:30.

For more information call 253-4488, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. until 4:30 p.m.

GOP Convention Set For Saturday

The Brunswick County Republican Party convention will be held Saturday, Feb. 6, at 2 p.m. at the party headquarters in Supply.

Keynote speaker will be Coy Privette, a former state legislator. Delegates are encouraged to attend.



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William Temple Allen, CPA

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