



NEWS RELEASE

Orange County Fire Authority
Public Affairs
1 Fire Authority Road
Irvine, CA 92602

For Immediate Release:
June 9, 2016

Contact: Fire Captain Larry Kurtz
Fire Captain / PIO
714-357-7782
larrykurtz@ocfa.org

OCFA INVESTIGATORS USE TIP FROM VIDEO TO ARREST ALLEGED ARSONIST

Suspect Caught on Tape in October 2015 Starting Fire in Santa Ana Walmart

Irvine – Orange County Fire Authority (OCFA) investigators arrested an alleged arsonist June 7 after she was caught on tape lighting a fire in a Santa Ana Walmart. News coverage of the crime that followed OCFA’s public release of the surveillance video generated a tip that led to the arrest of Erika Rubi Valeriano, 42, on June 7. She was charged with two felony counts of arson in an inhabited structure.

“This is a great example of the importance of news agency participation and citizen involvement in helping law enforcement to apprehend criminals,” said OCFA PIO Larry Kurtz. “There was a lot of hard work that went into this case, but the arrest would not have been possible without the tip we received that followed broadcast of the video.”

OCFA investigators worked for months following the October 4, 2015 Walmart fire and release of the video before using information from the tip to track down Valeriano. She used many aliases and frequently changed locations making it difficult for OCFA investigators to determine her whereabouts. Another fire on May 30, at Santa Ana’s El Super Market and additional videotape surveillance footage of Valeriano allegedly lighting a fire led OCFA investigators to the June 7 arrest.

The October 2015 **video** inside the Walmart shows Valeriano allegedly entering the store, loading up her shopping cart, and then setting a fire in one of the aisles. After the fire is discovered, while employees attempt to extinguish it, she uses the distraction to exit the store with a shopping cart filled with stolen merchandise.

OCFA Investigators are looking for similar crimes that may have been committed in the Southern California area to determine if they are related. OCFA’s Investigation Tip Line is (714) 573-6720 or Crime Stoppers Line (855) TIP-OCCS (847-6227).

###

The Orange County Fire Authority is a joint powers authority that serves more than 1.8 million residents in 23 cities