

Clatskanie Area Man in Custody After Burning Down His Residence

Saturday, 21 February 2015 10:33 -

Columbia County Sheriff's Deputies responded Friday, February 20 to the residence of a reportedly agitated and intoxicated male subject who family members said was threatening to burn his house down. Darren Loftesness, 53, Clatskanie is charged with Attempted Assault of Public Safety Officers, DUII, Felony Attempt to Elude and resisting arrest, among other charges. Additional charges are pending the results of an ongoing investigation.

Just before 7 p.m., the sheriff's office and several area police agencies responded to a domestic disturbance that turned violent when the suspect reportedly used gasoline as an accelerant to burn down his own residence. Deputies and officers responding to the highly volatile situation at 23825 Blunk Dr., in the Clatskanie area found at least one building on fire and the suspect behaving erratically in the yard before leaving the scene in a car. The suspect drove down Blunk Dr., where he was hemmed in by responding law enforcement units. The suspect did not initially respond to law enforcement's request for him to leave the vehicle, but instead threatened to ram the police units with his pickup truck. Law enforcement officers used less lethal force to breach the vehicle and deployed a electronic stun device to end the incident and get the suspect in custody without serious injury to the suspect or authorities.

Fire personnel from three jurisdictions (Clatskanie Fire, Columbia River Fire, and Mist-Birkenfeld Fire) responded but could not address the burning building until the suspect was in custody. By the time they reached the residence, it was fully engulfed in flames.

"This was an intense, fluid law enforcement situation," said Sheriff Jeff Dickerson. "We were fortunate to have extra help with reserve deputies on duty and law enforcement from the Clatskanie and Rainier Police Departments, as well as troopers from the Oregon State Police. Everyone worked together very well to bring this matter to a safe conclusion."

Loftesness was placed in custody in the Columbia County Jail with bail set at \$91,685.