

Bride-to-Be Accused of Setting Church on Fire Day Before Wedding

What should have been the final hours before a wedding instead ended with a church fire, a criminal investigation and a bride-to-be behind bars.

According to ABC4, 25-year-old Lenita “Tessa” Moreno has been charged after authorities allege she intentionally set fire to a meetinghouse of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Kaysville, Utah, while preparations were underway for her wedding, which was scheduled to take place the following day.

Court documents cited by ABC4 state that the Kaysville Fire Department requested police assistance on July 10 after a fire was reported at the church on West Center Street. Investigators later determined the blaze originated in the building’s Relief Society room, prompting an investigation involving the local fire marshal and the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

According to ABC4, several people—including Moreno, her fiancé and members of the groom’s family—were inside the church decorating for the upcoming ceremony when the fire alarm sounded. Those present located the fire and extinguished it using water that had been brought for wedding decorations, along with a fire extinguisher, before the flames spread further.



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Court documents cited by ABC4 say investigators determined the

fire appeared to have started beneath a stack of chairs. Investigators collected several items recovered from the area as part of the investigation.

Detectives also examined Moreno's activities earlier that evening.

According to court documents obtained by ABC4, Moreno and her fiancé visited an Ace Hardware store to purchase hooks needed for the wedding setup and stopped at Chevron. Investigators allege surveillance video showed Moreno taking two or three disposable lighters, concealing them beneath her clothing and in her shoe before leaving the store without paying for them.

Authorities estimate the fire caused more than \$108,000 in damage to the church building, ABC4 reported.

Moreno has been charged with aggravated arson, a first-degree felony, as well as misdemeanor counts of retail theft and providing false information to police, according to ABC4.

During a July 27 interview, Moreno allegedly admitted giving officers a false birthdate, court documents state. When questioned about the Ace Hardware visit, she reportedly acknowledged taking an item from the store but declined to identify what it was.

Investigators also allege Moreno falsely claimed she had obtained a marriage license for the ceremony.

According to ABC4, police later determined that no marriage license had been issued before the scheduled wedding.

The arresting officer wrote in the arrest affidavit, as cited by ABC4, that Moreno had "continually" been deceptive throughout the investigation and had taken "drastic steps" to conceal her alleged lies.

Moreno was booked into the Davis County Jail and is currently being held without bail.

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