



# Department of Justice

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## TEXAS MAN ADMITS SETTING FIRE TO BIG LOTS STORE

**DALLAS** - A former store manager of the Big Lots store located in Richardson, Texas, pleaded guilty in federal court today to two counts of arson, announced U.S. Attorney Richard B. Roper of the Northern District of Texas. William Gary Garrard, Jr., 38, of Plano, Texas, appeared before U.S. Magistrate Judge Paul D. Stickney this afternoon to enter his plea. Judge Stickney set a sentencing date of May 7, 2007, before U.S. District Judge David C. Godbey. As part of the plea agreement, the government and Garrard agree that the imposition of a concurrent sentence of five years imprisonment, for both counts, would be the appropriate disposition of this case.

On September 23, 2003, William Gary Garrard, Jr. worked the evening shift as the store manager of the Big Lots store located in a strip shopping center at 1332 S. Plano Road in Richardson, Texas. At approximately 9:49 p.m., Garrard intentionally set a fire in the store manager's office using gasoline as an accelerant. Approximately five minutes later, firefighters with the Richardson Fire Department arrived at the scene, but by that time, the automatic sprinkler system had extinguished the fire. Garrard returned to the office, ostensibly to secure loose money, and ignited a second fire using gasoline as the accelerant, and in the process, the fire spread to a soft cast he was wearing, and he sustained burns on his arms and face.

As a result of the two fires ignited by Garrard, the Big Lots store was damaged, causing losses to Big Lots and its insurers because of the property damage and the personal injuries sustained by Garrard and the worker's compensation and short-term disability claims he subsequently filed. No person, other than Garrard, was injured in the fires.

U.S. Attorney Roper praised the investigative work of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and the Richardson Fire Department. The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Linda Groves and Mark Penley.

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