



RICHARD A. BROWN
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

**DISTRICT ATTORNEY
QUEENS COUNTY**
125-01 QUEENS BOULEVARD
KEW GARDENS, NEW YORK 11415-1568
718-286-6000

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CONTACT: KEVIN RYAN
HELEN PETERSON
MERIS CAMPBELL
(718) 286-6315

**QUEENS TEENAGER CHARGED WITH SETTING FIRE CAUSING MORE THAN
\$400,000 IN DAMAGES TO GOLF COURSE BUILDING AND EQUIPMENT**

Thirty-Eight Golf Carts Destroyed and Clubhouse Pro Shop Damaged

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown today announced that a 17-year-old Fresh Meadows teen has been charged with arson and criminal mischief after allegedly pouring flammable liquid onto golf carts at the Kissena Park Golf Course which led to a fire that ultimately destroyed 38 golf carts and damaged the clubhouse pro shop.

District Attorney Brown said, "The defendant is charged with setting a fire that caused extensive damage to a recreational facility that serves the community. The fire could easily have caused serious injuries to responding firefighters or any people who may have been on or around the golf course. This was no teenage prank. It is a serious crime that will be dealt with accordingly."

District Attorney Brown identified the defendant as Christopher Casella, 17, of 197-01 58th Avenue in Fresh Meadows. The defendant has been charged with 39 counts of third-degree arson and one count of second-degree criminal mischief. If convicted, he faces up to 15 years in prison. The defendant is presently awaiting arraignment in Queens Criminal Court.

According to the criminal complaint, sometime between just before midnight on June 24, 2009, and the early morning hours of June 25, 2009, the defendant and two unapprehended others were allegedly captured on video surveillance tapes located at the Kissena Park Golf Course at 164-15 Booth Memorial Avenue. The videotape allegedly shows the defendant and two accomplices climbing over a fenced-in parking area of the golf course where 38 golf carts were parked. The video allegedly depicts the three individuals pouring liquid onto the golf carts. They are then allegedly shown climbing back over the fence. At that point a flame comes over the top of the fence onto the parked golf carts and the entire area goes up in flames.

The District Attorney said that according to the golf course manager within the golf cart parking area there is a 50 gallon gasoline tank which is used to fuel the carts.

It is further alleged that the damage to the golf course and the equipment is in excess of \$407,000.

District Attorney Brown said that the defendant was arrested this morning by Detective Dante Cavallo of the Arson & Explosion Squad of the New York City Police Department.

Assistant District Attorney David Chen of the District Attorney's Economic Crimes Bureau is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Gregory C. Pavlides, Bureau Chief, and Christina Hanophy, Deputy Bureau Chief, and the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Peter A. Crusco and Deputy Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Linda M. Cantoni.

It should be noted that a criminal complaint is merely an accusation and that a defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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Note to Editors: Press release e-version posted at www.queensda.org.