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Topeka Fire service dog Boomer sits in front of a Topeka Fire Department truck. Boomer worked an arson in Liberal at Rent-A-Center in 2010 and helped convict an arsonist in the case. Boomer died recently at the age of 10. Courtesy photo

Boomer helped solve arson case at Liberal's Rent-A-Center in 2010

By CHRIS FISHER

• WIBW

TOPEKA – It is with a heavy heart that the Topeka Fire Department announces the passing of the Investigations Unit Accelerant Detection Canine Boomer, at the age of 10 years old.

Boomer was placed into service in December of 2005 and has been an 8-year collaborative partnership between the City of Topeka and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and

Explosives (BATFE): a division of the United States Department of Justice.

Since entering into service, Boomer has responded to more than 900 incidents logging more than 80,000 miles. He has been deployed in roughly 300 fire scenes both in the City of Topeka, and regionally; this includes two BATFE National Response Team activations in Kansas and Missouri.

Liberal Fire Department Chief Kelly Kirk remembers Boomer well.

"Boomer was the K-9 used to investigate the Rent-A-Center Fire in 2010 here in Liberal," Kelly said in a press release. "That resulted in the conviction of an arsonist."

Since January 2006, Topeka has seen a significant drop in the occurrence of fires that necessitated formal investigations. As compared to statistics generated prior to the program, Topeka has experienced an equally impressive 33 percent drop in the number of fires being classified as incendiary and/or arson.

Boomer was pivotal in the investigation of an estimated 60 injury fires and more than 20 fatality fires in both Topeka and the northeast Kansas region. During his career, Boomer aided in the collection of more than 250 evidence samples. Once Boomer alerted, these samples were collected and tested and he achieved an approximate 90 percent positive laboratory confirmation rate.

Boomer's positive alerts to the presence of ignitable liquids within a fire scene statistically indicated to investigators there was a 90 percent chance that the laboratory would confirm the existence of ignitable liquids within the fire debris. This accuracy rate ultimately provided investigators with the crucial evidence needed to successfully prosecute the crime of arson.

Boomer was actively involved in the arrest and/or conviction of more than 40 suspects for crimes including arson and murder/homicide in both federal and district courts.

Boomer served Topeka and the surrounding communities with honor and distinction and will never be forgotten.

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