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Police charge suspect with arson in fire at historic Minnesota synagogue

A 117-year-old synagogue in Duluth burned to the ground Monday. Four days later, police arrested a 36-year-old man for allegedly setting the fire that destroyed the oldest modern orthodox synagogue in northern Minnesota.

Matthew J. Amiot was booked on first-degree arson Friday after allegedly setting the historic house of worship ablaze. No one was inside at the time, though six Torah scrolls — sacred Jewish texts handwritten on parchment paper — were destroyed.

At a Sunday news conference, Police Chief Mike Tusken said, “There is no reason to believe this is a bias or hate crime” at this time. Authorities have not determined the motive. According to Duluth Fire Chief Shawn Krizaj, firefighters responded to the Adas Israel Congregation at 2:30 a.m. Monday. Krizaj explained at the news conference that the fire initiated outside the building but “quickly spread through voids in the wall space and spread throughout the synagogue.”

The structure was consumed by flames until dawn, when it collapsed. It took five hours of hosing down the building before the fire subsided, leaving behind charred debris in what Duluth Assistant Fire Chief Brent Consie called “pretty much a total loss.” [\[WASHPOST\]](#)