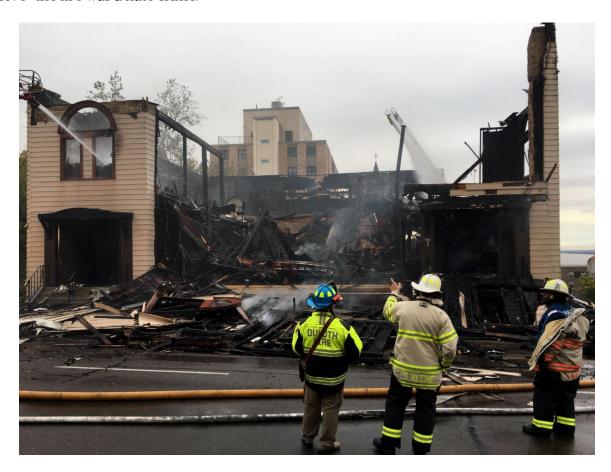# Man held in connection to fire that destroyed 119-year-old Minnesota synagogue

Duluth police arrested Matthew Amiot, 36, on Friday, but said at this time they have "no reason to believe" the fire was a hate crime.

Firefighters investigate the scene after a fire burned down the Adas Israel Congregation in Duluth, Minn., on Sept. 9, 2019.   Dan Kraker / Minnesota Public Radio via AP file

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By Sarah Jackson and Ben Kesslen

A man is being held in county jail in connection to the fire that burned down a Minnesota synagogue, police said on Sunday.

Duluth Police Chief Mike Tusken said his department is recommending a first degree arson charge for Matthew James Amiot, 36, who has been held without bail since his Friday arrest.

Amiot was arrested on Friday afternoon and gave a statement to police, but has yet to be charged. The Duluth PD, along with federal ATF investigators, are still looking into the motivation of the fire. A complaint is expected to be filed next week.

"At this moment in time, there is no reason to believe that this is a bias or hate crime," Tusken said in a Sunday press conference, adding the classification of the crime is subject to change as the investigation continues.

A fire at a Jewish synagogue in Duluth, Minn., on Sept. 9, 2019.   KBJR

Duluth police and firefighters responded to a report of a fire early Monday morning and found Adas Israel Congregation, a 119-year-old Orthodox synagogue, in flames.

Although the fire department said no accelerants were used to start the blaze, officials said Sunday that the fire spread quickly throughout the synagogue, which is facing major structural damage.

Firefighters were able to recover some of the synagogue's religious artifacts early Monday morning. One firefighter was injured on the scene.