

Manager Arrested In Plaza 8 Theater Burglary

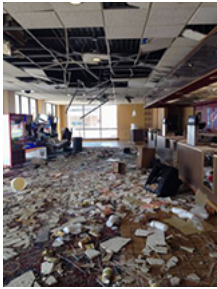
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Manager Arrested In Plaza 8 Theater Burglary **News**

Posted by : Randy

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St. Joseph, Mo. (newspressnow.com) - Smashed ceiling tiles, glass, popcorn kernels, straws and other garbage filled the lobby of the Plaza 8 on Tuesday morning.



St. Joseph police responded to the theater, which closed for good Sunday, before 10:30 a.m. to investigate a reported burglary, but what they found was extensive damage.

Capt. Jeff Wilson, spokesman for the St. Joseph Police Department, said Joshua T. Hall, the theater's manager, was taken into custody Tuesday afternoon.

Mr. Hall, 35, has yet to be charged. Mr. Wilson said the investigation turned from burglary to property damage and making a false police report. There was no indication whether anyone else would be taken into custody.

Mr. Hall was arrested a few hours after police initially responded to the scene.

“Upon arrival, the entire building was in complete disarray — hundreds of thousands of dollars of property damage,” said Scott Vanover, the responding officer. “We’re in the process of looking for evidence, we’ve got some items we’re going to take for fingerprints (and) DNA, and then the incident will be turned over to detectives for the follow-up.”

Mr. Vanover said the damage occurred sometime between the theater's closing at about 11 p.m. Sunday and when an employee came in Monday between 10 and 11 a.m. to pack up some remaining items. The incident wasn't reported until Tuesday.

Mr. Vanover said it was a first in his 23-year career with the department to see such damage in one place.

“I can think of maybe one other, where they stripped the building of copper,” he said, noting that copper and scrap metal theft is one scenario police have to consider in their investigation. Several detectives were on the scene, taking photos and collecting evidence.

Mr. Hall reported the damage to police. He told the News-Press Tuesday morning, prior to his arrest, that he had gotten a call from another employee about the damage, but thought he had exaggerated the extent of it.

When he showed up to survey the theater Monday night, he told a reporter what he found was worse than he expected. He said he just had one question — why anyone would do it.

“This looked like work, this didn't look recreational,” he said.

Mr. Hall said there are any number of ways someone could get into the theater, especially possibly

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former employees familiar with the building. He noted that a back door had some recent issues with latching closed.

Mr. Hall said there wasn't much left in the theater worth noting. Money had been taken out and all that was left were some soda fountain parts, some rented video games and the projectors and film, all of which were left unharmed.

Of the individual theaters, at least one had extensive damage, including a slashed screen and fabric torn from the walls.

While inside, police had to duck around exposed cables pulled from the ceilings, warning that some still may be live with electricity.