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A FATHER-of-three who walked into a solicitor's office and set himself alight in front of staff was in a critical condition last night in hospital.

John Harnedy (44) walked into the reception area of Wolfe's Solicitors in Skibbereen in west Cork just before 11am yesterday.

Mr Harnedy had a container of petrol concealed in a plastic bag, which he poured over himself.

Shocked staff looked on as he then took out a box of matches and set himself on fire.

A member of staff at the firm reacted by putting out the fire with a fire extinguisher while others soaked him with water.

It is understood Mr Harnedy said something to staff before he set himself alight.

A local doctor attended to the man while waiting for the ambulance to arrive. A unit from the Skibbereen Fire Brigade was also called to the scene.

Gardai escorted the ambulance along the journey to Cork University Hospital where Mr Harnedy was taken to the burns unit and assessed.

Staff at Cork University Hospital last night described Mr Harnedy as being in a "critical condition".

His wife and three children, ranging in age from three to eight years, are being comforted by friends. It is not clear what drove him to such a desperate act.

Meanwhile, Gardai have named the 36-year-old man who died in a house fire in Castlelyons near Fermoy in north Cork as Patrick Casey.

Mr Casey died following a fire at his flat in the early hours of Sunday morning.

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