

Breaking News



THE IRISH TIMES

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Ireland

Tue, May 25, 04

Cork man set himself on fire inside solicitors' office

Niall O'Connor

A man is in a critical condition in hospital after setting himself on fire inside a solicitors' office.

The incident occurred at Wolfe and Co Solicitors on Market Street in the west Cork town of Skibbereen.

The 44-year-old man, who is from the area, walked into the office shortly before 11 a.m. yesterday. It is understood he was engaged in a family law dispute.

During a conversation with office staff, the man doused himself in petrol and ignited the fuel - he was immediately engulfed in flame.

Gardaí and emergency services arrived within minutes, and the man was brought to Cork University Hospital.

A spokesman for the hospital said the man was being treated at the burns unit, and was in a critical condition.

It is understood the solicitors' firm was representing the man's wife in a custody battle.

He had spent a number of years in England, and had recently returned.

A Garda source confirmed that the man was engaged in a long-running family dispute.

"This is one of those tragic cries for help by someone who couldn't find a way out of his situation.

"It's just lucky that no one else was injured in the fire. People at the scene and gardaí reacted very quickly and stopped the fire from spreading - it could have been a lot worse."

Mr Adrian Healy, a councillor on Skibbereen Town Council, works only a few feet from Wolfe and Co Solicitors, in the local post office.

"We went out on to the street when we heard the sirens, and we saw the smoke coming out the door.

"It is very frightening to think that this could happen in our town and to friends of ours. I am particularly shocked as I knew the man - it is tragic," he said.

Special Reports

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The office of Wolfe and Co Solicitors was closed "due to unforeseen circumstances" yesterday, and a spokesman for the practice was unavailable for comment.

A spokeswoman for the Southern Law Society was also unavailable for comment.

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