

Arson suspected in citrus pack-house fire

By Lloyd Phillips May 8, 2018 11:55 am

Arson is suspected of being the cause of a raging inferno that gutted an Eastern Cape citrus pack-house on Monday, 7 May.



The fire and its aftermath at Riverside Citrus Services' high-tech pack-house in the Eastern Cape's Fort Beaufort area.

Photo: courtesy of Riverside Citrus Services/Lona Group



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Police told *Farmer's Weekly* this suspicion was based on the observations of officers attending the scene of the fire at the Riverside Citrus Services (RCS) pack-house in the Fort Beaufort area.

"Our police officers have been investigating the fire and gathering data and other information. An arrest is imminent in this case," said Eastern Cape SAPS spokesperson Captain Khaya Tonjeni.

Tonjeni added that the SAPS had not yet been able to confirm whether or not there had been any protest action at the pack-house which may have been associated with the fire.

A brief statement issued by the Lona Group, which owns RCS, confirmed that the pack-house was "completely destroyed" by the fire.

"Thankfully, no injuries have been reported and we would like to thank all parties who have assisted us to date," said the press release.

A news story on the website of Eastern Cape radio station, Algoa FM, said that monetary losses due to the fire damage to the high-tech citrus pack-house could be as high as R200 million and that the jobs of approximately 300 workers could be negatively affected.

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