

Several fires at former Fernald State School in Waltham being investigated as arson, authorities say

By [Sarah Mesdjian](#) Globe Correspondent, Updated May 6, 2025, 3:18 p.m.



A four-alarm fire broke out at a former Fernald School building on April 19. WALTHAM FIRE DEPARTMENT

Authorities are investigating two fires that broke out April 19 at the former Fernald State School in Waltham as potential acts of arson, officials said Tuesday.

The April fires may be related to two fires at the former center in December and January, according to a statement from the state fire marshal's office and Waltham officials.

"There have been four fires in that area since December," said Waltham police Chief Kevin O'Connell. "These incidents are dangerous, and we're deeply concerned that someone is going to be hurt."

Early on April 19, crews went to 200 Trapelo Road and found two buildings ablaze: the Schoolhouse/Gym and the Mutual Training Building, officials said.

It took crews more than six hours to fully extinguish the fires, officials said. They later determined that the fires were set "intentionally and separately."

"Firefighters confronted heavy smoke and flames venting out the windows. [Crews] were present when the roof of one building collapsed and the first floor of another collapsed into the basement," said Waltham Fire Chief Andrew Mullin. "First responders, curious onlookers, and even the person or persons responsible could have been injured or worse."

On Dec. 14, a fire at a former chapel on the campus caused minor damage, officials said.

On Jan. 18, a fire at Chipman Hall ended in "catastrophic damage that included a roof collapse," officials said.

All four fires took place on Saturdays. No injuries were reported, officials said.

"If you were in the area of the Fernald School on these dates and saw anything suspicious, or if you have specific information on the person or persons responsible, please share it with investigators at 1-800-682-9229," said State Fire Marshal Jon M. Davine. "What's most important right now is that these fires stop before someone gets hurt."

Sarah Mesdjian can be reached at sarah.mesdjian@globe.com. Follow her on X [@sarahs_journal](https://twitter.com/sarahs_journal).

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