

LAKE BRIDGEPORT

Woman's death ruled a murder

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A 32-year-old Lake Bridgeport resident's death a week ago has officially been ruled a murder, the Wise County Sheriff's Office announced Friday.

Wise County Sheriff Lane Akin said the Dallas County Medical Examiner's Office has classified Lauren Whitener's death as a murder, according to autopsy results. Her body was found in a bedroom by firefighters responding

to a house fire at her home in the early morning hours of July 5.

"The medical examiner determined her death was not a result of the fire or smoke inhalation but as a result of homicidal actions," Akin said.

Due to the ongoing investigation, Akin said he was not ready to release the exact nature of the wounds at this time.

A capital murder investigation is now being pursued by the Wise County Sheriff's

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MESSENGER ARCHIVE

FATAL FIRE — Investigators have determined the death of a Lake Bridgeport resident July 5 was a homicide. They are seeking information from the public.

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Office and the Texas Rangers due to an apparent arson happening nearly simultaneously with the murder.

"We believe the murder was committed, and the person set the place on fire in order to destroy evidence," Akin said.

While investigators have developed some suspects in the case, no arrests have been made, the sheriff said. A news release issued by the sheriff's office said numerous items of forensic evidence have been collected and submitted to crime labs in Dallas and Austin.

Lake Bridgeport and Bridgeport firefighters responded to the

fire at 620 N. Main St. in Lake Bridgeport around 4 a.m. July 5 after a neighbor reported seeing smoke coming from the home. Firefighters found a couch on fire and quickly extinguished it.

In addition to the ongoing capital murder investigation, the Wise County Fire Marshal's Office and the Tarrant County Arson Task Force are continuing their investigation into determining the cause and origin of the fire.

The sheriff's office is asking anyone who might have information about the incident to call the sheriff's office at 940-627-5971 or Crime Stoppers at 940-627-8477.