

GERMAN'S JUDGEMENT

# Forest fire verdict

In August of last year, 27 year old Scott Verdinne Stumpf from Germany was arrested after accidentally starting a devastating forest fire in La Palma.

His trial took place earlier this month and he has been sentenced to three and a half years in prison and to pay damages to the Island Council of almost €2 million, as well as compensation to the boroughs of El Paso, Los Llanos de Aridane, Villa de Mazo, Fuencaliente and to the widow and children of Francisco José Santana Álvarez, the forestry protection worker who died in the fire. Since the condemned is destitute and has no income, it's unlikely that anyone will ever see a cent.

The court found it proven that the young man caused the fire due to gross negligence, put the lives of many people in danger and cost a human life. In mitigation, it was allowed that he freely admitted his guilt to the police once detained.

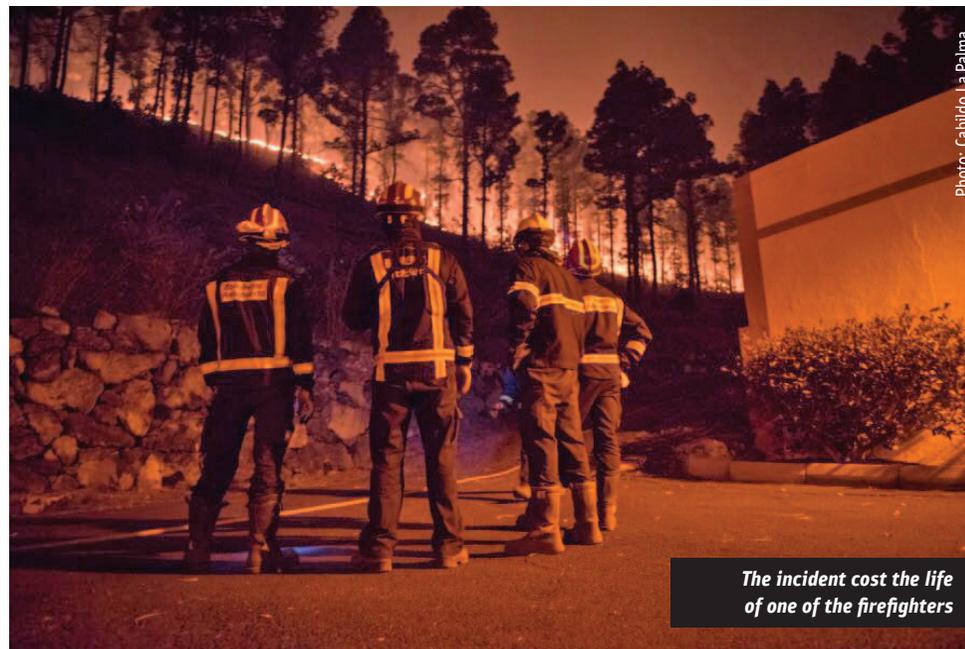


Photo: Cabildo La Palma

The incident cost the life of one of the firefighters

Scott had been living in an abandoned building in El Paso in western La Palma for about three months. He had built himself an outhouse for his necessities and on August 3 after using the facilities, he set fire to the used toi-

let paper. With high temperatures, strong winds and low humidity the danger of forest fires was great, the island was on alert and he neglected to take note of that. He also failed to make sure that the burning loo paper had gone

out before leaving the house. The resulting fire raged for five days and affected four boroughs and 4,864 hectares of land. Some 3,000 residents had to be temporarily evacuated from their homes. Experienced firefighter



Photo: 112 Canarias

Almost five hectares of woodland and mountains were affected



Photo: 112 Canarias

Security forces fought to get the fire under control for days

and member of the environmental protection agency, Francisco José Santana Álvarez from Gran Canaria, got caught in a fire trap as the winds changed direction. He was badly burned and died of asphyxiation as well as his

wounds. Scott was picked up by a roadblock on the LP2 by the Guardia Civil. He immediately gave himself up as a possible cause of the fire and was arrested. Whilst the fire was declared under control after five days.

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