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DETROIT

New sentence ordered in case of Detroit firefighter's 2008 death

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A man convicted of arranging an arson that killed a Detroit firefighter has been sentenced three times since the 2008 crime.

Twelve years and two judges later, the trial court still hasn't been able to get it right, the Michigan appeals court said.

Mario Willis was convicted of second-degree murder after being charged with paying a handyman \$20 to burn down an abandoned house. The roof collapsed on firefighter Walt Harris in 2008 while he was fighting the fire, killing him.

The appeals court last week acknowledged the "tragedy" but returned Willis' case to Wayne County Judge Margaret Van Houten. The court said she had failed to adequately explain why he deserved a minimum prison sentence of 37 years.

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Van Houten exceeded the guidelines, which would put the minimum sentence anywhere from about 19 years to 31 years. A prisoner is eligible for parole review after the minimum sentence.

The appeals court noted that Willis, now 38, has had "exemplary behavior" behind bars.

"A defendant's behavior in prison since his prior sentencing is a proper consideration on resentencing," the court said.