

North Carolina FBI investigates fire at predominantly black church

Washington (dpa) - The FBI has opened an investigation into a suspected arson at a predominantly black church in Charlotte, North Carolina, the bureau said Monday.

The case involving the Briar Creek Road Baptist Church in Charlotte comes among a string of nighttime fires that have destroyed at least six predominately black churches in five different Southern US states.

"There is no reason to believe there is any connection between the fires at this time," the FBI's Charlotte field office said in a statement.

The FBI probe of the Charlotte case is being conducted to determine whether any federal laws were violated related in the suspected arson, parallel to the fire investigation by local authorities.

Three of the fires are suspected to be arson, while two were believed to be natural causes and one is of still unknown cause, according to the Southern Poverty Law Centre, a civil rights groups.

The fires follow the June 17 shooting by a white supremacist who killed nine people at a predominately black church in Charleston, South Carolina.

The White House said they would offer federal resources if needed.

"We have seen some extremists carry out acts of violence against the black church or against black churches across the country," spokesman Josh Earnest said.