

STATE

\$170,000 reward in hunt for arsonist

BY VERONICA ROCHA
Los Angeles Times

The reward offer jumped to \$170,000 for an arrest and conviction in last month's massive fire at a downtown Los Angeles construction site as investigators revealed an accelerant was used to start the blaze.

Investigators are continuing their probe of the fire that consumed the seven-story Da Vinci apartment building under construction in the 900 block of Fremont Avenue. But more information is needed to "close the loop," said Special Agent Carlos Canino with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

"This is a huge fire," he said Wednesday morning. "We feel very strongly it's solvable."

Councilman Jose Huizar proposed a \$75,000 reward Tuesday, which still needs L.A. City Council approval. After



Damian Dovarganes The Associated Press

Firefighters battle an inferno at an apartment building under construction on Dec. 8 in Los Angeles. Investigators say the blaze was an act of arson that caused an estimated \$25 million to \$30 million in damage.

that, the owner of the DaVinci property matched the \$75,000 reward, and the ATF offered \$20,000.

Canino confirmed that an accelerant was used to start the fire, which was the size of a city block and created a 7-foot-high debris pile.

No one was injured in the Dec. 8 fire, which took 250 firefighters an hour and half to extinguish.

The blaze caused damage to Highway 110 and nearby buildings. It resulted in \$25 million to \$30 million in damage, city officials said.

Los Angeles Fire Chief Ralph Terrazas said the fire not only put the lives of

firefighters at risk but also put a great strain on resources citywide.

Officials are hoping to renew public interest in the case so they can find whoever started the fire.

"It's a miracle that in a major fire like this no one was killed or injured," Huizar said.

The fire, he said, put the city in danger.

A week after the fire, authorities released images and surveillance video of two potential witnesses who were at or near the fire. Authorities said they were hoping to talk to them for their investigation.