



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF LOUISIANA STATE FIRE MARSHAL

Department of Public Safety & Corrections • Public Safety Services
8181 Independence Blvd. • Baton Rouge, LA 70806

www.lasfm.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Ashley Rodrigue
Public Affairs Director

DATE: 2/22/24

PHONE: 225-620-5115
osfm.publicaffairs@la.gov

Trio Arrested In Connection With 2023 Church Fire

WEBSTER PARISH- State Fire Marshal (SFM) deputies have arrested three Mississippi residents for their roles in an insurance fraud scheme involving a fire at an abandoned church.

Cynthia Pearson, 66, and Ricky Pearson, 65, both from Jackson, MS, were booked into the Bayou Dorcheat Correctional Center (BDCC) on Friday, February 16, 2024. Both were arrested on one count each of Arson with Intent to Defraud and Criminal Conspiracy.

Shawn Burton, 52 of Jackson, MS, was booked into the BDCC back in August 2023 on one count each of Simple Arson of a Religious Building, Simple Burglary and Criminal Conspiracy.

In April 2023, the Minden Fire Department responded to the Fountain of Praise United Worship Center located in the 500 block of Constable Street for a report of a fire. The church was without utilities and had not been in use for several months. Several suspicious circumstances surrounding the fire led to a request for the SFM to investigate its origin and cause.

Through extensive investigative efforts, SFM deputies and agents with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) determined the fire was intentionally set and identified Burton as a suspect in the case. Following his arrest in August, continued investigative efforts led to arrest warrants for the Pearsons, who own the facility.

Thanks to the assistance of the Webster Parish Sheriff's Office, the Pearsons were taken into custody on Feb. 16.

This investigation is still ongoing. Anyone with information that can assist deputies with this case is asked to submit tips through our Arson Hotline at 1-844-954-1221 or online at lasfm.org. All tips can be submitted anonymously.

The SFM would like to thank the Mississippi State Fire Marshal's Office and the ATF for their assistance with this case.

-END-END-END-END-