



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF LOUISIANA STATE FIRE MARSHAL

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Columbia Men Arrested in Connection with Church Arson

CALWELL PARISH (March 30, 2026) – On Friday, March 27, 2026, State Fire Marshal (SFM) investigators charged 19-year-old Anthony Dillion Jr. and 20-year-old James Smith IV, both of Columbia, with one count each of Simple Arson of a Religious Building and Criminal Conspiracy in connection with a Columbia church fire.

Around 5:30 a.m. on March 27, 2026, a fire was reported at St. John’s Roman Catholic Church in the 7900 block of Highway 165 in Columbia. At the request of the Caldwell Parish Sheriff’s Office, SFM deputies investigated and concluded that Dillion and Smith allegedly set the fire intentionally.

The SFM would like to thank the Caldwell Parish Sheriff’s Office and the Columbia Fire Department for their assistance in this investigation. The Caldwell Parish Sheriff’s Office placed additional counts of Criminal Conspiracy and Simple Burglary charges.

The Louisiana State Fire Marshal’s Office reminds the public that anyone with information regarding fire-related crimes is encouraged to submit an anonymous tip by visiting lasfm.org and selecting the “Arson Fires” icon.

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