



News Release

OFFICE OF LOUISIANA STATE FIRE MARSHAL

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Public Safety Services

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Overnight Fire Leaves One Dead in Farmerville

Farmerville, LA - An early morning fire today severely damaged a Farmerville home, leaving one occupant dead. The circumstance surrounding the fire remain under investigation.

Just after 1:00 a.m., State Fire Marshal investigators were dispatched to the scene of a fire at 302 Underwood Street in Farmerville. Fire crews received notification of the blaze just before 1:00 a.m. While the exterior of the home remains intact, the fire caused significant damage throughout the interior of the three-bedroom, wood-frame home.

Within the charred remains of the home, investigators discovered the body of 29 year old Valene Henderson. Henderson's body was found in a hallway near the rear doorway of the residence. Henderson shares the residence with her husband, 30 year old, MacArthur Gray who was away from the home at the time of the fire.

Gray did return to the home shortly after fire crews arrived and provided investigators with some insight into their activities immediately before the fire. Gray stated that electrical service had been terminated to the home Tuesday morning and that they were utilizing a candle for lighting within the home.

According to Gray, he left the residence some twenty minutes before the fire to purchase prescription Ambien at Henderson's request. He claims to have discarded the Ambien in a roadside drain after observing emergency crews at his home. Gray, who is currently on parole, was arrested at the scene for Possession of Schedule II CDS, as he was found to be in possession of crack cocaine. He remains in the Union Parish Jail.

While the investigation is active and ongoing, initial findings have not yet established a cause for the fire. Investigators, however, determined the fire to have originated in the master bedroom of the home. Gray claims that when he left the residence, the candle was in use in the master bedroom.

An autopsy will be performed in Little Rock, Arkansas which will determine the cause of death.

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