



News Release

OFFICE OF LOUISIANA STATE FIRE MARSHAL CODE ENFORCEMENT AND BUILDING SAFETY

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EXPLOSION AND FIRE CLAIMS ONE LIFE IN PONCHATOULA

Ponchatoula, LA – Late Friday State Fire Marshal investigators responded to an explosion and fire in a residential subdivision in Ponchatoula that claimed the life of a 48 year old man. Just after 5:00 p.m. Friday Ponchatoula firefighters were dispatched to a reported explosion and fire at 41097 Renee Drive in Ponchatoula. Upon their arrival, firefighters found the 2500 square foot, single story home, fully involved in flames. After extinguishing the blaze, firefighters located a body believed to be that of 48 year old Elphage Joseph “Kirk” Scioneaux III who is the “adopted son” of the homeowner, 68 year old Elphage Joseph “EJ” Scioneaux Jr. State Fire Marshal investigators were called upon to recover the remains and determine the cause of this deadly explosion and fire.

After processing and documenting the victim’s location within the structure, investigators began their systematic review of the damaged structure. Investigators found evidence of a low-order concentrated explosion likely caused by ignitable liquids which investigators believe had been dispersed throughout the residence. The explosion propelled several large doors on the rear of the structure and the door framing some 20 to 25 feet from their pre-blast positions. The front or street facing side of the home also showed signs of damage attributable to an explosion having occurred. Little, in the way of fire patterns were available for investigators to study because of the extensive fire damage throughout the residence. Investigators were able to readily conclude that a very rapidly developing, intense fire had occurred within the residence, bringing about a consistent level of damage throughout the structure. Investigators spent two days poring through the rubble and sifting debris.

A specially trained detection K-9 was introduced into the scene in order to assist investigators in identifying trace amounts of ignitable liquid residue. The K-9 gave a positive response, alerting in a number of locations within the ruins of the former residence. Debris samples were collected and will be submitted to the State Police Crime Lab in the coming days. An autopsy was performed early Saturday morning by the Tangipahoa Parish Coroner's Office. Investigators attended that autopsy and were able to collect additional evidence which establishes that the victim was alive and breathing at some point during the explosion and fire event. Investigators are awaiting the results of a dental record comparison in order to positively identify the victim.

Investigators learned that a "heated exchange" occurred between "EJ" Scioneaux and "Kirk" Scioneaux some 45 minutes prior to the 911 call where a neighbor reported the explosion and fire. "EJ" Scioneaux confirmed for investigators that he and "Kirk" Scioneaux were engaged in an intense argument concerning a renovation project at the home, which had been ongoing for some eight months. According to "EJ" Scioneaux they frequently argued, but he characterized this argument as being more intense than previous arguments. In an attempt to defuse the confrontation "EJ" Scioneaux told investigators that he left the home and went shopping. Investigators were able to confirm that "EJ" Scioneaux in fact left the residence as he claimed.

Investigators believe that "Kirk" Scioneaux, still reeling from the argument with "EJ" Scioneaux, dispensed an ignitable liquid substance throughout the residence and ignited it. Investigators are unclear as to whether "Kirk" Scioneaux intended to end his own life. As the airborne fumes were ignited, a violent explosion occurred, heaving large objects some distances from the point of the explosion. The rapid developing fire then quickly consumed the structure. Evidence collected at the scene suggests that "Kirk" Scioneaux was in proximity to the blast and was likely thrown backward by the blast into the bedroom where his body was recovered. Investigators believe that "Kirk" Scioneaux was standing in the rear hallway of the residence, near an exterior doorway when the blast occurred.

"Kirk" Scioneaux is a native of Taiwan and first came to the United States nearly 20 years ago on a student visa. In May of 1998 he achieved a Master's of Business from Southeastern Louisiana University in Hammond. "EJ" Scioneaux and "Kirk" Scioneaux became acquainted with one another in that same year when they met in a local nightclub. Shortly thereafter they became involved in a same-sex relationship and in January of 2002 "EJ" Scioneaux legally adopted "Kirk" Scioneaux. According to "EJ" Scioneaux, the purpose of the adoption was to afford "Kirk" Scioneaux "legal rights and privileges." "EJ" Scioneaux describes their relationship as "close" and said that "Kirk" Scioneaux had, over the years, become his "caretaker." "EJ" Scioneaux suffers from poor health and requires regular medication and treatment.

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