



News Release

OFFICE OF LOUISIANA STATE FIRE MARSHAL

Department of Public Safety and Corrections
Public Safety Services

8181 Independence Blvd.
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70806

VISIT OUR WEBSITE: www.lasfm.org

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CONTACT:

Deputy Chief Brant Thompson

OFFICE: 225-925-4911

CELL: 225-247-6251

EMAIL:

Brant.thompson@la.gov

Fire Marshal Orders Evacuation of Drew Apartments

Ruston, LA – Just after noon today the State Fire Marshal ordered that Drew Apartments on Henderson Street in Ruston be closed down. The order came on the heels of a January 9th fire that destroyed eight units within the apartment complex. The order, signed by State Fire Marshal Butch Browning, states in part, “the apartments must be vacated and not occupied for any purpose until approved by the Office of State Fire Marshal.” It goes on to say, “the order results from conditions found to exist that are especially liable to fire or dangerous to life.”

Although the fire investigation is still active, investigators with the Office of State Fire Marshal have attributed the cause of the fire to a faulty furnace which was in use within one of the units destroyed by the January 9th fire. As part of their investigation, State Fire Marshal Officials found similar conditions present in other apartment units within the complex. Immediate measures were taken to ensure the safety of those still living within the complex.

Since January 9th, licensed contractors have been at the location working to remedy outstanding maintenance issues which pose risk to tenants of the complex. Additionally, a 24 hour a day “fire watch” has been in place since January 9th to ensure the safety of those living within the complex.

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Today, those measures fell apart when contractors packed their equipment and left the scene. Those contractors, hired by Drew Apartments management, cited their reasons as not having been paid for their work on the complex. That action left the Office of State Fire Marshal with but one alternative and that was to close the facility.

“While it is not our intent to displace residents of the complex, we must do everything in our power to ensure that conditions are safe for those who call the complex home. We have worked with local groups in Ruston to ensure that everyone displaced by this event has a safe place to stay,” said State Fire Marshal Butch Browning.

Officials estimate that approximately 100 tenants have been affected by this closure. A temporary shelter has been opened at Trinity United Methodist Church located at 1000 West Woodward Road in Ruston. All displaced tenants will be offered temporary shelter at that location. Officials will continue to assist those residents as they seek long-term housing.

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