



News Release

OFFICE OF LOUISIANA STATE FIRE MARSHAL

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Port Barre Fire Claims Life of Homeowner

Unsafe smoking practices suspected cause of fire

Port Barre, LA – Unsafe smoking practices are being attributed to a residential structure fire that claimed the life of a Port Barre woman Tuesday morning.

Firefighters from St. Landry Parish Fire District #2 were dispatched to 191 Bellanise Road at approximately 7:30 a.m., after neighbors reported smoke emanating from a bedroom window.

Upon entry into the residence, a manufactured home, firefighters discovered the badly burned body of homeowner Diane Winchester, 64, in a bedroom on the northeast end of the structure. Winchester's body, which was found on the bed, was later examined by State Fire Marshal investigators and released to the St. Landry Parish Coroner's Office for autopsy.

Investigators determined that the fire originated on the bed where Winchester's body was found. The fire inflicted significant damage to the home.

During the course of the investigation, investigators learned that Winchester suffered from a medical condition which greatly hindered her mobility and those close to her informed investigators that she was a heavy smoker who routinely smoked while in bed.

After carefully sifting through the bedroom, investigators located smoking materials, which served to confirm statements made as to Winchester's smoking practices.

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