



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF LOUISIANA STATE FIRE MARSHAL

Department of Public Safety & Corrections • Public Safety Services

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Property Owner, Tenants Arrested For Scheme To Burn Houses For Insurance Money

LAFOURCHE PARISH (June 20, 2018) - On the morning of Thursday, June 1, 2017, the Louisiana Office of State Fire Marshal was requested by the Bayou Blue Volunteer Fire Department to assist with determining the origin and cause of a structure fire in the 1700 block of Lacroix Drive in Houma.

Investigators were told there had been one occupant in the residence that morning, a tenant, who had left a curling iron plugged in when she went next door to talk to a neighbor. Investigators were told upon her return to the house, she noticed smoke and fire in the back part of the house and went back to the next door neighbor to call 911. The neighbor reported that they went into the home to see about the source and observed a mattress on fire in the rear left bedroom.

After assessing the scene, investigators determined the area of origin to be the bed in the back bedroom, but deemed the cause undetermined.

Three months later, investigators received new information from the other two tenants of the home at the time of the fire. The tenants, who had been at work at the time of the fire, said they believed the owner of the home, Lonnie Cavaness, who was also their employer, was behind setting the fire in collaboration with the third tenant who was at the home at the time of the fire, Amber Miller. The man and woman say Miller admitted to them that she had set the fire in exchange for being paid by Cavaness.

In October, Miller (DOB 3/30/94) was arrested for Simple Arson. In a new statement to investigators, Miller claimed the neighbor, Kyle Dupre, who is also her cousin, set the house on fire for Cavaness in exchange for money. An additional witness interviewed also reported Dupre admitting to them that he set the house on fire in exchange for part of the insurance money that Cavaness would collect from the fire. The witness also indicated there were additional fires that Dupre had set for Cavaness.

On February 18, 2018, Dupre (DOB 11/6/89) was arrested for Simple Arson, but denied any involvement in the fire.

On May 30, 2018, Dupre requested to speak to OSFM investigators about the case. Dupre told investigators he was an employee of Cavaness' at the time of the fire. He claims that Cavaness developed

the plan to burn the house down in order to evict two of the three tenants and collect insurance money. Dupre says after Cavaness asked if he knew anyone who would burn the house down, he offered to do it for \$1,000.

Dupre admitted to entering the house when all three tenants were gone and setting a fire on the stove. However, when Miller returned to find the smoke, he says he re-entered the home and moved the smoldering material to the back bedroom where he piled clothes on top, lit a shirt and left, while Miller watched.

Dupre also admitted to setting fire to the house he was staying in next door, also owned by Cavaness, for \$1,000. That fire occurred in the evening hours of July 12, 2017, and Dupre says he set it the same way as the first fire.

Cavaness had received \$85,377 in insurance money for the first fire and \$84,300 for the second.

On June 14, 2018, Lonnie Cavaness (DOB 10/19/69) was arrested for Arson with Intent to Defraud. He denied any involvement in the fires.

Additional charges are expected for Dupre and Cavaness.

The OSFM would like to thank and acknowledge the Lafourche Parish Sheriff's Office for their partnership in investigating and closing this case.

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