



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF LOUISIANA STATE FIRE MARSHAL

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One Dead, One Injured in Delhi House Fire

RICHLAND PARISH- State Fire Marshal (SFM) deputies continue investigating the circumstances surrounding a house fire in Delhi where a woman died saving her disabled patient.

Just before 6 p.m. on November 23, the Delhi Fire Department responded to a call for a house fire with people trapped located in the 100 block of Macon Drive. Upon firefighters' arrival, they discovered two occupants in a bedroom. Both were pulled from the home and CPR administered. One occupant, the paraplegic, 71-year-old female homeowner, was revived and flown to a burn unit in Mississippi. The second occupant could not be revived.

The victim has been identified as 64-year-old Gwendolyn Theus who was a home nurse for the disabled homeowner.

Due to the extensive damage, deputies have been unable to access the scene in order to begin efforts to determine an area of origin or cause.

Investigators learned from the surviving occupant that Theus came into her patient's bedroom and alerted her to a fire in the home. The survivor reports multiple attempts by Theus to wheel her bed out of the room. Eventually, Theus pulled the survivor from her bed and had been trying to push her out of the window to save her when she succumb to the smoke. Neighbors also made attempts to assist through the window from the outside before firefighters arrived. The surviving occupant is expected to make a full recovery.

"Ms. Theus' valiant efforts to put her patient's life before her own are both admirable and heartbreaking," said State Fire Marshal H. "Butch" Browning, "Our prayers are with her loved ones and with the surviving victim for her recovery and loss of her dedicated nurse and friend."

The home did have working smoke alarms, something the SFM stresses all families should have. The agency's Operation Save-A-Life partners with local fire departments to install free smoke alarms for families in need. To learn more about the program, visit lasfm.org.

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