



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF LOUISIANA STATE FIRE MARSHAL

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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East Feliciana Investigation Ruled Arson-Suicide

Ethel, LA – After a week-long investigation of a residential structure fire where a man's lifeless body was recovered on March 18th, investigators from the East Feliciana Parish Sheriff's Office and the State Fire Marshal's Office have ruled the fire to have been intentionally set as part of a suicide plot.

According to investigators, James Gilliland, 59, is believed to have set fire to the wood-framed structure, located at 9811 Battle Road in Ethel, just before taking his own life by a single shot fired from a semi-automatic handgun that was recovered with the body.

Forensic examination of evidence collected at the scene, along with the results of an autopsy procedure, served to confirm that Gilliland took his own life just after setting the home ablaze. The house, which was completely destroyed by the fire, was owned by a couple from Nashville, Tennessee.

Investigators learned that Gilliland, who had been involved in a lease-purchase arrangement with the owners for a number of years, had informed them several months ago that he had lost his job and could no longer afford the payments.

Over the course of those months, Gilliland had negotiated the transfer of items of moveable property, belonging to Gilliland, to the property owners in lieu of payments due. Those items, primarily consisting of home appliances, were also consumed by the flames.

Gilliland was expected to vacate the property by noon on the day of the fire.

The Louisiana State Police Crime Lab and the East Feliciana Parish Coroner's Office assisted in the investigation.

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