



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF LOUISIANA STATE FIRE MARSHAL

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Inmates Arrested for Washington Parish Jail Fire

WASHINGTON PARISH- Two inmates of the Washington Parish Jail have been re-booked into the facility for setting a fire at the jail that led to the evacuation of dozens of other inmates and staff members.

Levi Lee, 18, and Medel Morales-Guzman, 32, are each facing one count of Aggravated Arson and one count of Fire-raising in a Correctional Facility. Each was already facing other criminal charges. Lee is awaiting trial for First Degree Murder, Attempted First Degree Murder, and two counts of Armed Robbery. Morales-Guzman is awaiting trial for Sexual Battery.

Just before midnight on July 21, jail staff noticed smoke inside one of the facility's cell blocks. While the Franklinton Fire Department worked to locate and suppress the source of the smoke, the cell block's 34 occupants were evacuated. Additional areas were later evacuated as smoke spread. There were almost 175 occupants inside the entire jail facility at the time of the fire.

After an assessment of the scene, State Fire Marshal investigators were able to narrow down the origin of the fire to the cell block's air conditioning unit.

Through further investigative efforts in collaboration with Washington Parish Sheriff's Office detectives, which included obtaining surveillance video evidence, it was determined the fire inside of the A/C unit was intentionally set by the two inmates, Lee and Morales-Guzman.

Both were re-booked into the jail on the new charges on Thursday, July 25.

"This fire could have been so much worse had it not been for the diligence of the Washington Parish Jail staff, not only to notice the danger, but to act immediately and efficiently to prevent harm by following well-established and well-practiced fire drills and procedures," said State Fire Marshal Chief Butch Browning, "I commend Sheriff Randy Seal and his staff for making safety a priority in their facility by always staying prepared for emergencies like this."

Sheriff Randy Seal also commented, saying, "Our wonderful working relationship with the Louisiana State Fire Marshal, our area firefighters, Franklinton Police Department and other agencies pays benefits over

and over for the citizens of Washington Parish. I am so grateful for the assistance of all involved and I give a special shout out to our jail staff whose immediate action prevented bodily harm and perhaps even death.”

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