



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF LOUISIANA STATE FIRE MARSHAL

Department of Public Safety & Corrections • Public Safety Services

8181 Independence Blvd. • Baton Rouge, LA 70806

www.lasfm.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Ashley Rodrigue
Public Affairs Director

DATE: 8/26/19

PHONE: 225-620-5115
ashley.rodrigue@la.gov

First-Grader Admits to Setting Vivian Church Fire

CADDO PARISH- The State Fire Marshal's Office (SFM) has concluded its investigation into a weekend fire at a church in Vivian and have determined a 7-year-old is responsible for the incident.

Just before 1:30 p.m. on Sunday, August 25, Caddo Fire District 8 received a fire call to the Church of Christ located in the 500 block of Christian Avenue in Vivian.

Significant fire damage was discovered in and around the building's vestibule. Firefighters then requested the assistance of the SFM to determine the origin and cause of the fire.

After assessing the scene, SFM investigators determined the fire was intentionally set.

SFM deputies learned the fire came hours after the church's front door was discovered shattered from a thrown rock.

Witness statements and evidence collected in and around the scene led investigators to identify a 7-year-old boy, who lived near the church, as a suspect in the case. The child was located and interviewed in the presence of a guardian.

The first-grader admitted to not only breaking the window the evening before, but also to setting the fire. He told investigators he found a lighter in the parking lot when he was riding his hoverboard in the area. The boy said he pulled down the cardboard that was temporarily securing the damaged front doors, took a piece of the cardboard inside and lit it on fire. He also admitted to lighting a roll of toilet paper on fire in a bathroom before leaving.

The juvenile could not give investigators a reason for any of his behavior, but said he had no feelings of ill-will or issues with the church or its congregants.

Due to the suspect's age, no arrest was made. However, the boy's guardian committed to having the family work with the church on their recovery.

The State Fire Marshal says this incident is one all families can learn from.

“It is certainly disappointing to see a child, especially of this age, engaging in such dangerous and concerning behaviors,” said State Fire Marshal Chief Butch Browning, “We encourage parents and guardians to keep a close eye on kids and warn them not only of the dangers of playing with fire, but the consequences of fire, including to property, their lives and the lives of others, as well as their futures.”

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