



For Immediate Release

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Ag Museum Fire Determined Accidental

The fire at the State Agricultural and Forestry Museum that destroyed three buildings Nov. 13 and caused over \$2.5 million in damage has been determined to have ignited on the upper floor of the barn and was accidental in origin, according to State Fire Marshal Mike Chaney.

According to Chaney, who is State Insurance Commissioner as well as State Fire Marshal, following an extensive investigation, including a re-creation of the conditions surrounding the fire, it was determined that the fire ignited after hay was stacked too close to wall-mounted light fixtures.

“There were no code violations in the building,” Chaney said. “These buildings were thoroughly inspected within the last year and the wiring was sealed in conduit and was well-maintained. The fire was an accident.” Agriculture and Commerce Commissioner Cindy Hyde Smith has been made aware of the results of the investigation.

State Department of Corrections inmate laborers, utilized on many state buildings and grounds, stacked the hay in the barn but were unaware of the light fixtures.

According to Chaney, Fire Marshals used some of the hay that was of the same load but not stacked in the barn, to re-create the conditions and determined the light fixtures put out enough heat to easily ignite the hay.

The Fire Marshal’s Office also used aerial footage of the blaze shot by WLBT Television to aid in the investigation. Chaney also praised the Jackson Fire Department for their work in battling the blaze, citing cold weather, high winds and the contents of the barn in making the blaze difficult to extinguish, and credited the JFD with saving the other museum buildings..