

# Contact: Ken Daley, Public Information

District Attorney Leon Cannizzaro's office on Friday (April 12) announced the felony conviction of a former inspector with the state fire marshal's office who attempted to hide his failure to inspect a Grand Isle motel where two people died in a blaze in September 2012.

At the end of a one-day bench trial, Criminal District Judge Paul Bonin found Nunzio Marchiafava guilty Thursday night of attempting to injure public records, a lesser crime than the charge he faced of injuring public records. Bonin found Marchiafava not guilty of malfeasance in office.

Marchiafava, 73, is to be sentenced April 25, when Bonin can impose a penalty ranging from zero to 2 1/2 years in state prison.

Marchiafava's criminal conduct was discovered after the independent watchdog Metropolitan Crime Commission investigated a complaint, and produced a report that spawned a probe by the state Office of Inspector General.

The IG's investigation included a search of the state fire marshal's computer servers for emails, instant messages and calendar information. Marchiafava was arrested in April 2013 after the IG determined he had falsified records related to his inspection of the Rusty Pelican motel located along Louisiana Hwy. 1 in Grand Isle.

In March 2012, six months before the fatal fire, Marchiafava was the New Orleans District supervisor for state Fire Marshal Butch Browning's office. Marchiafava emailed supervisor Dan Wallis that he had visited and inspected the property on April 2, 2012, when he actually had spent the day in New Orleans.

After the fatal fire, Marchiafava attempted to destroy documents that proved he was in New Orleans on the day of his purported inspection. He later falsified documents claiming a May 25 visit to the property, though not until after the Sept. 26 fire in which 60-year-old Belle Brandl and 46-year-old Timothy Foret perished. Marchiafava retired from the fire marshal's office in March 2013.

"This former senior-level supervisor in the Louisiana Fire Marshal's office is now a convicted felon because a citizen took the time to report his conduct to the state Inspector General and the New Orleans DA's office," said Rafael Goyeneche, president of the Metropolitan Crime Commission. "Justice was served with his conviction."

Assistant District Attorneys Daniel Smart and Jay Meyers prosecuted the case.

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