

# **ST. TAMMANY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT # 1**

1358 Corporate Square Drive  
Slidell, LA 70458



**Fire Chief - Larry Hess**

**For Immediate Release**

**March 29, 2011**

## **Slidell Business, Purple Armadillo Destroyed by Fire...**

At approximately 1:20 PM on Tuesday St. Tammany Fire Protection District No. 1 Communications Officers were notified of a fire at 58465 Tyler Dr. in Slidell via 911 call.

First arriving fire units found the Purple Armadillo, a local home décor retail store on fire with smoke and flames already showing. Due to the size of the building, the proximity of other businesses and the advanced state of the fire both a second and special alarm were called resulting in six fire trucks and 27 personnel on scene.

According to their own statements Louise Mace, the store owner, and customer Tracy Crawford were in the front of the store when they heard a noise in the back workroom and the smoke alarm was going off. Upon investigating, Ms. Mace discovered the back storeroom was on fire. She called to Tracy Crawford who alerted her uncle sitting outside in his car, Mr. Joe Williams. Ms. Mace called 911 while Mr. Williams entered the building and immediately discharged a fire extinguisher on the fire and held it in check. When that extinguisher ran out, he went to the business next door (Studio One) and grabbed another fire extinguisher and discharged it on the fire as well. Ms. Mace, Ms. Crawford and Mr. Williams then determined that the fire was getting too bad and all evacuated the building.

"Fire suppression personnel did an outstanding job, and had it not been for the quick action by Mr. Joe Williams who risked his own safety to try and extinguish this fire prior to the Fire Department arriving on scene, and the rapid entry by the first responding companies to extinguish the fire, the outcome would have been much worse. Mr. Williams' actions bought us valuable time" according to Fire Prevention Officer Mike Thiel.

Chief of Fire Prevention Neil Ricca stated: "The quick response of our fire suppression personnel and their aggressive attack of the fire prevented further spread of the fire." Chief Ricca added, "We had a favorable outcome today, but I want to caution our citizens that using a portable fire extinguisher should only be attempted after alerting other building occupants that the building is on fire and calling 911. In this case, those involved did just that." Ricca further stated that only those trained to use a fire extinguisher should attempt to do so.

The building was equipped with a working smoke alarm which also alerted the occupants to the presence of the fire.

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Fire Prevention Officer Mike Thiel who had conducted some of the initial fire inspections on the building during construction was the first fire department official on the scene.

Thiel stated that during the construction and inspection process we often encounter builders questioning the need for fire walls required by Life Safety and Building Codes. They argue that the installation of fire walls adds to the time and expense it takes to get businesses opened. “In hindsight the value of the fire separations proved their worth. Today the building owner and tenants agreed that the fire walls along with the quick action of Mr. Williams and the fire department significantly reduced the damage to the businesses on either side of the Purple Armadillo” said Thiel.

Fire department investigators classified the fire as accidental and identified its source as a candle in the rear storage area of the business. There were no civilian injuries reported however one firefighter was treated at the scene by Acadian Ambulance Service for symptoms of heat exhaustion then sent to the hospital where he is in stable condition and undergoing further tests.

For more information about St. Tammany Fire Protection District #1 visit us at [www.SlidellFire.org](http://www.SlidellFire.org) or follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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