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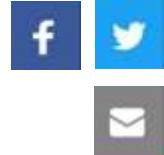
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**Idaho Department of Insurance News Release**

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## **Fire Investigators Determine Watkins Pharmacy Fire as Accidental**

**BOISE, ID (February 10, 2022)** – A team of investigators from the State Fire Marshal’s Office, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), Valley County Sheriff’s Office and Cascade Fire Department spent two days sifting through debris and reviewing surveillance videos from nearby businesses to determine that the cause of the fire that consumed the Watkins Pharmacy in downtown Cascade was an accident.

State Fire Marshal Knute Sandahl said that the hours of video footage from nearby businesses, numerous photos sent to the team from nearby residents, and interviews helped tremendously in making the determination. Video evidence showed that the fire burned undetected for at least two and one-half hours before being noticed by a passing Valley County Sheriff’s Deputy. The video also showed that the fire was initially centered around a rooftop HVAC unit. During interviews with owners Benjamin and Amber Watkins, investigators learned that a new roof was added in 2021. “The re-roofing project provided a void area, causing the fire to burn a prolonged amount of time,” said Marshal Sandahl.

Construction documents from the Cascade Building Department and the previous owner provided key information on the fire’s spread and location. Physical evidence confirmed the suspicions of investigators during the scene investigation. The fire was not visible to firefighters until a portion of the ceiling collapsed. Fortunately, Fire Chief Steven Hull recognized rapidly deteriorating conditions and pulled crews out the building just prior to the ceiling collapse.

“We are grateful to all of the investigators that took part in providing answers during this devastating loss to the Cascade community,” said Marshal Sandahl. “We especially want to thank those citizens that came forward with videos, pictures, and information.”

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**About the Department of Insurance**

The Idaho Department of Insurance has been regulating the business of insurance in Idaho since 1901. The mission of the Department is to serve and protect Idahoans by equitably, effectively and efficiently administering the Idaho Insurance Code and the International Fire Code. For more information, please visit us at [doi.idaho.gov](http://doi.idaho.gov) or email us at [consumeraffairs@doi.idaho.gov](mailto:consumeraffairs@doi.idaho.gov).

**About the State Fire Marshal**

The State Fire Marshal's Office participates in and coordinates an integrated statewide system designed to protect human life from fire and explosions through fire prevention, investigation, and public education activities. The program involves fire prevention activities, fire/arson investigation, code enforcement and the operation of the National Fire Incident Reporting System. The State Fire Marshal's Office provides assistance to local fire agencies throughout the state.