

# 'Thorough Report' On Fire Is Vowed

By ED LEPOMA

Mayor Moon Landrieu said today a "very thorough public report" should be complete in about two weeks, covering all aspects of the Rault Center fire which killed four persons.

In his weekly news conference, the mayor also praised the New Orleans Fire Department, calling it "one of the best in the country."

However, he added, "If mistakes of judgment were made (in fighting the fire and rescue), we will acknowledge that."

AS IN ALL emotional and traumatic events, "everybody has their own solution," he said. But he promised "a very thorough, public report of what went on."

The mayor said firemen are "extremely aggressive and well-trained . . . and had acted very courageously in the past."

He said his administration has spent nearly \$3 million on fire equipment over the past three years and that another \$170,000 was appropriated this year.

Safety in high-rise buildings is the concern of all major cities, not just New Orleans, he said.

LANDRIEU SAID he hopes the experts who are looking into the fire can find some way to develop new fire prevention and warning systems, but he would not predict what

changes might be made in the city or state fire or building codes.

New Orleans "has a very excellent fire code," Landrieu said.

Landrieu termed "absurd" the charges that economics might be a factor that would hamper further safety requirements.

Some critics have charged that economics were the reason sprinklers were not installed in skyscrapers here and elsewhere.

"THAT DOESN'T mean we place economics above lives," he said.

The Rault report will look at what other cities have done regarding sprinklers, Landrieu said.

"But we have to be reasonable. We can't come up with requirements that would make it impossible to build another high-rise in New Orleans."

Concerning yesterday's U.S. Supreme Court decision on obscenity, Landrieu said it would bring about more local control of businesses that have liquor licenses but he didn't think it would make a great deal of difference to strip shows.

Although New Orleans has the reputation of being risqué, entertainment in bars here has not approached the point nudity has reached in other major cities, he said.

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The investigation into reported jewelry thefts in the fire-damaged Rault Center apparently has ended.

Police Detective Chief Henry Morris said \$7,500 worth of jewelry has been found and he does not expect to make any more arrests.

Police have received only two reports of thefts from the building, he said. One was from a woman who said she lost about \$12,000 in jewelry, and the other theft, which has not been confirmed, involved a few hundred dollars, said

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Morris.

A SECURITY GUARD has been charged with theft in the loss of a \$5,000 watch.

Meanwhile, police, the City Fire Prevention Bureau and the State Fire Marshal's Office are continuing to investigate the cause of the blaze last Wednesday which left four persons dead.

Investigators would not say if they have uncovered any evidence of arson. The fact that two fires occurred in the building the same day has caused investigators to look closely at the arson angle.

A meeting to discuss new state legislation on fire prevention will be held Monday and Tuesday in State Fire Marshal Raymond Oliver's office here.

Two women who survived jumps from the building remain in critical condition at Charity Hospital. They are Mrs. Natalie Smith, 39, 528 Aurora, and Mrs. Wilma Williams, 26, 1724 Caffin Ave.

Further safety precautions were taken at the building yesterday when police routed passers-by around Gravier Street. Oliver said there is a danger of falling debris.

OLIVER SAID he agrees with City Councilman James Moreau that the fire department should have its own helicopter to be used in fighting blazes. "We can't get too much rescue equipment," he

said. Private helicopter pilots rescued eight persons trapped on the roof of the Rault Center.

Oliver said he also agrees with Moreau that the Coast Guard should be included in the fire department's radio network.

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