



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF LOUISIANA STATE FIRE MARSHAL

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Five Die in Home Fires in Five Days

BATON ROUGE- The State Fire Marshal's (SFM) Office is again asking the public to increase fire safety awareness and prevention efforts as deputies continue to investigate multiple fatal home fires across the state that have occurred over the past five days.

"Again, we're seeing an uptick in tragedies associated with home fires when outside temperatures drop," said State Fire Marshal H. "Butch" Browning, "We need families to be aware of the fire hazards in their home and take steps now to mitigate or eliminate those hazards to avoid not only a fire in the home, but the severe injuries and deaths we see result from home fires."

The first fire occurred on Friday, February 11, in Bossier City. Around 1:40 a.m., the Bossier City Fire Department responded to the 1700 block of Alison Avenue for a report of a house fire. Upon arrival, firefighters learned there had been two occupants in the home at the time of the fire; a 48-year-old woman and her 15-year-old grandson. Both had initially escaped safely. However, firefighters learned the woman went back inside to try to rescue pets and never reemerged. The teen was treated at a local hospital for smoke inhalation after also returning to the home to try to save his grandmother. The investigation into the cause of this fire is ongoing.

The second fire was reported to the Ferriday Fire Department around 2 a.m. on Saturday, February 12 in the 600 block of Maryland Avenue. Firefighters discovered the body of a 61-year-old male resident in a bedroom of the mobile home. Following an assessment of the scene, SFM deputies have been unable to rule out the possibility of an unattended space heater as a potential cause.

The third fire occurred the morning of Sunday, February 13, in the 1300 block of Elysian Fields Avenue in New Orleans. The New Orleans Fire Department reports that a 65-year-old female resident died in that fire. SFM deputies are assisting NOFD with their investigation into the cause of this fire, which is ongoing at this time.

The fourth fire occurred in the City of Kenner on Valentine's Day. Firefighters were called to a garage fire located in the 100 block of Holy Cross Place just before 1 p.m. Firefighters rescued an 81-year-old man from a fire inside of the detached garage of the home. The victim was taken to an area hospital where he later died. At this time, deputies are unable to rule out the possibility of unsafe smoking practices as a contributing factor to the cause of the fire.

The last fire occurred in Leesville around 7:30 a.m. on Tuesday, February 15. Firefighters responded to the 3800 block of Camp Baker Road for reports of a mobile home fire. There were two occupants in the home at the time of the fire; a husband and wife. Deputies learned the female resident was able to escape after attempting to rescue her 65-year-old husband. While the woman was hospitalized for injuries sustained during that rescue attempt, unfortunately, her husband died on the scene. The investigation into the cause of this fire is ongoing.

“Our hearts absolutely break for the families suffering these losses of life because they are so preventable,” said Browning.

Our key safety messages to take away from these past few days are to get out and stay out when you find yourself faced with a fire emergency, to always smoke outside of the home and avoid smoking when tired or impaired, and finally, as cooler air is expected to return to the state by the end of the week, to keep in mind simple home heating safety tips that help you prevent a fire hazard in your home. Those tips include:

- Place space heaters 3-5 feet from combustible objects like blankets and curtains
- Plug all heating appliances directly into wall outlets, not power strips or extension cords
- Do not use stoves or ovens to heat homes
- Don't overfill fireplaces/wood-burning stoves
- Do not leave candles/open flames (or space heaters) left unattended
- Have working smoke alarms in your home!

Lastly, none of these homes had working smoke alarms at the time these fires occurred. One home was confirmed to have had hard-wired smoke alarms, but the breaker powering those alarms was shut off.

Smoke alarms save lives and our Operation Save-A-Life partners with local fire departments to install FREE smoke alarms for families that need them most.

To learn more about Operation Save-A-Life, or to register for a free smoke alarm, visit lasfm.org.

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