



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF LOUISIANA STATE FIRE MARSHAL

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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St. Martinville Woman Dies in House Fire

ST. MARTIN PARISH- The State Fire Marshal's Office (SFM) has determined unsafe smoking practices likely led to a deadly house fire in St. Martinville over the weekend.

Around 12:15 p.m.. on Sunday, September 4, the Catahoula Volunteer Fire Department responded to a report of a house fire located at the 4400 block of Catahoula Highway in St. Martinville. Unfortunately, firefighters located the body of a female victim near the front door of the home.

Official identification and cause of death are pending with the St. Martin Parish Coroner's Office, however, the victim is believed to be a 34-year-old resident of the home.

After an assessment of the scene and collecting witness statements, SFM deputies determined the fire began in the doorway area of the living room where the victim was located and where she was also known to smoke cigarettes.

Deputies learned the victim was wheelchair-bound and utilized an oxygen tank. While the exact cause is still undetermined, deputies have not been able to rule out the possibility of unsafe smoking practices as a primary contributor to the fire.

The State Fire Marshal's Office advises people to never smoke, and never allow anyone to smoke, where medical oxygen is used. Medical oxygen can cause materials to ignite more easily and make fires burn at a faster rate because oxygen is fuel to fire. In addition:

- Candles, matches, wood stoves and even sparking toys can be ignition sources and should not be used in a home where medical oxygen is utilized.
- Keep oxygen cylinders at least five feet from a heat source, open flames, or electrical devices.
- Body oil, hand lotion, and items containing oil and grease can easily ignite. Keep oil and grease away where oxygen is in use.
- Never use aerosol sprays containing combustible materials near the oxygen.

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