



**For Immediate Release**

**May 5, 2009**

**State Fire Marshal Commends  
Arson Investigators**

**May 3-9 Declared Arson Awareness Week by Governor**

JACKSON – In ceremonies on the South steps of the state Capitol, Mississippi State Fire Marshal Mike Chaney recognized and commended thirteen State Deputy Fire Marshals for their roles in the investigation of over 300 arson fires which resulted in 126 arson arrests in Mississippi during 2008.

The ceremony honoring the investigators and other members of the State Fire Marshal's Office were part of Arson Awareness Week (May 3-9) activities.

"These Deputies are among the most highly trained arson investigators in the country. They work long, hard hours trying to determine the causes of fires that have destroyed someone's home, church, vehicle, or business. We honor them today for their dedication and determination to protect lives and property in the state," Commissioner of Insurance and State Fire Marshal Mike Chaney said.

May 3-9, 2009 was declared Arson Awareness Week in Mississippi in a proclamation signed by Governor Haley Barbour. The proclamation reads, "The State of Mississippi pays special tribute to all fire and law enforcement investigative agencies for their dedicated and tireless service in detecting and investigating the crime of arson."

The Insurance Information Institute reports that arsonists destroyed nearly \$900 million in insured property and killed 295 civilians nationwide in 2007.

"Our Deputies undergo vigorous additional training each year to deal with the new or unusual techniques developed by arsonists. Many of the cases our office has solved this year have also been due to the State Fire Marshal's Arson Reward Program," State Chief Deputy Fire Marshal Ricky Davis said.

The State Fire Marshal's Arson Reward Program offers cash rewards of up to \$1,000 for hot tips or information leading to the arrest and arson conviction of any person responsible for the willful destruction by fire or explosion of any real or personal property within the State of Mississippi.

Anyone with a tip can contact the State Fire Marshal's Office at (601)359-1061, or 1-888-648-0877, or may contact their local sheriff.

Listed below are some tips to reduce the chances that you may become a victim of arson. External and internal security such as locks, alarms, and monitoring equipment can deter an arsonist. Arsonists, like burglars, fear light. Be sure to have sufficient lighting. Do not provide cover for the arsonists. Get involved with community awareness and watch programs.

- Secure and monitor unoccupied and abandoned buildings.
- Remove trash, debris, and other combustible materials from the front and back of your business or home.
- Remove or securely store flammable material and chemicals from your business or home.
- Lock your doors and windows.
- Report suspicious people and activity to law enforcement officials.
- Support local Neighborhood Watch programs.
- Illuminate the exterior and entrances.
- Keep dumpsters at least 10 feet away from buildings and roof overhangs. Make sure all discarded materials are placed inside the containers and padlock them after school hours.
- Lock and secure your vehicle.

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