



For Immediate Release

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**Family Credits Free Smoke Alarm with Saving
Lives and Home**

JACKSON – The blaring tones of their newly installed, free smoke alarm and quick action with their home fire extinguisher are what the Bobby and Jannie Smith family of Oloh credits for saving their home and potentially their lives during a house fire this past weekend.

The smoke alarm, installed just two weeks ago by the newly established Rock Hill Volunteer Fire Department (RHVFD), was courtesy of the State Fire Marshal's Free Smoke Alarm Program. Ironically the Smith's smoke alarm and fire safety education were done by Volunteer Fire Fighters Stacy and Steven Purvis. Stacy Purvis is the granddaughter of Bobby and Jannie Smith. The fire extinguishers were donated to the RHVFD by FEMA.

"I thank the Lord for the smoke alarm and fire extinguisher that my granddaughter and grandson-in-law left us. Without them our house would have burned completely down," the almost 80 year old Jannie Smith said.

The Smith family fire started when a pot was left unattended on the stove and caught fire. According to Mrs. Smith, her husband was in a back room with no exit and two other granddaughters were there when the house began to fill with smoke. The smoke alarm alerted them to the fire and her husband and granddaughters grabbed the fire extinguisher and put the fire out before the whole house could become engulfed in flames. She says she is not sure her husband could have gotten out if that had happened.

“The Smith family serves as a prime example of the people we are trying to protect with the Fire Marshal Free Smoke Alarm program. Elderly people, living on fixed incomes, do not have ready access to smoke alarms. Here are four lives that were saved because of their smoke alarm. Think of how many lives could be saved if every home had a working smoke alarm,” Commissioner of Insurance and State Fire Marshal Mike Chaney said.

Some 32,800 smoke alarms were purchased for the Program funded by a nearly \$500,000 grant awarded through the United States Department of Homeland Security’s Assistance to Firefighters Grants Fire Prevention and Safety Program. Installation and delivery of a special sealed smoke alarm with a 10-year battery is coordinated through county fire coordinators. During the visit to install alarms firefighters will provide fire prevention and home escape planning education and leave educational brochures for the residents to review after the firefighters have left. The program has distributed a little over 16,000 smoke alarms to fire departments to install in households that are at or below the poverty level. To date, 10,453 alarms have been installed in 7,091 homes.

The State Fire Marshal’s Office has applied for a second \$1 million grant to purchase more smoke alarms. According to statistics from the United States Fire Administration an estimated 890 lives could be saved each year if all homes had working smoke alarms.

As of June 13, 2009, there have been 41 fire deaths investigated by the State Fire Marshal’s Office, well ahead of the 32 reported by this time in 2008.

“It is very important for everybody to have a smoke alarm and a fire extinguisher. The good Lord and the Fire Department saved our house and our lives,” Mrs. Smith said.

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