



For Immediate Release

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Heating Fire Safety Tops Winter Storm Preparation List

Jackson – Nearly half of the 19 fire deaths investigated by the State Fire Marshal's Office since January 1 have been determined to have been caused by improper or malfunctioning heating sources. Of those 19 deaths, smoke alarms were reported to have been present in only two of the deadly fires.

Commissioner of Insurance and State Fire Marshal Mike Chaney sees the potential for more deaths and fires with the approaching winter storm which is predicted to bring falling temperatures, ice and snow across the state. To prevent more fires and fire deaths he strongly urges all Mississippians to put heating fire safety near the top of their winter storm preparation list.

"The last thing I want to see during this winter storm is the report of another fire death caused by a heating source. We are working very hard to provide everyone with the information they need to protect their homes and the lives of their families during cold winter weather," Chaney said.

"Every home should have a working smoke alarm. Working smoke alarms can cut the risk of people dying in home fires in half."

The National Fire Protection Association reports that the leading cause of home fire deaths is heating equipment; and that half of home heating fires are reported during the months of December, January and February. The peak time for home heating fires is between 6:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m., with associated deaths occurring between midnight and 10:00 am.

Fire safety education and preventing fire deaths continue to be priority goals of the State Fire Marshal's Office.

The State Fire Marshal's Office recommends following these heating fire safety tips:

- All heating equipment should be UL® approved and cleaned and inspected by a qualified professional prior to being used each year.
- Remember to keep clothes, drapes, and anything else combustible at least 3 feet away from all heating equipment, especially space heaters.

- Inspect the space heater's power cord for damage, fraying or heat. If the cord inspection reveals any of these issues, the heater should be replaced. Proper cleaning is essential and should be done regularly.
- Never use space heaters while you sleep, when you are away from home, or in areas where children may be without adult supervision.
- Always unplug space heaters when they are not in use. The heater should also be equipped with a tip over shut-off switch.
- Use only traditional heating equipment.
- Never use a stove or oven to heat living spaces. Kerosene is a poor choice for heating as it will give off poisonous fumes.
- Have chimney flues cleaned and inspected by qualified personnel.
- Have a spark screen that is age appropriate for all individuals using any area to be heated by a fireplace.
- Burn only approved materials in a fire place or wood burning stove; never burn paper or trash in a fireplace or wood burning stove.

Should a fire break out in the home, have an emergency evacuation plan for the family to follow and have a designated meeting place for all family members. Once everyone is outside the burning home, call 911 and **DO NOT RE-ENTER THE HOUSE UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES!!!**

For more fire safety information and tips visit the special Holiday and Heating Fire Safety web page on the Mississippi Insurance Department website at www.mid.state.ms.us. (Look for the link in the notifications tab.)