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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Jackson, Mississippi  
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## **New Commissioner Urges Fire Safety in Frigid Weather**

Jackson – Due to the latest blast of frigid temperatures throughout the state, Commissioner of Insurance and State Fire Marshal Mike Chaney reminds citizens to remain extremely vigilant and exercise fire safety with all activities. Winter months generally bring a spike in fire related deaths in Mississippi, usually caused by faulty heating equipment or methods used to obtain heat.

Yesterday, in Hinds and Rankin Counties alone, 4 homes were destroyed in what have been determined to be weather related fires.

“The year 2007 was another year in which we had a high number of fire deaths in the state. We must all work together to keep everyone aware of fire safety to bring those numbers down in 2008. It is particularly important now that we are experiencing such extreme cold temperatures and people search for ways to stay warm. Fire safety is a responsibility every citizen must never take lightly,” said Commissioner Chaney.

Some cold weather fire safety tips to remember include:

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

- Inspect the 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 gas range to heat living spaces. Kerosene is a poor choice for heating as it will give off poisonous fumes.

Fire departments and senior citizen groups may obtain copies of *Remembering When*: a falls and fire prevention program for older adults from the State Fire Marshal Division of the Mississippi Insurance Department (MID). Additionally, *Risk Watch: Unintentional Injuries*, a school-based injury prevention curriculum for pre-school through grade 8, is available to any interested school or fire department (while supplies last).

For more information concerning fire safety education or any of these programs contact the State Fire Marshal Division of the MID.

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