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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Following Heating Safety Tips Could Save Lives During Expected Record Breaking Cold Weather

Jackson – Two weeks into the New Year and the Mississippi State Fire Marshal’s Office has investigated two fire deaths. There is great potential for more fire deaths to occur in the coming days of cold weather as people struggle to find ways to stay warm.

Commissioner of Insurance and State Fire Marshal Mike Chaney today urges all Mississippians to use caution when making heating source choices. He encourages all Mississippians to exercise good common sense in finding heat sources and to make sure smoke alarms in their homes are working properly.

The State Fire Marshal Division of the Mississippi Insurance Department strongly recommends citizens following these cold weather 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, people, 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!!!**

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. 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). Fire departments interested in participating in a free smoke alarm installation program funded by a recent federal grant should contact the State Fire Marshal's office for additional information.

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