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Free Smoke Alarm Program Grows

Lives are saved with working smoke alarms

JACKSON –More Mississippi lives could be saved with the expected arrival of another 15,000 smoke alarms for the State Fire Marshal's Free Smoke Alarm Program. This group adds to the previous 15,000 alarms that were distributed in early March to some of the fifty-two counties in the state that are participating in the program designed to help prevent the increasing number of fire deaths in the state. To date 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.

As of March 16, there have been 19 fire deaths investigated by the State Fire Marshal's Office, which is slightly ahead of totals at this time in 2008. This number includes the recent tragic deaths of infant twins in Greenville, where preliminary reports indicate the possibility that the smoke alarms in this home were not working.

"The value of a working smoke alarm in the home was never more evident than a fire reported this weekend in Rankin County. Fire officials there are quoted as stating that two lives were saved because there was a working smoke alarm in the home. Every home in this state should have a smoke alarm for the protection of the families who live there. Smoke alarms save lives," Commissioner of Insurance and State Fire Marshal Mike Chaney said.

The State Fire Marshal's Free Smoke Alarm program is funded by a nearly \$500,000 grant awarded through the United States Department of Homeland Security's Assistance to Firefighters Grants (AFG) Fire Prevention and Safety (FP&S) Program. Installation and delivery of a special sealed smoke alarm with a 10-year battery will be coordinated through county fire coordinators. During the visit to install the 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.

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.

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