



For Immediate Release

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State Fire Marshal Stresses Heating Fire Safety

Jackson – With overnight temperatures expected to drop into the 20's this week, Commissioner of Insurance and State Fire Marshal Mike Chaney strongly urges the public to be mindful of the fire risks associated with home heating.

“This is the time of year when we see a marked increase in home fires caused by faulty heating equipment or people using ill-advised methods to stay warm,” Chaney said.

Since December 1, 2010 there have been five fire deaths in the state. Three additional fire deaths occurred in November. There have been 74 fire deaths this year in Mississippi as compared to 78 at this time in 2009.

“Working smoke alarms can cut the risk of people dying in home fires in half,” Chaney said.

The State Fire Marshal's Office wants people to take extreme care when choosing a heating source during this week's cold weather.

A National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) report shows 73% of home heating fire deaths can be attributed to space heaters. 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.

The State Fire Marshal's Office recommends the following 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, 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.
- Have an emergency evacuation plan for the family to follow should a fire break out in the home, 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 Fire Marshal Page of the Mississippi Insurance Department website at www.mid.state.ms.us. You can also find the Mississippi State Fire Marshal on Facebook and follow them on Twitter at twitter.com/msfiresafe.

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