



For Immediate Release

February 25, 2011

State Fire Marshal's Office Becomes Partner in National Children's Fire Safety Effort

Jackson – During 2010 and 2011 in Mississippi, twelve children under the age of 6 lost their lives due to fire. These numbers are in line with a recently released national report that states that children age 4 and younger account for about half of all childhood deaths and injuries suffered in fires.

To help protect some of the most vulnerable of Mississippi's citizens, those least likely to escape a fire without help, Commissioner of Insurance and State Fire Marshal Mike Chaney announced today that the Mississippi State Fire Marshal's Office is joining a national campaign, spearheaded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, to promote fire safety for children.

"The loss of a life in a fire is difficult enough, but when the young life of a child is cut short, it becomes especially tragic," Chaney said. "The Mississippi State Fire Marshal's Office gladly welcomes the efforts of this new campaign in helping children and families remain fire safe and fire aware."

The State Fire Marshal's Office has added a link to the campaign (www.ready.gov/kidsfiresafety) to its website and will also be offering additional safety tips through Twitter @msfiresafe, and on Facebook.

This campaign joins Risk Watch®, an ongoing education effort the State Fire Marshal's Office offers free to schools throughout the state. Risk Watch® is a school-based curriculum that links teachers with community safety experts and parents. The curriculum is divided into five age-appropriate teaching modules.

Two fire-safety education officers also travel the state making presentations to schools and groups that request it with the assistance of the local fire department.

"Every young person we can reach and teach to become fire safe and fire aware at an early age, grows up to become an informed adult who will pass that message on to their children," Chaney said.

Young children are not able to sense danger in the same way as adults. They have a very limited ability to react quickly and properly in an emergency situation, and have little control over their environment. This increases their risk of death and injury in a fire. The State Fire Marshal's Office and the national children's fire safety education campaign offer the following tips when teaching children about fire safety:

- Keep matches, lighters and other items used for ignition in a secured drawer or cabinet out of the reach of children.

- Teach your children to tell you when they find matches and lighters.
- Always dress children in pajamas that meet Federal flammability standards. Avoid dressing children for sleep in loose-fitting, 100% cotton garments, such as oversized t-shirts.
- Teach children to get out of a burning building quickly and call for help from another location.
- Show children how to get low and go below the smoke to get out of the house and stay out.
- Demonstrate how to stop, drop to the ground, cover your face, and roll if clothes catch fire.
- Develop and practice a home fire escape plan and designate a meeting place outside. Get out and stay out.
- Familiarize children with the sound of your smoke alarm.
- Replace mattresses made prior to the 2007 Federal Mattress Flammability Standard.
- Check under beds and in closets for burnt matches, evidence your child may be playing with fire.

(Source: National Fire Protection Association)

Also critical to fire safety for any home is the installation and use of working smoke alarms.

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

Anyone who does not have a smoke alarm may obtain one through the State Fire Marshal's Free Smoke Alarm program. Contact your local fire department to determine if they are participating in the program, or contact the State Fire Marshal's Office.

Since the program began, and through the use of two federal grants totaling a little over \$1.5 million, the Free Smoke Alarm program has installed approximately 30,000 smoke alarms throughout the state. There are a number of documented cases where smoke alarms obtained through the program have saved lives. The State Fire Marshal's Office is in the process of applying for a third grant to purchase smoke alarms for the hearing-impaired.

Fire safety education will continue to be a top priority for the State Fire Marshal's Office. Among the most important fire safety reminders for all Mississippians are: every home should have a working smoke alarm, and every family should have and practice an escape plan to be prepared in the event of a fire. Instructions on how to create a family escape plan can be found on the special Cooking and Heating Fire Safety page of the Mississippi Insurance Department website at www.mid.state.ms.us. Fire safety messages can be found on the Mississippi State Fire Marshal Facebook fan page and on Twitter at twitter.com/msfiresafe.

###