



MISSISSIPPI STATE FIRE MARSHAL

MIKE CHANEY
State Fire Marshal

PRESS RELEASE

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State Fire Marshal Stresses Greater Need for Homes to Have Smoke Alarms

Jackson – There is one glaring fact that cannot be overlooked from an early morning house fire in Starkville, MS on February 3. Had there not been a working smoke alarm in the home, the Mississippi State University campus would today be mourning the loss of the lives of seven of its students.

“Thankfully, the home had a working smoking alarm, and the seven MSU students living there owe their lives to that fact,” said Commissioner of Insurance and State Fire Marshal Mike Chaney.

“It is disheartening to hear again and again about a fire in which there is no working smoke alarm. It is a simple message that the Mississippi State Fire Marshal will continue to bring to the people of Mississippi until more people take heed. Pure and simple – having a working smoke alarm in the home cuts your risk of dying in a house fire in half, and if ever there were a more vivid example of this just look at these seven young lives still with us.”

Of the 55 fire deaths investigated by the State Fire Marshal’s Office in 2015 a little over half either had no smoke alarm in the home, or the smoke alarms present were not working. That is unacceptable to Chaney and the Mississippi State Fire Marshal’s Office.

The fire in Starkville happened at approximately 2:30 am. The smoke alarm awakened one of the seven students living in the rental house. That student then went door to door to awaken his housemates, and everyone made it out safely.

“Fortunately, the landlord of this house had been proactive with the smoke alarms and had had the home hard-wired with interconnected smoke alarms. It was a very smart thing to do,” said City of Starkville Fire Marshal Mark McCurdy.

“Had that smoke alarm not worked,. I have no doubt we would have been dealing with multiple fatalities.”

The State Fire Marshal’s Office continues to work with local fire departments on the installation of smoke alarms in high-risk homes and homes with older adults, children, and people with disabilities. To date the State Fire Marshal’s Office and local departments have installed 54,280 smoke alarms, 209 bed-shaker devices and 75 strobe smoke alarms in 27,009 homes.

Local fire departments are now teaming with the Red Cross to install more smoke alarms. Anyone in need of a smoke alarm should contact their local fire department.