



MISSISSIPPI STATE FIRE MARSHAL

MIKE CHANEY
State Fire Marshal

PRESS RELEASE

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State Fire Marshal Urges Fire Safety After Spike in Fire Deaths

Jackson, MS – Within the last week, there have been eight fire deaths in Mississippi for a total of 27 for 2018. That's an over 50% increase in the number of fire deaths this time last year, a fact that is unacceptable to State Fire Marshal Mike Chaney.

“Any fire death is a death too many, people need to take extra fire safety precautions when it comes to protecting their homes and family,” Chaney said.

Reports indicate that in nearly all of the recent fire deaths there were no working smoke alarms. The Mississippi State Fire Marshal's Office has and continues to stress, working smoke alarms in a home can reduce your risk of dying in a fire by almost half. The perfect time to check the batteries in your smoke alarms would be when you turn your clocks forward Sunday, March 11 for Daylight Saving Time.

The Mississippi State Fire Marshal's Office recommends the following smoke alarm safety tips.

- Test smoke alarms at least once a month using the test button.
- Make sure everyone in the home understands the sound of the smoke alarm and knows how to respond.
- Replace all smoke alarms when they are 10 years old.
- Replace the smoke alarm immediately if it doesn't respond properly when tested.

- Smoke alarms with nonreplaceable (long-life) batteries are designed to remain effective for up to 10 years. If the alarm chirps, it is a warning that the battery is low. Replace the entire smoke alarm right away.
- For smoke alarms with any other type of battery, replace batteries at least once a year. If the alarm chirps, replace only the battery.
- Smoke alarms should be placed in every sleeping area and common hallways.

And with colder weather forecast later this week, Chaney again stresses the need for practicing heating fire safety in your home.

“Careless or improper use of heating sources continues to be a leading cause of fire deaths in the state. It takes just one spark. Whether it is a space heater plugged into and overheating an extension cord incapable of handling such voltage or blankets too close to sparks from a fireplace, a fire can start in a moment and end a life in seconds. Using common sense when it comes to heating safety saves both lives and property.” Chaney said.

Citizens preparing for the coming cold temperatures need to follow these heating fire safety tips from the State Fire Marshal's Office to protect their homes and families:

- All heating equipment should be UL® approved, 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 heated by a fireplace.

- Burn only approved materials in a fireplace or wood-burning stove; never burn paper or trash in a fireplace or wood burning stove.

Follow the MID on Twitter - @MSInsuranceDept and on Facebook at Mississippi Insurance Department for more smoke alarm and fire safety tips.