

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Fire death numbers up across Mississippi in 2018

JACKSON, Miss. – Mississippi saw 79 Fire Deaths in 2018. The State Fire Marshal Office (SFMO) investigated 74 of those, while local agencies investigated the other five deaths.

That's compared to 56 fire deaths statewide in 2017, with 53 of those investigated by SFMO.

The number of fire deaths in 2018 reflects a 36 percent increase over fire deaths during the previous year. However, State Chief Deputy Fire Marshal Ricky Davis says this is not a record-breaking number.

"As recently as 2006, the SFMO has investigated upwards of 100 fire deaths," Davis said. "In fact, in the last five years, we've significantly lowered the number of preventable fire deaths across the state. I can't say specifically why the numbers are higher this year but, in a majority of these cases, a working smoke alarm could have saved lives."

Out of the 74 fire deaths investigated by SFMO, there were 38 cases in which no smoke alarms were present. State Fire Marshal Mike Chaney says in 12 cases there were smoke alarms but they didn't work.

"It's upsetting because these fires were preventable and, in every one of these cases, a life could have been saved," said Chaney. "The State Fire Marshal Office doesn't just investigate after a fire has occurred. Our educators are out working in communities and schools every day."

SFMO educators reached over 41,000 people in 2018 and visited more than 300 schools.

"Still, more people need to install and maintain smoke alarms and make escape plans specific to their home," Chaney said. "One fire death is one too many."

There were many reasons for the fires including one fire which was caused by a child playing with a lighter. Electrical fires top the list, resulting in 21 deaths. In 13 of the death cases, a cause for the fire could not be determined. A full list of the causes is found on page 2, as well as a breakdown of deaths by county.

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CAUSE OF FIRE DEATHS:

Child playing with lighter	1
Microwave Explosion/Clothing fire	1
Vehicle exhaust/grass	1
Cooking	11
Undetermined	13
Smoking	13
Heating	13
Electrical	21

NUMBER OF FIRE DEATHS BY COUNTY:

Adams	4
Alcorn	2
Benton	1
Calhoun	2
Carroll	1
Claiborne	1
Clay	2
Chickasaw	2
Desoto	3
Forrest	2
Harrison	6
Hinds	1
Holmes	1
Jackson	3
Jasper	1
Jefferson Davis	4
Jones	3
Lafayette	2
Lauderdale	1
Lee	1
Lincoln	1
Lowndes	1
Madison	1
Marion	1
Montgomery	2
Neshoba	4
Pike	2
Pontotoc	1
Prentiss	1
Quitman	4

Simpson	3
Sunflower	2
Tishomingo	1
Union	1
Washington	3
Wilkinson	2
Yazoo	1