

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HEATING EQUIPMENT TO BLAME FOR TEN FIRE DEATHS IN 2023

JACKSON, Miss. – Very cold temperatures are on the way. It's important to inspect heat sources now to make sure heaters and fireplaces work safely.

There were at least ten heating-related fire deaths in 2023. That number is down from thirteen heating-related fire deaths in 2022. A heating-related death could include improperly using a space heater or using a stove to heat a home.

"Remember to keep clothes, drapes, and anything else combustible at least 3 feet away from all heating equipment, especially space heaters," said State Fire Marshal Mike Chaney. "Never leave space heaters on when you are away from home."

There were 67 total fire deaths in Mississippi in 2023. There were no working smoke alarms in the home in more than 50% of those cases. Test smoke alarms at least once a month using the test button. Smoke alarms should be placed in every sleeping area and common hallways and on every level of the home. If you cannot afford a smoke alarm, call your local fire department - they may be able to install one for you. If not, please call the State Fire Marshal Office at 601-359-1061.

The State Fire Marshal's Office (SFMO) recommends the following heating fire safety tips:

- All heating equipment should be UL® approved and cleaned and inspected by a qualified professional prior to being used each year.
- 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 or in areas where children may be without adult supervision.
- Do not leave space heaters on when you are away from home.
- Always unplug space heaters when they are not in use. The heater should also be equipped with a tip over shut-off switch.
- Never use a stove or oven to heat living spaces. Kerosene is a poor choice for heating as it will give off poisonous fumes.
- If using a gas heater, install a carbon monoxide detector.
- Have chimney flues cleaned and inspected by qualified personnel.
- Have a spark screen that is age appropriate for all individuals if using 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.
- Test smoke alarms at least once a month using the test button. Replace all smoke alarms when they are 10 years old.
- Smoke alarms should be placed in every sleeping area and common hallways and on every level of the home.
- Should a fire break out in the home, have an emergency evacuation plan for the family to follow and have a designated meeting place for all family members.
- Once everyone is outside the burning home, call 911 and don't go back inside the home under any circumstances.

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