



# NEWS RELEASE

## OFFICE OF LOUISIANA STATE FIRE MARSHAL

Department of Public Safety & Corrections • Public Safety Services

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## Three Lives Lost, Two Injured in Spate of Deadly Fires

**Baton Rouge, LA** – State Fire Marshal investigators continue to sift through the details surrounding three (3) accidental but deadly fires since this past Saturday. And though unrelated, the fires shared one unfortunate and glaring characteristic: none of the homes involved had working smoke alarms.

In the first fire, investigators were summoned to 6212 Highway 1, in Batchelor, after fire crews responded to a residential structure fire at around 9:00 p.m. Saturday night. During suppression efforts, firefighters located the body of 83-year-old Irwin Charles Hopkins in a hallway in the northeast area of the single-story, wood-framed home.

As for the second fire, Natchitoches fire officials requested the assistance of State Fire Marshal investigators regarding a travel trailer fire located at 7568 Highway 6, in Natchitoches, shortly after 4:00 a.m. Sunday morning.

Firefighters from Natchitoches Parish Fire District 7 discovered the body of Theron E. Starnes, 55, in the center of the trailer during suppression efforts.

In a third incident, two (2) occupants were injured in a fire involving an older-model manufactured home just before 1:00 a.m. Tuesday morning in Columbia. Unfortunately, a third occupant, 67-year-old Dennis Hoffman, did not escape the blaze, which inflicted severe damage to the structure.

The causes of all three fires were determined by investigators to be accidental in nature.

The State Fire Marshal's Office wishes to take this opportunity to remind Louisiana citizens of the great importance of installing and maintaining working smoke alarms in homes.

Numerous studies have consistently demonstrated that early detection dramatically increases your chances of escaping should there be a fire.

Smoke alarms are of such value that the State Fire Marshal's Office, in conjunction with local fire departments, sponsors *Operation Save A Life*, an initiative where low income citizens can have a smoke alarm powered by a sealed 10-year lithium battery installed in their home *free of charge*.

For those interested, please contact your local fire department.

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