



# NEWS RELEASE

## OFFICE OF LOUISIANA STATE FIRE MARSHAL

Department of Public Safety & Corrections • Public Safety Services  
8181 Independence Blvd. • Baton Rouge, LA 70806

[www.lasfm.org](http://www.lasfm.org)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**CONTACT:** Ashley Rodrigue  
Public Affairs Director

**DATE:** 12/28/19

**PHONE:** 225-620-5115  
[ashley.rodrigue@la.gov](mailto:ashley.rodrigue@la.gov)

### **Eighth Fire Fatality in a Month Leads to Plea from State Fire Marshal**

**CALDWELL PARISH-** State Fire Marshal H. “Butch” Browning is making a plea to Louisiana families to take home fire safety seriously following the eighth fire fatality in north Louisiana in three weeks.

“These deaths should not be happening,” said Browning, “The weather is mild and while several of our investigations are still ongoing, the majority of these suspected causes indicate not only were these fires preventable, but the losses of life were too.”

The latest fatal fire investigation began around 1:45 a.m. on Saturday, December 28 in the 1500 block of Sweetwater Road just outside of Columbia.

Upon arrival, firefighters with the East Columbia Fire Department learned there had been four occupants in the home at the time of the fire. A 67-year-old female was found dead while her husband, a 73-year-old male, and a 16-year-old female relative were hospitalized with injuries. An 89-year-old man, the female victim’s father, was able to escape uninjured. Several pets were also lost in the blaze.

While an exact cause of the fire remains undetermined, State Fire Marshal (SFM) deputies have determined there were no working smoke alarms in this home.

This tragedy comes after fatal fires in Wisner, Haughton, Shreveport, Coushatta, Cullen and Benton that have occurred since December 8 claiming the lives of now eight people. Preliminary causes under investigation in those fires range from electrical to heating-related and cooking. In many of the cases, the victims were elderly and/or disabled and in two of the cases, the victims died after re-entering the structure. Also, many of these homes were without working smoke alarms.

The SFM would like to implore all residents to take a look around your homes, and the homes of your elderly relatives and neighbors, to keep an eye out for potential fire hazards and take immediate action to make the situation safer. Those hazards include heating devices too close to combustibles and overloaded electrical power sources while preventative actions include ensuring working smoke alarms are present and to “Get Out, Stay Out” when faced with a fire emergency.

“Keeping yourself and your loved ones safe from fire is simple and starts with personal accountability,” said Browning, “Fire is everyone’s fight because it does not discriminate. It can and does affect all families and can happen at any time, especially without constant awareness and prevention efforts.”

The SFM’s Operation Save-A-Life partners with local fire departments and districts to install smoke alarms for families that need them. You can find more information on the program on our website [lasfm.org](http://lasfm.org).

**END - END - END**

