



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF LOUISIANA STATE FIRE MARSHAL

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Three Die in Home Fires in 26 Hours

BATON ROUGE- The State Fire Marshal's (SFM) Office is pleading with the public to increase fire safety awareness and prevention efforts as deputies continue to investigate multiple fatal home fires across the state in just one day.

"It's cold outside and we know cold temperatures go hand-in-hand with fire tragedies," said State Fire Marshal Dan Wallis, "But we haven't even seen the harshest temperatures yet. That's why I'm very concerned and urging families to be aware of the fire hazards in their homes and in the homes of those they love."

The first fire occurred on Sunday, December 18, in New Orleans' Gentilly neighborhood. Around 7:15 p.m., the New Orleans Fire Department responded to the 2900 block of Serantine Street for a report of a house fire. Upon arrival, firefighters learned there was a female resident still inside despite her attempts to escape through security bars and efforts by neighbors to help get her out. Firefighters later located the 73-year-old near the front door. Following an assessment of the scene, deputies have been unable to rule out the use of temporary, canned heat sources as a possible cause as the home had been without utilities for several years.

The second fire was reported to the Slagle Volunteer Fire Department around 4:30 p.m. on Monday, December 19 in the 6800 block of Highway 8 in Leesville. Firefighters discovered the body of the 83-year-old sole, female resident at the front door. Following an assessment of the scene, SFM deputies determined the fire began in the home's living room where it is believed the victim was sleeping when the fire began. Deputies have been unable to rule out the possibility of an electrical malfunction associated with holiday decorations as a potential cause. This home did have a smoke alarm, but it was not functional at the time of the fire.

The third fire occurred just before 10 p.m. Monday, December 19, in the 300 block of Arizona Street in Ruston where a disabled male victim in his 40s was discovered. Deputies are actively investigating this case at this time.

"These deaths are all devastating, especially because, of what we know, they were all likely preventable," said Wallis, "Please, stop what you are doing now and look around your home. Do you have a working smoke alarm? Are there hazards in your home that can lead to fire danger? Head to your elderly neighbor or relative's home and do the same check. Following our simple safety steps can and will save lives."

Those key safety messages include:

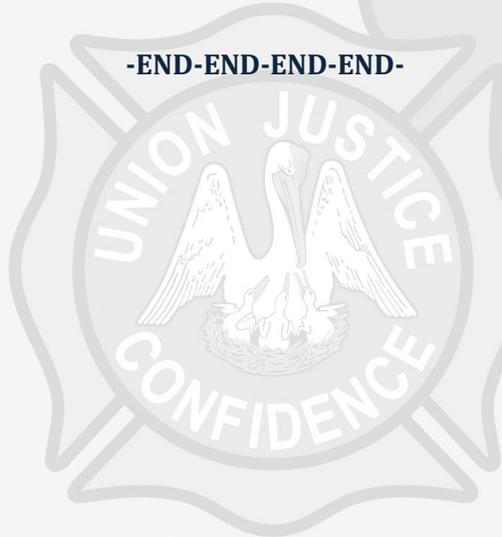
- Place space heaters 3-5 feet from combustible objects like blankets and curtains
- Plug all heating appliances directly into wall outlets, not power strips or extension cords

- Do not use stoves or ovens to heat homes
- Don't overfill fireplaces/wood-burning stoves
- Do not leave candles/open flames (or space heaters) left unattended
- Keep holiday decorations 3-5 feet from heat sources and be mindful of not only the quality of their wires but how many decorations are plugged into one power source
- Have working smoke alarms in your home!

Lastly, these deaths bring our state's fire fatality count up to 75 with more than 10 days left in the year. In all but a handful of those cases, no working smoke alarms were found.

Smoke alarms save lives and our Operation Save-A-Life partners with local fire departments to install FREE smoke alarms for families that need them most. To learn more about Operation Save-A-Life, or to register for a free smoke alarm, visit lasfm.org.

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