



# NEWS RELEASE

## OFFICE OF LOUISIANA STATE FIRE MARSHAL

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

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Ponchatoula Man Dies in Heating-Related House Fire

**TANGIPAHOA PARISH-** State Fire Marshal (SFM) deputies have determined a fire in Ponchatoula that claimed the life of a disabled man and injured his wife was caused by a space heater placed too close to combustible objects.

Around 6:15 p.m. on Friday, January 27, the Ponchatoula Fire Department responded to a report of a house fire located in the 18000 block of Esterbrook. Upon arrival, firefighters learned there had been two occupants in the home at the time of the fire and one was still inside. Despite firefighters being able to rescue the bedridden, 77-year-old male resident, he later died at an area hospital.

During the investigation into what caused the fire, SFM deputies learned the victim and his wife, in her 70s, were in a front room watching television when they heard a loud noise from the back of the house. When investigating the sound, the female resident found smoke and flames and then attempted to get her husband into his wheelchair so they could escape. She was injured during her efforts and was unfortunately unable to help her husband get out of the home.

After an assessment of the scene and collecting witness statements, SFM deputies determined the fire began in a back bedroom and was caused by a space heater left running unattended and too close to bedding and clothing.

The SFM urges Louisianans to practice safe home heating practices in the following ways:

- 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, ovens, or grills to heat homes
- Don't overfill fireplaces/wood-burning stoves
- Do not leave candles/open flames (or space heaters) left unattended

If you know of a relative, friend or loved one that engages in unsafe heating practices, please help us share these tips with them and develop a safer way for them to keep warm.

In addition, deputies were unable to confirm the presence of working smoke alarms. Smoke alarms are proven to be the difference between life and death in a fire emergency. The SFM's Operation Save-A-Life partners with local fire departments to install smoke alarms for free for families that need them most. To learn more about the program and register for a smoke alarm, visit [lasfm.org](http://lasfm.org). You can also contact your local fire department to request a smoke alarm installation.

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