



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF LOUISIANA STATE FIRE MARSHAL

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Two Die in Separate Mobile Home Fires in North Louisiana *SFM Calls for Increased Fire Preparedness for Mobility-Challenged Louisianans*

BATON ROUGE- State Fire Marshal (SFM) deputies are continuing their investigation into two, separate mobile home fires in North Louisiana that claimed the lives of two men, one of them who was mobility-challenged.

“After more than a month without a loss of life in a home fire, our agency was called to investigate four fatal fires within a week and a half, all in North Louisiana, and all but one involving a victim that was mobility challenged,” said State Fire Marshal Dan Wallis, “I am calling on all individuals who are mobility challenged to take a look around your home, right now, and create an escape plan that helps you navigate your unique circumstances, quickly and efficiently, to ensure you can escape a fire threat safely.”

The first fire occurred on Wednesday, May 31, around 6:30 p.m. The Winnsboro Fire Department responded to a report of a mobile home fire located in the 300 block of Clyde Weems Loop in Gilbert. When firefighters arrived, they, unfortunately, discovered the body of a man in the home’s living room.

“Our preliminary death investigation reveals the decedent is Michael W. Stephenson, 68, of Baskin,” said Shane Scott, spokesperson for the Franklin Parish Coroner’s Office, “Official identification and cause of death are pending an autopsy by our office.”

At this time, deputies have determined the fire began in the living room area where the victim was found. While an exact cause remains undetermined, deputies are unable to rule out the possibility that unsafe smoking practices could have been a contributing factor.

The second fire occurred on Sunday, June 4, around 12:15 p.m. Desoto Fire District #3 responded to a report of a mobile home fire located in the 200 block of Kayla Drive in Grand Cane. When firefighters arrived, they learned there had been two people in the home at the time the fire was discovered. One man was able to escape and attempted to help the second man, who was mobility-challenged, but the rescue effort was, unfortunately, unsuccessful.

At this time, deputies have determined the fire began in a bedroom. While an exact cause remains undetermined, deputies are unable to rule out the possibility of an electrical malfunction associated with overheating during appliance charging as a potential contributing factor.

While both of these investigations continue, the SFM would like to remind Louisianans about the importance of fire safety awareness and prevention when it comes to smoking and electronics. Regarding smoking safety, always smoke outdoors. Ensure smoking materials are fully extinguished and discarded in appropriate containers and keep smoking materials, especially spark-producing objects like lighters, out of the reach of children. And regarding electronic safety, make sure all appliances and electronic devices are charged with the manufacturer-supplied equipment. Keep charging appliances and devices on a non-combustible, clutter-free surface and, when charging is complete, disconnect the charging wires to avoid overheating.

In addition, deputies have been unable to determine whether there were working smoke alarms in either home. If you have smoke alarms, ensure they are working. If you need help getting smoke alarms for your home, Operations Save-A-Life can help. To learn more about Operation Save-A-Life, or to register for a free smoke alarm, visit our website at lasfm.org or contact your local fire department to request a free smoke alarm installation.

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