



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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Ashley Rodrigue
Public Affairs Director

DATE: 1/31/22

PHONE: 225-620-5115
ashley.rodrigue@la.gov

Two Die in Weekend Home Fires

Vigilance Urged Following Deadliest January in Five Years

BATON ROUGE- Two lives lost in home fires over the weekend have led to the State Fire Marshal's Office (SFM) recording the deadliest January since 2018.

"We have said time and time again that a drop in temperatures inevitably leads to a rise in fatal home fires in Louisiana which is why we have been beating the drum about safe home heating practices," said State Fire Marshal H. "Butch" Browning, "We have got to see the public care more about their safety inside of their homes to stop this terrible trend."

As of Jan. 31, there have been 15 fire fatalities across the state. The last time Louisiana saw this level of loss of life to fire in the month of January was in 2018 when 20 people died in home fires. Weather data for temperature averages in Louisiana for the month of January from 2017 through 2022 show 2018 and 2022 as the only years the temperature averaged lower than the normal temperatures for areas including New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and Shreveport.

The most recent fatal fire investigations both occurred this past Saturday, Jan. 29.

Just before 3 a.m., the Bastrop Fire Department responded to the 900 block of Collins Avenue where firefighters learned one resident was able to escape the burning home and tried to alert the other resident, but did not get a response. The victim, a 58-year-old man, was later found in a bedroom where investigators determined the fire started. While the exact cause of this fire remains undetermined at this time, deputies cannot rule out the possibility of excessive use of extension cords or heating-related factors contributing to the cause.

That afternoon, around 3:45, Iberia Fire District #1 responded to the 3800 block of Melancon Road in New Iberia for a recreational vehicle fire. Deputies learned several neighbors attempted to alert the lone resident when the fire was noticed, but they could not get a response. The victim, a 50-year-old woman, was later found in a sleeping area of the RV. Deputies believe the fire started due to an older model space heater being placed too close to bedding in the area where the victim was located. In addition, deputies found that the heating device was powered through an extension cord connected to a power strip with every outlet utilized.

"The steps families can take to avoid becoming the next tragic fire death we report are simple and should be done right now," said Browning.

- 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
- Have working smoke alarms in your home!

Regarding smoke alarms, deputies confirmed neither home had working smoke alarms. Smoke alarms are a proven tool to alert residents to a fire danger in order to escape safely, even in a mobile home or RV. If you need assistance obtaining smoke alarms for your home, Operations Save-A-Life can help. The program partners with local fire departments to install smoke alarms for free. To learn more about Operation Save-A-Life, visit our website at lasfm.org.

