



# NEWS RELEASE

## OFFICE OF LOUISIANA STATE FIRE MARSHAL

Department of Public Safety & Corrections • Public Safety Services  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### Fire Safety Vigilance Urged After Three Home Fire Deaths in Two Days

**BATON ROUGE-** The State Fire Marshal's (SFM) Office is reminding Louisiana families to remain vigilant about fire safety in their homes after three people have died in residential fires in the past two days across our state.

Around 6:45 a.m. on Monday, December 4, St. Tammany Fire District #2 responded to a call for a house fire located on Hester Street in Madisonville. A passerby reported seeing smoke coming from the home and that when he knocked on the door to try to alert residents, he saw a man lying on the floor. When firefighters arrived, they located the man's body in between the kitchen and living room areas of the home.

While official identification and cause of death are pending with the parish Coroner's Office, at this time, the victim is believed to be the 32-year-old homeowner.

Following an assessment of the scene and conducting witness statements, deputies have determined the fire began in the kitchen and was caused by unattended cooking.

Then, around 8:30 p.m. on the 4th, the Cottonport Fire Department responded to a vacant house fire located in the 300 block of Cottonport Avenue. Firefighters later located the body of a man inside.

While official identification and cause of death are pending with the parish Coroner's Office, at this time, the victim is believed to be a 39-year-old transient man from the area.

Following an assessment of the scene and conducting witness statements, deputies have determined the fire began in the room where the victim was found. While an exact cause remains undetermined, deputies have been unable to rule out the possibility of unsafe heating practices and/or smoking-related activities as possible contributing factors.

Lastly, around 8:30 a.m. on Tuesday, December 5, the Marksville Fire Department responded to the 400 block of Kirby Drive for a report of a mobile home fire. Firefighters later located the body of a man inside the living room.

While official identification and cause of death are pending with the parish Coroner's Office, at this time, the victim is believed to be a 61-year-old homeowner.

Following an assessment of the scene and conducting witness statements, deputies have determined the fire began in the living room where the victim was found. While an exact cause remains undetermined, deputies have been unable to rule out the possibility of unsafe heating practices, an electrical malfunction associated with improper use of extension cords and/or smoking-related activities as possible contributing factors.

“To have three people lose their lives in home fires in such a short period of time after a year of record low home fire fatalities across our state is truly sad and concerning,” said State Fire Marshal Dan Wallis, “We want the people of Louisiana to be proud of how fire-aware you all have been in 2023 and to continue that commitment to safety. Please keep these families in your thoughts, but also let these tragedies remind you how to keep yourselves and your families protected from fire dangers.”

The SFM urges the common practice of these key cooking safety tips:

- Stay in the kitchen when you are cooking, especially when the stove is active
- Keep cooking environments free of clutter and combustible materials
- Avoid cooking when tired, distracted or impaired

When it comes to electrical safety, which is often associated with home heating, it is advised to avoid long-term and unintended uses of extension cords which include connecting several extension cords to create non-traditional power sources. This can cause overheating and become a fire hazard. The SFM also suggests the following home heating tips:

- 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
- Avoid the use of stoves or ovens to heat homes
- Don't overfill fireplaces/wood-burning stoves and ensure proper ventilation
- Do not leave candles/open flames (or space heaters) unattended

Finally, there were only working smoke alarms in one of these homes. The SFM wants to stress to all Louisiana residents that smoke alarms have proven to be the difference between life and death in a fire emergency. If you need assistance obtaining smoke alarms for your home, Operation 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](http://lasfm.org) or contact your local fire department to request a free smoke alarm installation.

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