



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF LOUISIANA STATE FIRE MARSHAL

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Heating, Smoking Safety Urged Following Fatal Fire in Kentwood

BATON ROUGE- State Fire Marshal Chief Bryan J. Adams is reminding Louisiana, once again, about heating and smoking safety following a fatal fire in Kentwood.

Just after 4:30 a.m. on Wednesday, January 31, 2024, the Kentwood Fire Department responded to a call for a fire at a non-operational bait shop located in the 71000 block of Highway 51. Firefighters arrived to find a resident of a nearby mobile home informing them of a woman possibly inside the burning structure. Unfortunately, firefighters did locate a deceased victim in the building.

Official identification and cause of death are pending with the parish Coroner's Office, however, the victim is believed to be the 74-year-old female resident of a nearby mobile home.

After an initial investigation, deputies determined the fire began in the front/middle portion of the bait shop, which was without any utility connections, where the victim was found. At this time, the cause of this fire remains undetermined with the inability to rule out several accidental factors including possible improper heating practices or possible improperly discarded smoking materials.

"We have sadly averaged one loss of life per week in 2024 to home fires and, in four of those cases, the cause is suspected to be either heating or smoking-related," said State Fire Marshal Chief Bryan J Adams, "This is a dangerous trend that cannot continue, and shouldn't, because these incidents are preventable."

The SFM's top home heating safety tips include placing space heaters 3-5 feet away from flammable items like blankets and comforters and plugging them directly into wall outlets as opposed to extension cords and power strips that can overheat and spark a fire. Also, it is advised not to leave candles or open-flame devices, including propane heaters, unattended or in use while sleeping.

Regarding top safe smoking practices, you should always smoke outdoors and fully extinguish and discard smoking materials in appropriate containers.

Lastly, there were no working smoke alarms in this building. Chief Adams 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 or contact your local fire department to request a free smoke alarm installation.

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